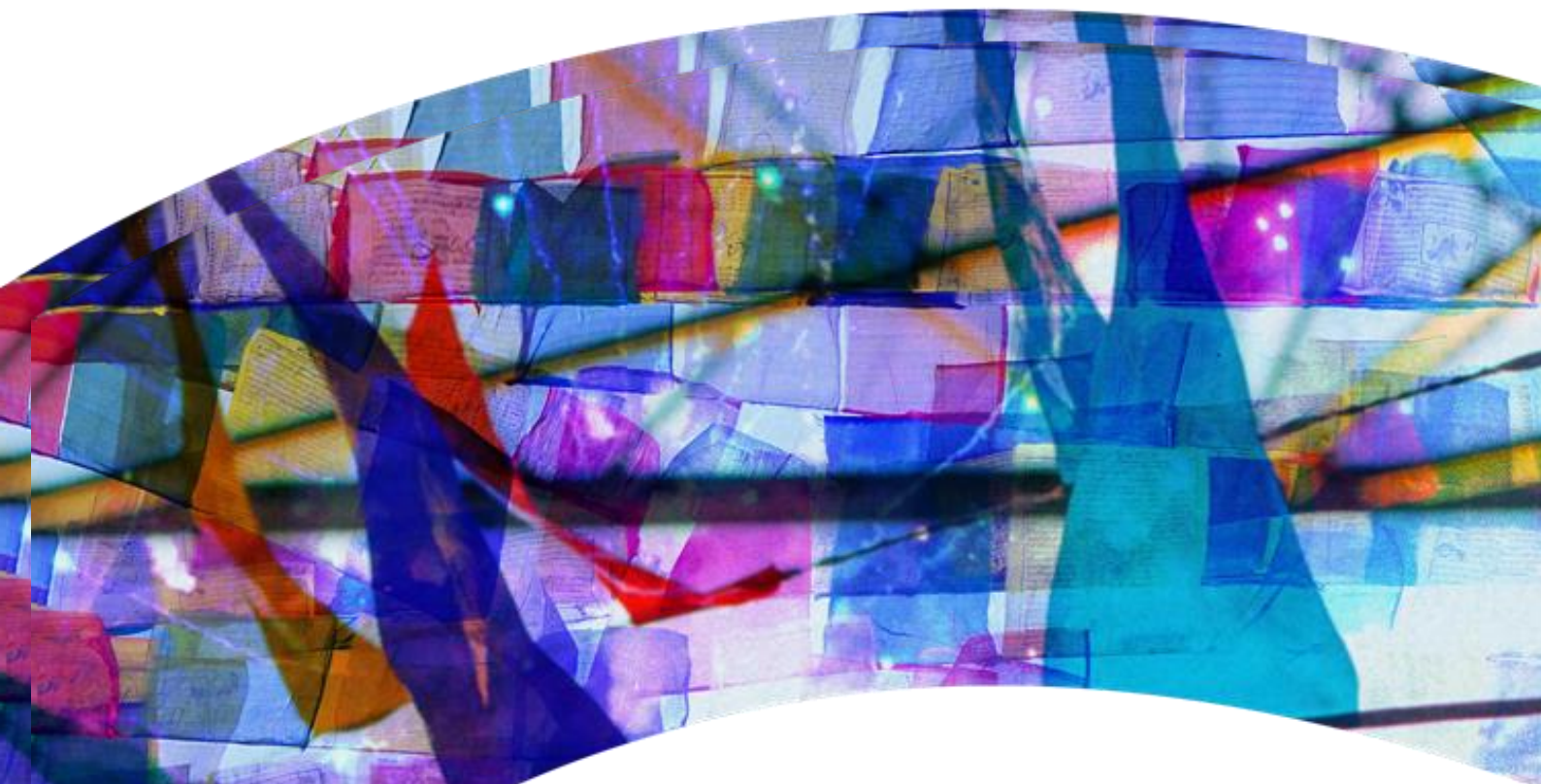


# We Are Staffordshire

Place Marketing Strategy 2023-2026

Last updated March 2024



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# 1. Introduction

## 1.1. About this Document

The last three years has seen We Are Staffordshire launch from a standing start to a national example of place marketing at the top of its game.

We've been agile, authentic about our story, the opportunities, and the challenges. But above all, we've taken risks, tried new things and learned by doing things differently.

In the years ahead, we must hold onto the excitement and energy of the 'start-up', whilst also being clear on the long-term projects we want to implement that will really deliver impact for Staffordshire.

This strategy document sets out our approach for We Are Staffordshire, the county's place marketing delivery vehicle, between April 2023-2026, with particular emphasis on recommendations and options for the wider strategic vision and structure beyond the 'pilot phase' of the organisation (post April 2024).

## 1.2. Vision

We Are Staffordshire exists to: **Increase Awareness, Engage Business** and **Influence Key Stakeholders** to look at and consider Staffordshire as the destination of choice to Live and Work, Invest, Visit and Study. Our vision is

***"To see and celebrate Staffordshire on the regional, national and international stage as a great place to live and work, visit, study and invest in a future; a place that supports a sustainable and prosperous future for generations to come."***

## 1.3. Mission and Objectives

Our **objectives**, approved by the Staffordshire Place Board, are to:

- **Increase Awareness** with key audiences about the Staffordshire Story, identity and wider county offer as a place to invest, work, visit, learn and live.
- **Engage Businesses** to encourage them to a) join the Ambassador Network if they are located in the county; b) relocate/set-up or open a base in the county; or c) promote Staffordshire as part of their business (agents, investment companies)
- **Influence Key Stakeholders** within significant target groups and organisations such as the Northern Powerhouse, Midlands Engine and through our MP Ambassadors, in central Government as well as internationally

Therefore, our **mission** is to:

- Through delivery of value-add\* events, PR and profile-raising activities, open the door to and collaborate with teams delivering inward investment, increased visitor economy, skills and education/research to further support prosperity in Staffordshire
- Raise positive awareness of and instil pride in the Staffordshire 'place brand' reputation inside and beyond Staffordshire's borders by utilising the voice of and educating businesses, MPs, young people and stakeholder partners as 'Ambassadors' in all Staffordshire has to offer

- Engage, make connections with and influence target stakeholders in target industries or destinations (Midlands/North West/London) around key priorities/opportunities/challenges for our county

\*Activities that support but sit over and above the pipeline of marketing activity and support provided by the Staffordshire inward investment service and LVEP.

## 2. Place Marketing Approach

### 2.1. Progress to Date

As we approach the end of the three-year pilot of We Are Staffordshire, momentum behind the programme and its impact cannot be underestimated.

Focus has been to:

- Deliver upon the proof of concept in the eyes of key partners, wider external stakeholders and potential future funders in the private sector
- Strategically align 'place (branding)' with delivery vehicles it directly supports and influences, including our inward investment service in Staffordshire and Destination Management Partnership / tourism board delivered through Enjoy Staffordshire and latterly the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent LVEP.
- Foster a wider sense of collaboration between the private and public sector – namely in Staffordshire via the establishment of an 'Ambassador Network'
- Present a united place brand beyond our Staffordshire borders as an 'open door' for investment, tourism and skills
- Measure as a baseline and then employ activities to challenge/improve/create new positive perceptions of the county and its towns
- Launching a programme of engagement and marketing focussed on B2B marketing campaigns, events, thought leadership and strategic sponsorship inside Staffordshire and beyond our borders.

We have delivered an impressive programme of activity, working with autonomy and clarity of purpose to collaboratively bringing tourism, investment and business support functions closer together and have made some headway in presenting a unified place brand.

We Are Staffordshire has gained significant traction and support from businesses across Staffordshire; district and borough partners through a commitment to enhanced two-tier working and raised awareness with key strategic stakeholders beyond the county's borders. Our Place Board and partners are fully aligned with our mission, with successful collaborative partnerships establishing.

Beyond September 2021, the pace and scale of delivery has been marked, with a significant number of events and campaigns delivered within the county and beyond our borders. Key activities include the Staffordshire Day events at the Houses of Parliament in April 2022; Commonwealth Games campaign supporting the summer tourism drive in July/August 2022 and launch of an Ambassador Programme and series of Staffordshire Ambassador showcase events held across the county.

As a strategic lead on place marketing activity, We Are Staffordshire has also successfully led collaborative activity to open the door for investment and tourism nationally and internationally; notably the strategic guidance and delivery of a new 'place led' investment prospectus, showcased at MIPIM and UKREiiF in spring 2022, UKREiiF 2023 and a 'Midlands Together in Tourism' roundtable discussion with national leaders within the visitor economy/tourism industry and launched 'A Place to Thrive' campaign, encompassing a clear quality of life offer through a new prospectus and series of short place films.

We have been shortlisted for international awards, including the City Nation Place, Place Branding of the Year award, and were recently appointed as partners of City Nation Place on their Global Place Advisory Board.

As we enter our next chapter beyond the three-year pilot, attention is now turning to how we build on this momentum through longer term 'flagship' campaigns that put 'place' at the heart of our approach.

## 2.2. Strategic Delivery Plans

At the outset of the three-year pilot, activity streams were defined to provide collaborative and 'value add' engagement for our wider tourism, investment, business support and skills workstreams; greater strategic alignment will be required between these functions to ensure successful impact beyond March 2024, and deliver impact efficiently.

In our first three years, an annual 'strategic delivery plan', has set out activities and an approximate timeline for delivery, aligned with the financial reporting period between April to March. The annual place strategic delivery plan has been structured under 'key pillars', which focus delivery against We Are Staffordshire's mission.

As we move beyond the three year pilot, the 2024-25 delivery plan and associated budget has been co-designed by We Are Staffordshire and the Place Board, District and Borough partners and our funding members, providing greater ownership and accountability on a wider collaborative level.



**Fig 2 – WAS 2024-25 Strategic Delivery Plan**

Beyond 2024, We Are Staffordshire will continue to act with the same clarity of purpose, providing a 'front door' through our umbrella brand to meaningful engagement, planning and lobbying around our priority agendas, including the celebration of place and culture at a regional and national level. We will also look to implement one or two longer term/ongoing pieces of work that will support our 'place' offer whilst aligning with economic priorities.

### 3. Strategic Delivery Beyond 2024

We Are Staffordshire exists as the central delivery vehicle to put Staffordshire on the map – regionally, nationally and globally – utilising the voice of our businesses, attractions and external allies to do so.

As we establish We Are Staffordshire as ‘business as usual’ at the end of this three-year pilot, this strategy document sets out We Are Staffordshire’s strategic approach to funding and more formal collaboration and alignment with wider economic growth services including but not limited to inward investment, tourism, culture and skills.

In addition to the regular drumbeat of Staffordshire activity, our primary focus will remain on delivering external-facing campaigns and leading on priority topics for Staffordshire. In consultation with partners, we will also explore the delivery of larger ongoing pieces of work to support Staffordshire’s economic ambitions. The launch of a Staffordshire Film Office and a dedicated, long-term programme of activity to support the retention, aspirations and pride of young people in the county have been identified as the first two priority programmes.

This vision will support We Are Staffordshire to build upon momentum gained, reach new audiences and not get lost in the noise of so many other competing towns, cities and regions.

#### 3.1. Future Funding

As set out, the resource and operating costs to establish We Are Staffordshire were 100% funded by SCC, over a three-year period between 2021-2024.

The total investment into the work is £530,000, broken down into support for the full salary of a Place Brand Manager and Place Campaigns Officer and an annual marketing budget over three years. This capital pot fund is due to end in March 2024.

As we look beyond the pilot phase of the programme, we have leveraged an opportunity to build upon the success of We Are Staffordshire through a diversification of our income stream with support from our District and Borough partners and the private sector here in Staffordshire. Securing diversified funding for 2024-25 has increased the marketing budget available, and with additional capital investment into a Staffordshire Film office from Staffordshire County Council, provides a healthy budget to support our ambitious work over the following year.

Funder	Ask	Guide notes	Percentage of funding total
Staffordshire County Council	£150k	to cover place marketing employee resource, plus marketing contribution	60
Districts and Boroughs/Leaders Board x8	£40k	Supporting specific place-led activity set out on an annual basis (i.e. UKREiiF, roundtables, House of Commons Activity)	16
Private Sector	£50k	Investment P/A from each ‘patron’ ‘SME’ and ‘Ambassador’ partner through tiered approach, with funders split across the Live, Work, Visit, Study offer	24
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£240k</b>		

#### 3.2. Stakeholder Mapping and Management



In developing a place marketing approach, defining audiences is key to ensuring the right messages are presented to the right people, at the right times – whilst avoiding a duplicated and siloed approach that competes with partners.

Under We Are Staffordshire, the approach to segmenting audiences in the first two years has been based on activity within Staffordshire, and a broader brush approach beyond our borders. Groupings are set out below, whilst a table sets out key distinct stakeholder segments at a high level in the appendix.

#### **INTERNAL**

- Businesses located in Staffordshire – Ambassador Network
- Collaboration with partners – Staffordshire Chambers of Commerce, Staffordshire inward investment service and Enjoy Staffordshire / Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Tent LVEP to reach new audiences in Staffordshire
- Delivery groups – wider collaboration

#### **EXTERNAL**

- Targeted leaders/stakeholders in major cities/nationally/internationally
- Collaboration with partners – Staffordshire Chambers of Commerce, Staffordshire inward investment service and Enjoy Staffordshire / Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Tent LVEP to reach new audiences
- Key influencers such as Visit England, the Institute of Directors, Institute of Place Management (IPM), City Nation Place
- External media partners and events’ organisers such as Built Environment Networking/Insider Media
- Investors and target developers
- Sector specific – digital/film, advanced manufacturing, energy

### **3.3. Staffordshire Activity**

The Staffordshire strategic pillar of activity is a key component of our mission; activities instil pride, they tell our story, and they aim through events, communications and sponsorship/supportive engagement, to take businesses in Staffordshire on a journey of learning – to win hearts and minds through the Ambassador Network.

Staffordshire-focussed activity has consistently been one of our main areas of delivery since We Are Staffordshire’s strategy launched in April 2021. Through Ambassador showcase events and the launch of an Ambassador Network we have recruited businesses to act as our salesforce and tell our story beyond Staffordshire’s borders.

Digital marketing and engagement is a key part of We Are Staffordshire’s delivery, enabling us to reach larger and diverse audiences, push calls to action around Ambassador recruitment and events,



and a bold and fresh tone of voice through engaging and inspiring video and photographic content. These activities will remain central to our strategy moving beyond the pilot in March 2024.

As we look ahead to We Are Staffordshire post March 2024, longer-term 'flagship' activities have been out in partnership with our Place Board and partners, with focus on a programme of activity to support young people in the county to attract and retain jobs, and the launch of a Staffordshire Film Office.

### 3.4. External Activity

The 'external' pillar of We Are Staffordshire's activity accounts for 75% of our focus, resource and budgetary spend. After all, We Are Staffordshire's mission is to put the county on the map beyond our borders.

It is this pillar of activity that affords We Are Staffordshire the greatest opportunity to take new approaches, risks and employ creative methods to land our messages. It is also this pillar that requires the greatest participation and collaboration between workstreams and partners to achieve success.

To date, delivery of our Staffordshire External activities has seen significant impact, with a Staffordshire presence at key in-person investment and development events such as MIPIM and UKREiiF in 2022 and an enhanced presence with all District and Borough partners for the latter in 2023. Utilising the voice of our home brands, heritage and business stories, we have also delivered events at the Houses of Parliament, shared our story at global place marketing events and launched a successful campaign, 'A Place to Thrive' to celebrate the quality of life afforded here in Staffordshire. Our efforts in this space have been recognised at an international level through the City Nation Place Awards where we were shortlisted in two categories, including the prestigious 'Place Brand of the Year awards.

Business as usual activities such as our roundtable debate series, which connect Staffordshire to national bodies and sector leaders, will continue into 2024-25 and beyond. In partnership with our investment team, we will also look to enhance our presence and reach at key events. We will continue to support our visitor economy/tourism and culture service areas through national PR campaigns/features and through lobbying/door opening exercises with target national bodies and funders.

As we look ahead and in the longer term, our external activities will seek to continue our collaboration with investment, tourism, culture and skills & jobs workstreams to deliver added value and support strategic priorities. Clearly, the Staffordshire Film Office will be a priority that touches upon and supports every one of the aforementioned areas.

#### **Internal/External Place Impact and Perception Change**

A key marker of We Are Staffordshire's success in the long term will be judged on whether the perception of our county inside and beyond our county borders has changed for the better.

A national perception benchmarking exercise was delivered as part of the 2023-24 delivery plan, with a recommendation that views are revisited thereafter on an annual or bi-annual basis for between 2024-2034.

This benchmark is integral so that that in the years ahead we can chart our progress in changing perceptions. Perceptions do not change overnight, and a decade-long measurement could yield interesting and valuable results not just for Staffordshire, but at a national place-marketing level.



## 4. We Are Staffordshire Leadership & Governance

Support for We Are Staffordshire from Staffordshire County Council as funders and key stakeholders; our Place Board as key strategic and now as funding partners; and the wider business community has been integral and remains key as we embark on our next chapter, ensuring our continued impact is felt inside and beyond our borders.

### 4.1. Commitment from Leadership and Strategic Partners

The strength of We Are Staffordshire lies in its independent and private sector led governance model, backed up by the resource and financial commitment of the local authority.

We Are Staffordshire Place Board sits amidst a collection of governance boards/steering committees across Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire, with some duality of members on such boards acting to 'connect the dots', including the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent LVEP, Staffordshire Chambers of Commerce and other key partner boards.

The ultimate goal is to harness collective efforts to present 'one voice' and one story for Staffordshire. Through the development of the Staffordshire Leaders Board in 2021, we have been afforded a unique opportunity to align not only at a county level, but with our district and borough partners to sell Staffordshire through one united approach and clarity of purpose.

### 4.2. The Place Board

We Are Staffordshire was established in 2020 with a private sector led 'Place' governance structure that mirrored many other places. Nationally, the success of such boards have been mixed, with many areas deciding to dissolve the formal board structure in favour of a less formal steering group.

In Staffordshire, efforts to develop a truly private sector led partnership has been highly successful. The We Are Staffordshire Place Board is 90% private sector led and represents the component strands of its mission – to promote Staffordshire as the place to live, invest (work), visit and study - equally.

Beyond March 2024, the structure and financial model supporting the programme may evolve; it is recommended that strategic approval and scrutiny for We Are Staffordshire continues to be led by the Place Board, with current governance structure operating unchanged and under the original conditions of its Terms of Reference.

#### **We Are Staffordshire Delivery Groups**

We Are Staffordshire Delivery Groups launched in March 2022 to support and enhance the reach and delivery of We Are Staffordshire's core team. Whilst some now operate as 'task and finish' groups and have disbanded, the 'young people' group remains central to our work and will be expanded in its membership and reach beyond 2024.

#### **Young People:**

- Changing young people's perception of Staffordshire, instil pride and present a compelling reason to stay; open opportunities/pathways to meaningful employment/training

A separate budget line exists to support the delivery group with its activities and can be drawn down upon receipt and approval of a budget request form by the Place Board Chair and Deputy.



## 5. Impact and Evaluation

### 5.1. Why we Measure Impact

Evaluating the impact of We Are Staffordshire has been important not only during the pilot phase but increasingly beyond March 2024, to measure our return on investment, reach and our profile regionally and nationally.

As our purpose is to improve the perception of Staffordshire inside and beyond our borders, perception surveys will be central to We Are Staffordshire measuring its impact. But this should not be the only method – particularly as factors affecting place perception may be outside our control or sphere of influence. ‘Place marketing’ will not provide an instant solution for perception change, and results will not be immediate. We Are Staffordshire is a new and bold approach for our county, and delivering brand awareness, engaging business and influencing key audiences will take time and sustained effort in the long term.

Stakeholder canvassing and feedback is another key method, allowing us to identify and react to any challenges and areas for improvement; demonstrate that stakeholder feedback has been acted upon and evidence longer term success and impact. Most feedback will be recorded and discussed at an internal level with improvements built into to the approach for future activity and campaigns. For significant campaigns with a larger and defined key stakeholders or sponsors (such as the House of Commons event or UKREiif), we will continue to develop individual approaches to collating views.

Measuring impact against agreed and SMART KPIs will allow us to interrogate and understand what activities deliver results or when we need to flex our approach. It also provides confidence to our Place Board, Staffordshire Leaders Board and key partners that we are delivering against our objectives and that our activities are clearly aligned to our mission and core objectives.

Finally, measuring and recording results will allow us to benchmark against competitors, and provides data-driven intel to support bids for future funding, awards entries and more.

### 5.2. Annual Review

The impact of the three-year pilot is set out in the wider ‘A Place to Celebrate’ impact review, published in April 2024.

Looking beyond 2024, under our vision for enhanced collaboration across investment, tourism and our district and borough partners, a succinct annual review presenting back on impact, expenditure, challenges and priorities for the year ahead would provide an opportunity to clearly demonstrate the linkages between the aforementioned workstreams and demonstrate our clarity of purpose.

We Are Staffordshire will continue to own the delivery of an annual review, undertaken in Q4 of each financial year and published in Q1 (April-May) of the following year.

This may include competitor analysis to learn from similar organisations (other place-led local authorities, arms-length marketing bodies and marketing consultancies) as well as comparing our own KPIs and performance year on year.

## 6. Contact

The next update to this document will be due in March 2025. For further information regarding the methods and approaches set out in this strategy document, please contact:

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## 7. Appendix

### 7.1. Background to We Are Staffordshire

In 2020, Staffordshire business, education and public sector organisations came together to develop a new story and approach to promoting and marketing the county.

Businesses leaders and key stakeholders across Staffordshire took part in a series of workshops and focus groups with the UK’s leading place marketing consultancy, thinkingplace, helping to inform the visual language, identity and narrative within the Staffordshire Story, which launched officially in November 2020.

With the launch of Staffordshire’s new story and identity, in early 2021 a new Place Board was established, providing oversight and governance of Staffordshire’s place marketing programme, setting the vision and priorities, and overseeing performance. Dedicated resource, via a Place Brand Manager and latterly a Place Campaigns Officer, have been appointed to take this work forward.

The project has received approval and financial backing of Staffordshire County Council’s Cabinet from 2021-2024 and is operating as a pilot during this time.

We Are Staffordshire launched in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, at a time where Staffordshire businesses across all sectors were facing significant operating and trading pressures.

As such, the place marketing work has been viewed as a way to kick-start Staffordshire’s recovery through a bold new approach to putting ‘Staffordshire on the map’ beyond our borders, whilst challenging and improving long-held perceptions.

Central to this pilot work is to develop closer partnership working between the private and public sector; with Staffordshire’s Destination Management Partnership via the Enjoy Staffordshire Tourism Board brand, Staffordshire inward investment service, wider business support functions, plus key external partners (Staffordshire Chambers of Commerce; Keele and Staffordshire Universities to name a few).

### 7.2. High level Stakeholder Matrix

This table does not detail individual organisations at this stage – this is to be captured in the Stakeholder Matrix and CRM.

Pillar	Groups	Management approach	Relationship Owner	Engagement approach
Staffordshire	Place Board	Manage closely	We Are Staffordshire	Governance Board, regular communications and approvals
	Key partner organisations / Boards	Keep satisfied/informed	We Are Staffordshire / inward investment service / Enjoy Staffordshire / Skills & Jobs depending on organisation/group	Presentations / information supplied to Boards as appropriate



	Ambassador Network / Deputy Lieutenant & Lord Lieutenant	Keep satisfied/informed	We Are Staffordshire	Active communications (newsletter, events) and presentations / impact documents
	Businesses / organisations not currently engaged	Keep informed	We Are Staffordshire	Website, social media, events, PR and via partners such as Chamber (events/intros)
	Priority sectors (sustainability, ceramics, digital)	Keep satisfied/informed	inward investment service / Skills & Jobs / Staffordshire County Council	Outreach marketing and communications
	MPs	Monitor/Keep informed	Staffordshire County Council	Presentations / information supplied as appropriate
	Local media	Monitor/Keep informed	Staffordshire County Council	PR / direct outreach
External	Central Government Depts	Monitor	Staffordshire County Council	Presentations / information supplied as appropriate
	Key national & international bodies (Visit England, DFT)	Monitor/Keep informed	We Are Staffordshire / inward investment service / Enjoy Staffordshire / Skills & Jobs depending on organisation/group	Direct outreach / marketing, events and communications
	National/international place bodies (CNP, IPM)	Monitor/Keep informed	We Are Staffordshire	Information supplied as appropriate / upon request
	Investor/Developer targets	Monitor/Keep informed	Staffordshire inward investment service	Outreach marketing and communications / events
	Metro Mayors/key leaders in Manchester & Birmingham	Monitor/engage on specific activity	Staffordshire County Council / We Are Staffordshire	Direct outreach / information supplied as appropriate
	Other DMPs/Local Authorities	Monitor/engage on specific activity	Enjoy Staffordshire / We Are Staffordshire	Direct outreach / information supplied as appropriate
	Key sectors/target sectors	Monitor/engage on specific activity	Staffordshire inward investment service	Outreach marketing and communications / events
	National / international media	Monitor/Keep informed	Staffordshire County Council /	PR / direct outreach

			We Are Staffordshire	
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### 7.3. Place Board Terms of Reference and Membership

Access the ToR and list of Board Members [here](#).

### 7.4. Diversity Commitment

As part of our commitment to supporting and championing speaker diversity, under this strategy we are developing a 'live' long list of internal and external speakers who we can engage with and call on for presentation/speaking appointments. The rationale for this is:

- As a business we are continuing our efforts to raise awareness of the Staffordshire as a place to live, work, visit and invest by engaging business and influence key stakeholders. Speaking appointments provide an excellent platform for this, so the greater variety of speakers we can put forward to discuss our key topics, the better we can promote ourselves and the great work we are involved in
- Staffordshire and its key leaders firmly champion diversity and strongly support wider representation at external events and engagements. By having a list of speakers who are keen to 'take to the podium' as part of their role we will be able to identify and promote these speakers more easily and where we can, ensure a fairer representation at the events we both host and attend as speakers
- Having a list of potential engaging external speakers and warm contacts whom we have worked with in the past will ensure we have high quality, impactful speakers at our hosted events – it should also make organising our own hosted events easier if we have a growing list of 'go-to' people to approach

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promoting  
Staffordshire, the  
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Live, learn, invest,  
grow.

**We Are Staffordshire**

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