

LEEDS CITY



KIRKGATE

MARKET  
est. 1857

STRATEGY  
DOCUMENT  
2021 - 2026

# FOREWORD

*Kirkgate Market is an iconic place for residents and visitors to Leeds, a real show stopper for the city with its stunning architecture and home to hundreds of local independent businesses.*

It has been a feature of the City long beyond living-memory and evokes special cherished memories for residents. The market is steeped in history and is a Grade 1 listed structure. The market has seen many changes over the years; the 1875 block shops are the oldest part of the market and were originally laid out as open streets; the 1904 hall designed by the Leeming brothers with its roof lantern is an iconic feature of the market and the city. Marks and Spencer started in the market with their penny bazaar and they continue to have a presence to this day. The market has seen changes over the years including the devastation when the market was hit by a large fire in 1975 which destroyed the lower part of the market. New halls were then added in 1976 and 1981. Most recently in 2014 the market went through a major refurbishment which saw the creation of the fresh produce area, as well as a new event space and market kitchen.

Throughout the years two things have remained constant:

Firstly, the love and regard residents of Leeds have for the market, not just as a building, not just as a place to shop but more importantly as, a place for Leeds, a place of Leeds.

Secondly Leeds City Council's commitment to the Market. The Council remains fully committed to its long-term future and will, even in difficult financial times, seek to continue to invest in its infrastructure in order to make sure it continues to thrive for generations to come.

Given the difficult retail environment in the UK today, enhanced further by the impact of covid-19 in March 2020 the market will undoubtedly face challenges over the next five years, but working with traders from the market and wider stakeholders, I'm confident that the market has a strong future and one that offers exciting opportunities as we enter a new decade.

**COUNCILLOR ASGHAR KHAN**

DEPUTY EXECUTIVE MEMBER AND CHAIR OF MARKETS MANAGEMENT BOARD  
LEEDS CITY COUNCIL



Pictured: the 1904 Hall , 1975 fire and Vicar Lane entrance.

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of the strategy is to help map out the strategic direction for the market over the next five years.

It sets out the market as a special place in Leeds and reflects on the connection that Leeds residents have with the market. It provides an overview of the current situation of the market, one that shows significant investment and commitment by a range of partners and stakeholders but also one that highlights the fact that the market is operating in the most challenging retail environment the UK has seen in living memory.

The strategy sets out a future vision for the market over the next five year period which is:

- An inclusive, successful and sustainable part of our city-centre offer, where independent retailers can innovate and thrive;
- An attractive, safe and welcoming destination where our investment secures the unique offer for future generations;
- A place for everyone, where people can experience Leeds, its people, heritage and culture.

The strategy reflects on the work completed to date and outlines work still to be done. It highlights the governance arrangements that will apply, ensuring successful delivery of the benefits the strategy outlines.

The strategy demonstrates our aim to make lots of improvements over the next five years to the market. With retail being an ever changing environment we will have to adapt to change, so the strategy will be regularly reviewed alongside a proposed delivery plan. It also sets out a perspective on how the market will look, feel and operate in 2026 and visualise how the changes the strategy sets out will impact the market.

It is important to maintain flexibility within a strategy which is linked heavily to a changing retail climate, due to the fast pace in which it moves. This should give more clarity to

businesses within the market so they can plan for the future and if required change and adapt their businesses along the way.

Collaboration between the Council, as the operator of the market, market traders and their representatives and wider stakeholder will be key in delivery of the strategy and will be pivotal in unlocking the challenges and reaping the opportunities that exist over the next five year period.

It is vitally important that the market recovers quickly from the impact of covid-19. Working in line with the Council's economic recovery framework setting out the ambition for the markets economy to be strong under three headings, Respond, Reset and Renew, and Build Resilience. The strategy plays a key role in helping to achieve this.

Finally, the market is a great place to visit - selling what people want and giving them exceptional customer service will ensure customers want to come back time and time again.

If you have any comments on the strategy please get in touch via [markets@leeds.gov.uk](mailto:markets@leeds.gov.uk). If you are not already doing so also please do give us a follow on one of our social media platforms.

Twitter: @LeedsMarkets  
Facebook: @Leeds markets  
Instagram: @LeedsMarkets

## THE MARKET, TODAY

Founded in 1857 and the birthplace of Marks & Spencer, which still has a stall here, Leeds Kirkgate Market is a stunning Grade 1 listed building which has grown and expanded over the decades and was in 2016 the proud bearer of the title ‘Britain’s Favourite Market’ and remains one of the largest in Europe. It is adjoined by a large outdoor market, which has been at the heart of Leeds residents’ shopping experience for years.

Situated five minutes walk from the rail station and right next to the bus and national coach station, the market occupies a prime location at the heart of the city centre and is an important element of the Leeds retail offer, evidenced by the approximately 7 million visitors passing through its doors in 2019 seeing a slight increase on the previous year, but significantly reduced in 2020 due to the covid pandemic.

The market is adjacent to one of the newest and largest retail developments completed in the UK over the last few years, the £150 million Victoria Gate shopping arcade which contains the largest John Lewis store outside London.

The market, which has won Trip Advisor Awards of Excellence, has

a large and loyal following on social media with over 43,000 followers on Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram as well as its own dedicated customer website [www.leedsmarkets.co.uk](http://www.leedsmarkets.co.uk).

The Council has invested significantly in the promotion and marketing of the market locally, regionally and national and the markets team has done many on and off site promotions and events working with partners such as The Leeds Playhouse, Johnson Press, Leeds Rhinos, and Leeds United Football Club, to name just a few.

Continual investment in the market has been maintained including:

- A programme of maintenance and renewal to bring the building up to modern standards.
- A new flexible dining, events and activities area.
- Creation of a 10 x 10m stage area with screen, audio & lighting equipment
- A new fresh produce area which brought together meat, fish, fruit, vegetables and other fresh foods.
- Creation of new pedestrian routes linking the market to the surrounding high footfall retail destinations and improved internal signage.

approximately  
**7 million**  
visitors a year

**40,000**  
followers on twitter

**Excellence**  
Trip Advisor Award



Whilst the market overall has relatively healthy occupation levels, there is some differences in occupation across

the market, with occupation levels\* in 2020 being:

Indoor Food Hall  
**100%**

Indoor Market  
**91%**

Outdoor Market  
**41%**

\*occupation figures as at December 2020

In particular we have seen a decrease in the number of new traders wanting to set up businesses on the outdoor market. This has also been seen across the country with market operators in some cases decreasing the number of stalls they have. Leeds market however still has an average of 80+ stalls on a daily basis and is still viewed as a large outdoor market. The 185 fixed stalls does potentially give a different visual perception of occupancy and impacts on the ability of the outdoor market to operate as a vibrant and exciting shopping experience.

Interest in trading on the indoor market remains strong, but there is a need to carefully consider applications so that a balanced offering remains as an incentive for shoppers to visit.

Over the last five year period capital investment approaching £19 million has been invested in the market, over the same period the market has delivered an operating surplus (revenue) of just over £1 million.

\*figures as of end of Dec 2020 – indoor figures based on lettable units

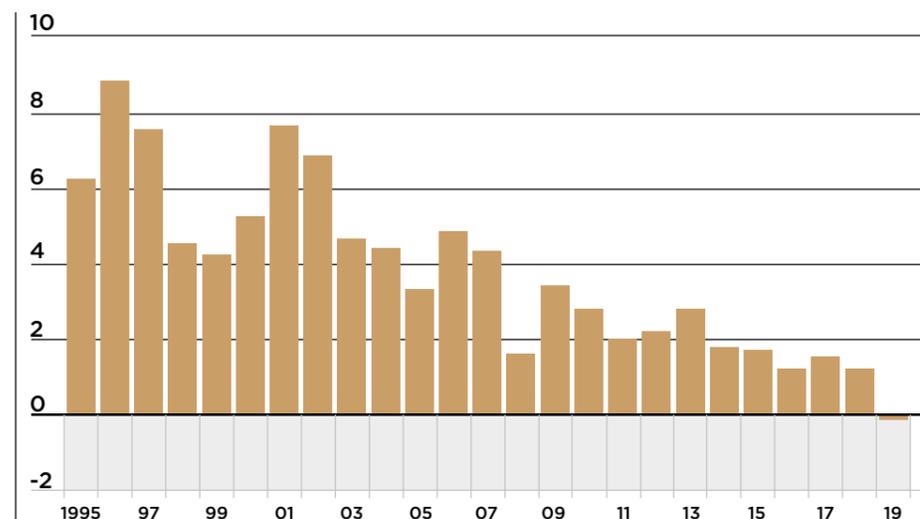
# RETAIL CONTEXT

The current retail climate is changing at a fast pace with numerous national high street retailers reporting difficult trading conditions across the UK. There is now a sustained period of retailers operating in difficult times with low retail growth and an increasing number of retailers (major and minor) experiencing financial difficulties leading to insolvency, entering administration, receivership, or seeking alternative sources of funding/relief from shareholders/landlords. This has been intensified

since the start of the covid pandemic in March 2020.

In particular many city centres across the country have struggled and reduced as a result of the continuing difficult retail environment. Whilst Leeds is somewhat bucking this trend and still has a strong retail sector at the heart of its city centre, it too needs careful consideration and effective promotion and joint working between retailers, the (Business Improvement District) BID and statutory agencies in its city, most notably the Council.

Source: The Guardian 09/01/20 citing BRC/KPMG data



Retail (High Street) total year-on-year UK sales growth, %

As the graph above, indicating low level of High Street retail sales growth shows (culminating in 2019 showing an actual decline in growth), the market is now operating in rapidly changing times. Patterns of retail shopping have changed since a majority of customers shopped at or visited a market for retail purchases.

Prior to covid-19 striking, the market was showing encouraging signs of increased footfall month on month. The impact on high street retail has been significant potentially changing people's shopping habits for good. There has been an acceleration in on-line shopping, growth of out of town shopping centres with free parking, supermarkets selling everything under one roof and other retailers changing opening hours to suit customer demand are having effects on customer spend in some areas of the market particularly non-food retail.

In addition a number of businesses such as Poundland, B&M and Primark are occupying a crowded retail space often selling items which were traditionally sold at markets, and with their buying power making it hard for market traders to compete on price.

Landlords across the retail sector are having to learn to adapt and are looking at new ways to attract footfall and fill empty retail units. This is seeing a shift away from letting units just for retail and includes letting units for leisure, services, creative maker spaces, art and performance venues and small digital businesses. All this sits alongside the retail element to help fill empty voids as well as attract a new audience to help support the retailers. Leeds City Council as the operator of the market is having to adjust its approach to unit and stall allocation, trader mix and promotional activity in a similar way.



# VISION 2021-2026

Taking into account the current position of the market and the retail context within which it operates we begin to form a vision for how the market must develop over the next five year period.

This vision must seek to build upon the strengths of the market, its existing and future traders and its current and potential customer base. The vision, if it is to truly steer the future direction of the market, must seek to capture opportunities and turn them into reality whilst being aware of challenges and

bringing forward innovative solutions to overcome difficulties.

We must place the future of the market in the context of the operator, Leeds City Council. The Council has set out its vision for the future and has set out its eight priorities of inclusive growth; health and wellbeing; sustainable infrastructure; being a child-friendly city; being an age-friendly Leeds; culture; housing and securing safe and strong communities.

[www.leeds.gov.uk/your-council/plans-and-strategies/council-plans](http://www.leeds.gov.uk/your-council/plans-and-strategies/council-plans)

There are opportunities within the market to make a contribution to most of the Council's priority areas including:

<b>INCLUSIVE GROWTH</b>	<b>Low cost start up business opportunities, 245 independent traders. Promotions of healthy living services</b>
<b>HEALTH AND WELL-BEING</b>	<b>Introduction of library, availability of low cost fresh produce</b>
<b>BEING A CHILD-FRIENDLY CITY</b>	<b>Dinosaur Trail, low cost roller disco, lego building, creative activities</b>
<b>BEING AN AGE-FRIENDLY LEEDS</b>	<b>Participation in 'Come in and Rest' scheme</b>
<b>CULTURE</b>	<b>Light Night, Community Art work, Indian Food Festival, Japanese Festival</b>

There is a particular need to consider how the market can contribute to the Council's aim of making Leeds carbon neutral by 2030 and recognising the Council's declaration of a climate emergency.

Considering the current situation as detailed above and using intelligence including the market's operating performance, consideration of the overall retail environment, site visits to markets across the region and the UK and having consulted with traders (including focussed workshops) and wider stakeholders a number of key themes and 'needs' have emerged for the Strategy including:

- A 'fit for purpose' infrastructure that is safe, secure and supports a first class retail experience
- A Leeds specific focus (rather than a simple generic template)
- Support for traders to start, grow and develop their business
- A need to recognise the heritage, special importance and uniqueness of the market
- The need for an external perspective which seeks to consider what retail will look like over the course of the life of the strategy
- A strategy that recognises that the market is a key element of the city's retail offer
- The importance of reflecting on customer needs and experiences
- The importance of environmental sustainability and the Council's commitment to respond to the climate emergency

**These needs and themes have been distilled down to form our vision**





## OUR VISION IS FOR KIRKGATE MARKET TO BE:

*An inclusive, successful and sustainable part of our city-centre offer, where independent retailers can innovate and thrive;*

*An attractive, safe and welcoming destination where our investment secures the unique offer for future generations;*

*A place for everyone, where people can experience Leeds, its people, heritage and culture.*

## AN INCLUSIVE, SUCCESSFUL AND SUSTAINABLE PART OF OUR CITY-CENTRE OFFER, WHERE INDEPENDENT RETAILERS CAN INNOVATE AND THRIVE

### SO FAR WE HAVE:

- Worked closely with the National Market Trader Federation (NMTF) to support youth markets within the region hosting four youth markets plus one during Love Your Local Market (LYLM) fortnight to help attract young people to start businesses on a market.
- Tried using a Leeds based letting agent to attract new businesses to the market.
- Managed to secure a number of quality lets in the market offering a further mix of businesses to the market despite the retail down turn.
- Increased our joint working with other city centre retailers and the BID.
- Purchased two bespoke container units to support tenants who may need to relocate for improvement works. The units also provide a focus for temporary activities and events.
- Provided an offer of free social media training to all traders with the support of the experts at Leeds Boost.
- Provided temporary rental concessions (financial support) to traders during difficult financial times.

### WE STILL NEED TO:

ACTIVITY	TIMESCALE	LEAD
Remain receptive to looking at alternative ideas to fill vacant units in order to retain income levels, continue to attract footfall and broaden the reach of the market including carrying out/commissioning a fundamental review of the nature, scale and scope of the open market, including consideration of ways to re-energise the look and feel of the open market and its connections to the indoor market.	Short to Long term	Chief Officer, Operations/ Head of Markets
Carry out detailed customer research into demand for digital and creative maker space, opening hours, payment methods and making best ways to promote the market with support from both Leeds universities and colleges. This customer feedback will be shared with tenants and help steer and understand what changes are required based on customer demand.	Short Term	Head of Markets
Develop the digital reach of the market by continuing to support tenants with their online presence whilst growing the market's own following across the right channels.	Short Term	Head of Markets
Continue to visit other markets, sharing and learning best practice and looking for innovative ideas especially around events, outdoor markets, and advertising.	Short Term	Head of Markets
Improve the wayfinding via digital screens with maps helping customers navigate a certain business at the touch of a button. These could also lend themselves to advertising opportunities for traders to promote their business at different entrances.	Short Term	Head of Markets
Review the process for the election of market trader representatives for Market Management Board, based on a 3 year time scale, allowing for tenants to put themselves forward and bring in new voices and fresh ideas.	Short Term	Chief Officer, Operations/Head of Markets
Explore the most suitable arrangements for opening times to seek to ensure the market is available as a shopping location that suits customer needs.	Short to Medium Term	Chief Officer, Operations/Head of Markets
Carry on working with tenants/traders to promote the market to ensure we continue to evolve to attract new audiences during this challenging and ever changing retail climate.	Short Term	Head of Markets
Examine the potential for diversification of use into non-retail led use including activity focused on student use, web-access, office services etc.	Short to Medium Term	Head of Markets
Develop a Markets Sustainability Plan bringing forward tangible realistic actions as to how the market can operate in a more environmentally sustainable way with a specific focus on how the market (and traders) can reduce its carbon footprint.	Short to Medium Term	Chief Officer, Operations/Head of Markets
Restate the markets commitment to operating as a safe, secure and welcoming environment where everyone is treated with equality and fairness. Produce a 'Behaviour Compact' for traders and staff so that there is clarity on acceptable behaviour, for everyone at the market, and set out a clear, fair and transparent process to deal with issues where behaviour could be considered as not reflecting the values of the market.	Short to Medium Term	Chief Officer, Operations/Head of Markets

# AN ATTRACTIVE, SAFE AND WELCOMING DESTINATION WHERE INVESTMENT SECURES THE UNIQUE OFFER FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS

## SO FAR WE HAVE:

- Invested over £1m in building and refurbishing units, which has seen three new units in the market kitchen open, all four refurbished units in fresh produce area let and eight units for tenants to move into due to the hotel development in the 1981 hall.
- Provided all new directional signage and the branding of the market kitchen, including new waste bins with the market branding.
- Relocated the market offices onto New York Street and enhanced the market branding to the office so as to highlight the market to passing traffic.
- As a direct result of trader feedback installed security cameras as well as investing in increases in security to combat potential anti-social behaviour.
- Made improvements to the website creating an A-Z trader list with direct links to their social media accounts, increasing ease of navigating the site for customers.
- Stepped up the co-ordinated advertising of events including bringing a dedicated resource to promote the market in-house.
- Developed the market’s online presence through Twitter, Facebook and Instagram. These platforms now having a combined reach of almost 200,000 per month.
- Improved the entrance ways to the market with new planters to Vicar Lane and an art installation to New York Street.
- Hosted the Jamie Oliver Ministry of Food cooking school, to teach residents how to prepare and cook healthy affordable meals

## WE STILL NEED TO:

ACTIVITY	TIMESCALE	LEAD
Continue to invest in the markets infrastructure (the next area will be the block shops. These units are in need of repair, due to water ingress, work is also required with the roof and safe means of access). Designs will be needed for the reinstatement of the retail units and this will give opportunity to open up the aisle space helping to open up sight lines in this area.	Short to Medium Term	Director of City Development/Chief Officer Operations
See the start of an 18-24 month build which will see the opening of the apart-hotel spanning the length of George Street opening out into the market. This will include a scheme being worked up for the former butchers row which will seek to increase customer flow into the market and increase dwell time with the possibility to add further seating areas. Space created in front of the lower part of the hotel scheme will allow for a scheme to be developed for either creative maker/digital business space using the container concept, or build more retail units dependent on demand at that time.	Short to Medium Term	Chief Officer, Operations/Head of Markets
Continue to respond to traders requests for the development of a surface level car park to support the vitality of the market on part of the outdoor market. Any implementation will need to be fully aware of the Councils position on climate emergency.	Short to Medium Term	Chief Officer, Operations/Head of Markets
Develop a marketing, promotion and social media plan for the market.	Short Term	Head of Markets
Continue to invest in our traders by building and improving communication platforms to share information and develop ideas to help promote their businesses.	Short Term	Head of Markets
Ensure sufficient funds are budgeted for to ensure the maintenance of this grade 1 listed building is kept up with.	Medium to Long Term	Director of City Development/Chief Officer, Operations
Ensure that the market is age and disabled friendly by keeping on top of encroachment in the aisles and clear of rubbish so the market is an attractive place to shop.	Short Term	Head of Markets
Improve the entrance ways to the market with new planters to Vicar Lane and an art installation to New York Street.	Short Term	Head of Markets
Review the level of public seating around the market based on customer demand.	Short Term	Head of Markets
Develop with traders, arrangements to ensure the ‘self-policing’ of stall layouts and any approved build-out so as to ensure that safe access is maintained for visitors to the market and which aid effective cleaning arrangements.	Short Term	Head of Markets

# A PLACE FOR EVERYONE, WHERE PEOPLE CAN EXPERIENCE LEEDS, ITS PEOPLE, HERITAGE AND CULTURE

## SO FAR WE HAVE:

- Introduced a Library into the market offering more than just books and including access to computers, business and benefits advice and also includes the markets information centre all in one location.
- Participated in a city wide recycling scheme and water refill project with 28 of our traders units becoming part of the national water refill phone app, highlighting shops that allow customers to come in and fill up their water bottles free of charge.
- Held some fantastic community events helping to attract people to the market including hosting cultural events such as the Indian food festival, Japanese Sakura festival and the Big Draw festival. We were the launch venue for the Royal British Legion’s local poppy appeal in 2019 with over 20 local schools making their own poppies as part of the poppy appeal launch.
- Championed community art including helping to create the Yorkshire rose as part of Yorkshire day.
- As part of Yorkshire Day 2018, provided the venue for a Guinness World Record for the most people wearing a flat cap at one time and hosted the first regional Youth Market Final in partnership with the NMTF.
- Installed a community art piece at the rear of the market, again as part of the Yorkshire day celebrations in 2019 working with local community group Seagulls.
- Taken part in the city wide dinosaur trail which saw over 150,000 people visit the market in its opening week alone.
- Registered the market as a safe place for vulnerable people to come and visit and feel safe.
- Participated in the ‘come in and rest’ scheme which is a scheme to support the elderly whilst shopping in our city.
- Commissioned the “Burly Banksy” to produce Leeds United themed art work on the electric boxes on the outdoor market as part of the club’s centenary year celebrations.

## WE STILL NEED TO:

ACTIVITY	TIMESCALE	LEAD
Continue with community art projects especially on the outdoor market	Short to Medium Term	Head of Markets
Focus on family friendly events as we want to attract new customers as well as future generations.	Short to Medium Term	Head of Markets
Look at creating specific events for older customers to get involved with whilst at the market.	Short to Medium Term	Head of Markets
Do more to promote how the market supports health and sustainability via fresh food, affordable, healthy lifestyle, and plastic free. Re-engage with Leeds Public Health team to see how joint working could bring forward greater health benefits to Leeds residents.	Short to Medium Term	Chief Officer, Operations/Head of Markets
Play an active role in Leeds 2023 working with the Leeds Culture Trust to support events proposed for 2023.	Short to Medium Term	Chief Officer, Operations/Head of Markets
Continue to act as a satellite venue for major cultural activities in the city including the annual Light Night activities and the International Film Festival.	Short to Medium Term	Head of Markets
Continue to explore how the market can support the development of more local innovators and entrepreneurs through the use of low cost pop-up units, defined space for new products and services including digital, art and craft, creative maker space etc.	Short Term	Chief Officer, Operations/Head of Markets



## DELIVERING THE STRATEGY

Whilst the strategy sets out the vision for the market and outlines the work done so far and more importantly the work still to be done, there will need to be a delivery mechanism to drive forward the actions required to ensure progress is made and maintained.

The primary work on delivering the strategy will be done by the markets management team, leaning on and calling upon wider expertise both within and outside of the Council. The team will work together with market traders both individually, collectively and through market trader representatives. Real and meaningful discussion and engagement between traders and management will be central to successful delivery.

A market strategy action plan will be developed and this will set out the desired outcomes arising from this strategy, the activity needed to deliver and will set out specific measures to enable progress to be tracked and maintained (identified actions in this strategy have been categorised as 'Short, Medium and Long Term' as an indication of expected timescales).

The existing market management board will direct and oversee the work on the market strategy and will provide 'check and challenge' on progress and will seek to drive forward successful change.

## THE MARKET, 2026

In 2026, at the end of the period of this strategy the market will have strengthened its position as an iconic element of the city. The market will have evolved to be resilient to the changing pattern of retail in the UK's high streets, it will be a modern retail environment offering a first class experience for traders, shoppers and residents alike.

Will have an apart-hotel on George Street, offering connections to Victoria Gate. Inside refurbishments to units and structure of the market will be complete, offering a firstclass retail market experience supported by clear signage and wayfinding. Later opening to take advantage of the early evening economy will be commonplace at the market, for both food and non-food retailers.

A decision will have been reached and any changes implemented in relation to the future nature, scale and scope of the open market.

The market will still have a thriving food offer and will be well supported by a balanced range of goods and services, all offered by customer focussed, tech savvy traders who thrive on being subject matter experts in their chosen area. The market will still be a home for cash payments but also there will be an almost 100% level of traders accepting card payments so that customers have the option of cash-free shopping. The market will, along with the city, be moving to be

carbon neutral and will be a beacon of sustainable shopping for the city and the surrounding area.

The market will have maintained and developed its media profile and will still be attracting positive media coverage on a national level due to the quality and promotional activity from businesses within it. This will result in raising the markets profile to a wider audience in the hope that when they visit the experience and customer service they receive from businesses and events will entice them to return again.

Alongside the media profile the market and individual traders will have a strong social media presence which will be so important in attracting new customers to the market.

Promotion of the market will be a key activity as a driver to attracting footfall and as social media has become the digital word of mouth, the market and its traders will have a unified voice to showcase the market as a special place to shop, it will highlight that the market is more than a simple retail experience.

Above all it will still be a special place for residents of Leeds with a special resonance across all sectors of the community. It will remain a place for community and cultural events, both large and small. It will remain a place for Leeds, a place of Leeds.



**In 2026, at the end of the period of this strategy the market will have strengthened its position as an iconic element of the city. The market will have evolved to be resilient to the changing pattern of retail in the UK's high streets, it will be a modern retail environment offering a first class experience for traders, shoppers and residents alike.**

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