



The 154th Open at Royal Birkdale

Update Bulletin March 2026

Welcome and Overview

The 154th Open will be played at Royal Birkdale from 12-19 July 2026. Preparations have now moved into a key delivery phase with activity underway on site and a continued programme of engagement and business support in place across Southport.

This bulletin provides an update for residents, businesses and community groups, highlighting site progress, upcoming engagement activity, business support opportunities and key information as we move closer to the Championship.

Official updates for The 154th Open can also be found at TheOpen.com.

Site Build & Birkdale Common Access

Site activity is now underway, marking the start of the main construction phase for The Open. Build schedules are in place, with on-course construction confirmed to commence from 7th April 2026 with the installation of the main grandstands. This will be followed by the installation of marquees, hospitality structures and wider course infrastructure, with course dressing and final preparations taking place throughout May and June.

Visible progress is now taking place across the site as preparations continue at pace ahead of the Championship in July. To ensure public safety during this period, access restrictions are in place across parts of Birkdale Common. These measures are necessary to manage construction activity, vehicle movements and working areas.

Clear signage and information boards are in place, and residents and visitors are asked to follow all guidance and respect temporary closures.

Travel & Transport Information

As planning progresses, more detailed travel and transport information is now available. Residents, businesses and visitors are encouraged to view the latest updates on TheOpen.com and www.sefton.gov.uk/TheOpen2026 including information relating to spectator travel routes, local access and traffic management measures.

Further updates will continue to be shared as arrangements are finalised



Community Engagement & Liaison

Following the successful engagement activity earlier this year, the next Community Engagement Day will take place in May 2026. This event will provide residents and businesses with an opportunity to view updated plans, understand more detailed operational arrangements and speak directly with The R&A, Sefton Council and partner agencies.

Further details, including the confirmed date and venue, will be shared via www.sefton.gov.uk/TheOpen2026 and communication channels.

The R&A Community Liaison team continues to host weekly drop-in sessions, providing an accessible opportunity for residents and businesses to ask questions and receive updates. These sessions take place:

- Tuesdays at The Atkinson (10:00am–2:00pm)
- Wednesdays at Southport Market (afternoon and evening sessions)
- Thursdays at Southport Market (daytime sessions)

Please note that some timings may vary depending on operational requirements.

Southport Station & Station Approach Improvements

Works have now commenced on a major improvement project at Station Approach, the covered mall linking Southport Station with Chapel Street. The project, delivered by the site owners in collaboration with the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority, will improve the appearance, functionality and overall experience of this key gateway into the town centre.

The first phase of works began on 9th April and is scheduled for completion by 10th July, ahead of The Open.

During the works, pedestrian access through Station Approach will remain open at all times and all shops and businesses will continue to be accessible. Works are being carefully planned and phased to minimise disruption, with signage and information in place to guide visitors safely through the area.

This investment reflects a shared commitment to supporting Southport's town centre and ensuring the destination is ready to welcome visitors during the Championship period.



Open for Business - Skill & Business Support Opportunities

As we move closer to the Championship, a range of funded skills and business support opportunities continue to be available to help local businesses prepare and maximise the opportunities The Open brings.

In partnership with Southport College, a Customer Service & Inspiring Leaders Programme is being delivered to support the development of customer-facing teams across the visitor economy. This free four-week course is designed for aspiring or newly appointed team leaders working within hotels, visitor attractions, travel businesses and hospitality settings, with a focus on leadership, communication, complaint handling and delivering high-quality customer service.

Businesses are encouraged to nominate staff who would benefit from strengthening their leadership and customer experience skills ahead of the busy summer period. To book a place, businesses can contact employer.partnerships@southport.ac.uk or call 01704 392874.

Alongside this, InvestSefton, Sefton Council's Business Support and Investment service, continues to provide FREE support to local businesses. This includes one-to-one advice as well as a programme of expert-led workshops taking place in Southport, focusing on social media and next-level customer service.

Remaining workshop dates

11th & 12th May – Social Media
8th & 9th June – Next Level Customer Service

**Sessions take place on Monday evenings (5.30pm–8pm)
and Tuesday mornings (10am–12.30pm) at The Bold
Hotel, Southport**

This combined programme is designed not only to help businesses maximise opportunities during Championship week, but also to strengthen resilience and capacity ahead of increased activity during the build phase and throughout the summer.

To explore how InvestSefton can support your business, email investsefton@sefton.gov.uk or call 0151 934 3452.



The Open Legacy Fund – Community Projects Programme

The Open Legacy Fund has officially launched in Southport, using funding provided by The R&A to support projects that will create lasting environmental and social benefits for the town.

Not for profit community and voluntary organisations whose activities take place in Southport and directly benefit residents will be able to apply for grants of up to £20,000 when applications open in May.

Projects must align with one of four Greenlinks sustainability priorities:

- Low carbon solutions
- Moving towards a circular economy
- Protecting and enhancing nature
- Delivering meaningful social value

Applications will be reviewed by a panel including representatives from The R&A, Sefton Council and local stakeholders, with successful projects informed later this year.

Enquiries regarding the application process can be directed to greenlinks@randa.org.

This fund represents an important opportunity to ensure that The Open leaves a tangible, long-term legacy within Southport's communities.

Business Toolkit – Register Your Interest

The Open Business Toolkit is currently being finalised and will be published in May 2026.

The toolkit will provide practical guidance covering anticipated demand patterns, staffing considerations, licensing and compliance, marketing opportunities, and operational planning during both the build phase and Championship week.

Businesses are encouraged to register their interest in receiving the toolkit by contacting tourism@sefton.gov.uk. Registered businesses will receive early notification once the toolkit is released.



Supply Chain & Local Contract Opportunities

Significant supply chain opportunities are now open to local businesses as preparations continue.

Absolute Taste, the official catering partner for The Open, is seeking local food, beverage and equipment suppliers to support operations between 8th–20th July 2026. Requirements include the capacity to supply high volumes, compliance with food safety standards and operational flexibility, including overnight delivery capability.

Businesses interested in supplying Absolute Taste or operating concessions onsite can register via the official supplier information form.

In addition, local businesses are encouraged to register with tourism@sefton.gov.uk so they can promote their services to the significant number of contractors and suppliers who will be working in Southport as the Championship build continues.

Stay Updated/Contact Information

For the latest updates and information, please use the following channels:

- Sefton Council – The 154th Open: www.sefton.gov.uk/TheOpen2026
- Business Support Services & Advice - investsefton@sefton.gov.uk
- Official Championship Information: TheOpen.com
- R&A Community Enquiries: communitysupport@theopen.com
- Championship Enquiries (Sefton Council): tourism@sefton.gov.uk

Residents and businesses are encouraged to check the webpage regularly, as information will be updated as soon as it becomes available.

Looking Ahead

Over the coming weeks, construction activity will continue at Royal Birkdale, with infrastructure build progressing through April and May. At the same time, community engagement, transport planning and business support activity will continue to build, ensuring residents and businesses are informed, prepared and able to benefit from the opportunities The Open brings.

Further information will also be shared on the local volunteer and welcome programme, including how residents can get involved in supporting the visitor experience during the Championship. Alongside this, businesses will be encouraged to take part in destination marketing activity, helping to promote Southport and maximise the profile of the town in the lead up to and during The Open.

Further updates will be issued in May including confirmed details for the Community Engagement Day and additional operational information.