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#OurFutureAshton

February 2026

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Welcome

Welcome to the first #OurFutureAshton newsletter of 2026, providing updates for residents, businesses and visitors on the exciting plans for Ashton town centre. We've had a very busy few months since the previous newsletter, and are happy to be able to announce that we have appointed our main contractor and works are due to start on site shortly. More of our successful business grants applicants have also started work on site, with four businesses now having completed their shop front improvements, three further businesses on site and others due to start on site imminently. For more information on the Ashton project please visit: www.wigan.gov.uk/OurFutureAshton

Main contractor now appointed



We are very pleased to announce that following a tender process between October-November 2025, we have now received Cabinet approval to appoint Bethell Civils and Utilities (Bethell) as the main contractor for the #OurFutureAshton project. Bethell specialises in Integrated Infrastructure and has been delivering complex Civils and Utilities projects nationwide since 1865. Bethell has also been successful in the tendering for the Mayors Challenge Fund (MCF) project in Ashton and so we are delighted that these two projects will now be delivered jointly and co-ordinated to ensure the projects are delivered on time and with the least disruption possible. We understand that people will be concerned about the works and how they might impact on their journeys through the town centre or affect their businesses. With that in mind, we will be working with Bethell to ensure there is always someone available on-site who can answer questions and discuss your concerns. Here is what Bethell have said about being appointed:

“We're proud to have been appointed to deliver the Ashton public realm scheme. As a civils contractor, we recognise how much this project matters to the people who live, work and spend time here! It's an opportunity to enhance shared spaces, celebrate local identity, and create an environment the Ashton community can enjoy for years to come. It's more than infrastructure project; it's an investment in Ashton's future. We want residents to feel informed and involved, so if you have any questions during the works, please don't hesitate to speak with our site team, they're here to help and support the community throughout the project.”

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Programme update:

Exciting work is about to start in Ashton town from Monday 16th February 2026.

Wigan Council are committed to transforming the heart of Ashton in Makerfield for the benefit of residents, businesses and visitors, investing in re-establishing a market offer, revitalising the market square and town centre, and improving the safety on connecting roads and paths.

Wigan Council and Bethell PLC are working together to deliver:

- Improvements to the historic market site on **Garswood Street** which will create a new public square
- Enhancing the public realm on **Gerard Street** and **Garswood Street** and improving road safety with new/improved crossings
- Surface improvements to **Albert Street** car park
- New pedestrian crossing on **Liverpool Road** outside St Oswald's church
- Signalise the existing pedestrian crossing on **Bolton Road**
- Improvements to the uncontrolled crossing at the **Bryn Street South** junction.
- Off-road path improvements between Townfields and Old Road, including a new bridge over Millingford Brook
- Work with Cadent Gas to carry out essential improvement works to upgrade the gas pipes running along Gerard Street



The work will be delivered in phases, as per the table below. Daily works will be carried out during the hours of 7.00am-5.00pm Monday to Friday. 7.00am-1.00pm Saturdays and limited Sunday closures to allow carriageway resurfacing.

Please note that all planned roadworks are subject to change due to weather conditions or unforeseen circumstances. Any changes will be communicated via a range of methods including letters, newsletters, social media, displayed on the yellow advanced warning signs and on Wigan Council Roadworks Bulletin.

Phase/Activity	Start	Finish
Albert Street car park	19/02	07/04
Garswood St car park	08/04	21/05
Garswood St, Market Square & Market Approach	19/02	17/07
Gerard Street	19/02	06/11
Townfields to Old Road footpath and bridge	21/07	15/09
Liverpool Road crossing	21/07	01/09
Bolton Road & Bryn Road South crossings	01/09	28/10



Building Grants Scheme Update:

We are pleased to announce that our Building Grant scheme is now underway on multiple sites with the first shopfronts already completed on Gerard Street and Garswood Street. The scheme is providing support to local businesses and building owners to improve their buildings and the overall appearance of Ashton town centre and the Conservation Area.

16 properties were successful in securing provisional funding – meaning they demonstrated that they had a high-quality scheme and the required match investment. In line with our Community Wealth Building aspirations, most of the design and construction work has utilised local architects and builders based within Wigan Borough.



In our last newsletter, we updated you that Cupcakery and Vapour Trader were the first shopfronts to start improvement works. These schemes have now completed as have several others, including, Indulge Hair and Ashton Thai Spa (pictured).

Our project managers, Creative Heritage, have also continued to work closely with the remaining grant applicants to support them through the grant agreement process.

Overall, 12 of the properties have now secured a place in Round 1 of the scheme, with most of those properties already having secured planning approval. So, over the next few weeks and months, you'll start to see for yourselves all the hard work coming to life in Ashton town centre, with this workstream expected to be completed by summer 2026.

We have also been working with Creative Heritage to launch a bi-monthly blog post that delves into the history and heritage of the buildings in the scheme. If you're interested in finding out more, about the history of Ashton, please visit: www.wigan.gov.uk/BuildingHistoryBlog

To keep up to date with progress on our regeneration proposals and to subscribe to these newsletters, please visit: www.wigan.gov.uk/OurFutureAshton



Public Artwork update

The #OurFutureAshton scheme is funding new street-art commissions which are being developed to celebrate the town's heritage, boost footfall for local businesses and enhance the vibrancy of the town centre. These artworks will complement the new Ashton Square development and help create a place that reflects the pride, history and values of the local community.

The first artwork created last year by Scott Wilcock of Snow Graffiti is already proving a hit, sparking lots of positive conversation on social media. You can find it just off Gerard Street, on the side of Andy's All Day Breakfast.

Since then, there has been plenty of activity happening behind the scenes. We're pleased to share that Tasha Whittle, a multidisciplinary artist and founder of the Manchester-based public art organisation Outhouse, has been appointed as the project manager for the upcoming commissions. Tasha brings extensive experience in delivering high-profile street art projects across the region, including the Rochdale Uprising Mural Festival and collaborations with Salford City Council. Her practice spans mural painting, drawing, screen printing, site-specific installations and interactive sound sculptures, often created through collaborative community processes. Tasha will work closely with Katrina Houghton, Assistant Business Partner for Arts Development at Wigan Council. Katrina has worked on a range of major public and outdoor art projects and leads on nurturing local artistic talent and developing cultural programmes and partnerships across the borough.

Together, they will be supporting the commissioning of artists and ensuring strong local involvement through a new Ashton Public Art Panel. This panel will include representatives from the Ashton Innovation Board, local businesses, schoolchildren and young people ensuring decisions are shaped by people who know Ashton best.

Get Involved

We are inviting local residents and business owners with an interest in art or Ashton's heritage to join the panel or take part in the next engagement session.

When: Tuesday 10th March 2026

Time: 4:30–6:00pm

Where: St Thomas's Church

If you would like to attend or express interest in joining the panel, please email Katrina at: ourfutureashton@wigan.gov.uk using: "Public Art Panel" as the subject of your email

We look forward to working with the community to help shape the future artwork that will brighten Ashton for years to come.



Image credit: Outhouse.
Tasha Whittle