

Report Purpose:

Footfall Analysis

Author:

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Footfall data for December 2025 and January 2026 reflects both seasonal trends and sustained local activity. Macclesfield benefits annually from a programme of established Town Council events, including Step into Christmas, the Twilight Market, 2 Treacle Markets and the Lantern Parade in early January, all of which are recognised as strong and consistent draws.

However, while these events have historically delivered increased footfall, performance in 2025/26 is notably stronger than in the previous year, suggesting that additional factors may be contributing. One such factor is the Elmer Trail, which ran from late November through to 12 January, overlapping with both the festive period and the early weeks of January.

All comparisons are based on like-for-like data sets, ensuring statistical accuracy.

December 2025 Performance

Year to Date

- Macclesfield: +2.5% (2024: -2.3%)
- North & Yorkshire: +0.2% (2024: -1.3%)
- UK: +0.2% (2024: -0.7%)

By the end of December, Macclesfield had achieved strong year-to-date growth, outperforming both regional and national benchmarks. This represents a significant improvement on the previous year, despite similar core festive events being delivered in both periods.

December YoY (Festive Period)

- Macclesfield: +11.3% (2024: -2.8%)
- North & Yorkshire: +3.2% (2024: +1.2%)
- UK: +2.2% (2024: +0.5%)

Macclesfield recorded a substantial uplift during December, well above regional and national averages. While events such as Step into Christmas, Treacle Market and the Twilight Market have consistently driven footfall in previous years, the scale of the year-on-year improvement suggests that the additional presence of the Elmer Trail may have enhanced overall impact by encouraging repeat visits and extended dwell time across the town centre.

Month on Month (November → December)

- Macclesfield: +1.6%
- North & Yorkshire: +1.1%

- UK: +2.2%

Month-on-month increases align with the festive build-up and the start of both Town Council events and Treacle markets and the Elmer Trail.

January 2026 Performance

Year to Date

- Macclesfield: +3.8% (January 2025: -2.3%)
- North & Yorkshire: -2.9%
- UK: -3.3%

Despite January traditionally being a challenging trading period, Macclesfield strengthened its year-to-date position, outperforming both regional and national trends.

January Year on Year

- Macclesfield: +3.8%
- North & Yorkshire: -2.9%
- UK: -3.3%

Macclesfield continued to achieve positive year-on-year growth in January. While the Lantern Parade has historically provided a post-Christmas boost, the continuation of the Elmer Trail until 12 January may have helped sustain footfall beyond a single event day, supporting activity across a longer period.

Month on Month (December → January)

- Macclesfield: -14.8%
- North & Yorkshire: -18.9%
- UK: -21.8%

All areas experienced a post-festive decline. However, Macclesfield's reduction was less pronounced than regional and national averages, indicating stronger retention of visitors into January.

Overall Assessment

Town Council events such as Step into Christmas, the Twilight Market, Treacle Markets and the Lantern Parade continue to be reliable and well-established drivers of footfall.

The scale of improvement in 2025/26 compared with 2024/25, despite these events being delivered in both years, suggests that additional activity is influencing performance.

The Elmer Trail, running continuously from late November to mid-January, is a plausible contributing factor, particularly in terms of repeat visits, family engagement, and extended dwell time.

The combined effect of anchor events (single-day or short-period peaks) and a longer-running attraction appears to have supported stronger and more resilient footfall across both December and January.

Key Lessons

- Established events remain reliable drivers of footfall
- Step into Christmas, the Twilight Market, Treacle Markets and the Lantern Parade continue to attract strong numbers year after year.
- These events provide predictable peaks in footfall and help maintain Macclesfield's town-centre vitality.

Longer-running attractions can enhance impact

The Elmer Trail, running from late November to 12 January, appears to have contributed to higher footfall compared with previous years, particularly in December and the first half of January.

Its continuous presence likely encouraged repeat visits, extended dwell time, and family engagement.

Post-festive resilience is achievable

Even after seasonal peaks, Macclesfield's footfall remained higher than regional and national benchmarks.

Combining anchor events with a trail or exhibition that spans multiple weeks appears to help mitigate typical post-Christmas declines.

Next Steps

- Consider running a new trail or themed event next year
- A fresh trail could maintain momentum, attract repeat visitors, and provide an opportunity to experiment with different themes or interactive elements.
- Careful planning around timing, duration, and promotion will be key to success.
- Integrate with core Town Council events
- Pairing a new trail with Step into Christmas, Twilight Market, or the Lantern Parade could maximise overall footfall and ensure continuity with the town's established festive programme.

Proposal: Given the strong performance this year and the likely positive contribution of the Elmer Trail, the Town Council should consider running a similar multi-week

trail next winter, potentially with a different theme to keep engagement high and continue building Macclesfield's profile as a vibrant, family-friendly destination. The cost would be £32,500 and subject to Wild in art having the availability,