

Section 1: Town Centre Economy

PLANS APPROVED FOR YATES'S SITE



This is an artists' impression of the building that is to be built on the site of burnt-out Yates's wine lodge in Talbot Square.

Planners approved the application by the Manchester-based Northold Group to develop the site with a new, art deco-inspired building that will incorporate two national restaurant chains, TGI Friday and Cosmo Buffet.

The site has remained derelict since the historic Yates's building was destroyed in a devastating blaze three years ago, which caused millions of pounds worth of damage and wrecked a number of nearby businesses.

The proposal represents a £3m investment in Blackpool and will complement the recent public realm improvements that have been made in and around Talbot Square. Work is expected to start this summer.

Once let, it is expected the development will create up to 70 full and part-time jobs.

BLACKPOOL TOWN TEAM

Discussions are underway with various private sector partners over the establishment of a “town team” to drive forward growth and investment in Blackpool town centre.

The formation of town teams is a key recommendation in the recently-published Portas Review on the future of high streets.

It is also one of the criteria that must be met in order to bid for Government funding that is now being made available on the back of the Portas Review.

It is proposed that the Town Team should be private sector-led and comprise property landlords, large and small shopkeepers, Council representatives and other local businesses.

Once established, the team would take “ownership” of town centre action plans and complement the work of the Blackpool Town Centre BID by providing a more strategic approach to town centre investment.

Among the private sector companies that have expressed a keen interest in joining the team are the new owners of the Hounds Hill shopping centre, local banks and accountancy firms, as well as local and national retailers.

PORTAS PILOTS

A total of 371 towns applied to receive a share of the £1.2m made available by the Government following the publication of Mary Portas’ review of Britain’s high streets.

The 12 towns that are successful in this first round of funding are expected to be announced by the end of May. The Government has already declared that there will be a second round of bidding.

Blackpool did not table a bid in the first round, but (as reported at the March BBLG meeting) the Council has received £100k from the High Street Innovation Fund, based on the percentage of empty shops.

A number of ideas are being considered as to how best to utilise this funding in order to stimulate activity in the town centre.

VIVA SHOWBAR

A new town centre show-bar is scheduled to open during the summer in the former Mecca building at the junction of Bank Hey Street and the Promenade.

Viva incorporates a first-floor cabaret venue with seating for over 600 people. Family shows are planned each weekend throughout the summer season.

The venue will also be available for events, private parties and corporate functions.

We are planning to hold a Blackpool Business Leadership Group meeting at the venue later in the year to give businesses an opportunity to see the new investment at first hand.

Section 2: Enterprise & Funding Opportunities

COASTAL COMMUNITIES FUND

A number of local bids have been made to the first round of the Coastal Communities Fund.

The fund, which is worth just short of £24million over the next year, has been created to provide struggling coastal communities across the country with money to support new opportunities and particularly those that create new jobs.

Grants of between £50,000 and £2m are available (both capital and revenue). The bids that we are aware of include:

South Beach

The Groundwork organisation submitted an application on behalf of a consortium of private, public and third sector partners who want create a more sustainable economic future for the South Beach area of Blackpool.

Central to the partnership are the South Beach Business Forum, Chamber of Commerce, and Federation of Small Businesses.

The bid, which is for just over £1.2m, estimates the creation of over 200 jobs through a range of activities including:

- Use of key public assets including the new Southpoint youth hub and the Blackpool Enterprise Centre to provide coordinated business support that will help stimulate and support private sector and social enterprise jobs and growth.
- Targeted creation of jobs in the hospitality, retail and cultural sectors and their supply chains, and also in craft manufacturing and leisure
- Personalised interventions including bespoke skills development, job brokerage and in-work support will ensure that new jobs are accessible to local residents.
- Improvements to the physical environment, investment in creative industries, and establishing a cultural focus for South Beach
- Engagement with Blackpool's new community television channel, use of conventional and social media, and a dedicated programme of activities and events that will increase footfall in South Beach and support its businesses.

Sustainable Energy Training Centre

This is a Wyre Council-led project to establish a sustainable energy training centre in Fleetwood. Developed in partnership with Blackpool & The Fylde College and the private sector, it is envisaged that the centre will train existing employed/unemployed local people in renewable/sustainable technologies, providing apprenticeship and technician level qualifications, to capitalise on the existing and growing renewable energy industries, both land-based and offshore.

Improved Conference Facilities

A Marketing Blackpool-led bid to redevelop the conference areas of the Winter Gardens including Spanish Hall, Baronial Hall, Renaissance Room and Windsor/Hoyles Bar

CELEBRATING SUCCESS

Apprentices and employers on the Fylde Coast joined together to celebrate outstanding achievement.

Around 350 people attended the event at The Tower Ballroom, organised by Blackpool & The Fylde College.

The College currently has over 600 apprentices employed with local and regional companies.

At the event, "Apprentice of the Year" awards were presented in each of the vocational areas. "Ambassador" awards were also presented to leading employers in each category.

The prize for Employer of the Year went to **Sandcastle Waterpark**.

WORK PLACEMENTS

Social Enterprise Solutions has now completed the work experience placement initiative which was presented to the Blackpool Business Leadership Group in January.

A number of businesses came forward after that meeting and offered to take on unemployed candidates. A total of 120 people were offered work placements over the three-month duration of the scheme.

Social Enterprise Solutions has asked me to pass on its thanks to those businesses that took part.

NEW ENTERPRISE ZONES

Every enterprise zone in England can now offer tax breaks to businesses as soon as they move on to the site, the Local Government Secretary Eric Pickles has confirmed.

The discount provides up to 100 per cent relief to new businesses for five years, with the Government meeting the costs.

Enterprise zones in the North West include the BAE sites at Warton and Samlesbury.

CONGRATULATIONS....

To Blackpool-based Danbro which won the Commitment To Skills Award at the Lancashire Business View magazine Red Rose Awards, held at the Winter Gardens. Danbro was also short-listed in the Financial Business Of The Year category.

Section 3: Visitor Economy

BLACKPOOL TOURISM ACADEMY

A number of Blackpool's leading tourism businesses have joined forces to make a £1m bid to launch a Tourism Academy.

Merlin Entertainments, Pleasure Beach Resort, Blackpool Zoo, Cuerden Leisure (operators of the Winter Gardens and two piers), Sandcastle Waterpark and Blackpool Transport Services have submitted the bid to the Government's new Employer Ownership of Skills (EOS) fund in a concerted attempt to raise skills and qualifications within Blackpool's visitor economy.

The companies - all members of the Blackpool Business Leadership Group - are working in partnership with Blackpool Council and Blackpool & The Fylde College on the proposal that will deliver apprenticeships, customer service training and various accredited excellence, leadership and management programmes.

Between them, the partners employ over 1500 year-round permanent staff, rising to almost 2,500 in peak holiday season.

It is projected that 40 new tourism apprenticeships will be created and over 1,000 local people will benefit from skills and training initiatives over the first two years.

Whilst the skills programme will be focused on the development of the consortium workforce, it is anticipated that there will be spin-off benefits identified for smaller tourism-dependent businesses across the area.

The tourism economy remains a major driver of Blackpool's overall economy, supporting around 11,000 employees and accounting for an estimated one quarter of all businesses in the town.

However, low productivity remains a major concern with a high proportion of jobs being part-time, with relatively low wages and high levels of seasonality.

The bid to the EOS sets out a blueprint for tackling the skills deficit and promoting the tourism as a genuinely rewarding career path for residents. This approach includes:

- Developing a sustainable skills partnership via a new group training association, the Blackpool Tourism Academy
- Developing an integrated approach to workforce development in areas of common skills needs, sharing staff expertise and industry best practice
- Designing a new, nationally-recognised intermediate and advanced apprenticeship in tourism practice

The consortium, which will invest over £220,000 of its own resources alongside the fund, is likely to learn whether its bid has been successful by the end of July.

The chair of the BBLG has since written to the Tourism Minister and local MPs to garner support for the bid. Paul Maynard MP has, in turn, written to the Business Minister Vince Cable urging him to back the application for funding.

OPEN GOLF

Open Golf organisers have given a strong indication that the championship tournament will return to Royal Lytham in future years.

The tournament is being staged at Royal Lytham between July 19 and 22 this year for the first time in over 10 years, and the R&A says it has firm plans to return.

The course has undergone a series of modifications with around 200 yards added to the overall length of the course and two new tented villages being constructed on the 400-acre site.

A total of 180,000 spectators attended the Open when it was last at Lytham in 2001 and organisers are hoping to better that. Corporate hospitality sales are already well ahead of last year.

MARKETING LANCASHIRE

Restaurateur Paul Heathcote has taken over as chairman of the recently-formed Marketing Lancashire.

One of his first priorities is to help appoint a chief executive to replace Mike Wilkinson, who retired earlier this year. Marketing Lancashire replaces the former Lancashire & Blackpool Tourist Board.

Section 4: Centenary Illuminations

GRUNDY EXHIBITION



A new exhibition marking the centenary of Blackpool Illuminations opens at The Grundy Art Gallery on Saturday 26th May.

The exhibition, entitled *ON: A re-imagining of Blackpool Illuminations* has been created by British sculpture Brian Griffiths and features elements of the Illuminations from the archive collection such as "Blue Face" (pictured left).

The show opens on Saturday 26 May and continues until July 28th.

FRIENDS OF THE ILLUMINATIONS

A Friends of Blackpool Illuminations group is now in place contributing ideas to the development of the annual illuminations display.

The group was formed towards the end of last year at the suggestion of Harts Amusements business with a view to forming stronger relationships between Blackpool businesses and the Illuminations team.

The group met at the Lightworks depot for the first time at the end of March. They met with members of the Illuminations team and discussed ideas for fund-raising as well as getting a preview of some of the new features for the Centenary display in 2012. More businesses will be encouraged to join the group as it develops.

The Friends group has also established its own Facebook page – this can be viewed at: <http://www.facebook.com/illuminationsfriends>

IN THE LIMELIGHT

Members of the public are being offered the chance to be part of the 2012 Illuminations display.

People are being invited to buy a place for their image in a new Centenary Heads section. This follows on from a Celebrity Heads section which was produced for last year's display and included the likes of Keith Lemon, Dame Shirley Bassey and Ken Dodd.

A total of 210 places are available with individual portraits being produced in "pop art" style.

Inclusion in the Centenary Heads section, which will be located on the cliffs at the north end of the five mile display, will cost £100.

Section 5: General Information

FAIRNESS COMMISSION

The newly-established Blackpool Fairness Commission has held its first meeting. Over 70 people attended the event at the Winter Gardens which aimed to address issues of unfairness and inequality within the town.

Blackpool Council Leader, Cllr Simon Blackburn opened the event and said that one of the key aims of the Commission was to get people involved in the decision-making process and thus ensure that the Council was able to deliver services with maximum positive impact.

The event also heard from Professor Richard Wilkinson, an internationally-renowned expert on the effects of inequality on society and individuals. The Professor spoke about how income inequality, as well as many other forms of inequality, can affect the life chances and health of people within our society.

His main message to the Commission was that the smaller the gap between rich and poor the better off the society.

More than 80 people have already “signed up” as Fairness Commissioners including a range of local businesses. These include:

- Number One Hotels
- Stay Blackpool
- Great Places Housing Group
- Bay Housing Association
- Blackpool, Fylde & Wyre Credit Union
- Blackpool BID
- Federation of Small Businesses
- North and Western Lancashire Chamber of Commerce

If you would like to find out more about the Fairness Commission, view the website www.blackpool.gov.uk/fairness where you will find up to date information on the progress of the Commission and get an insight to some of the issues facing the town.

INVITATION TO OPEN DAY

A4e, which is delivering the Work Programme in the Blackpool area, is inviting members of the Blackpool Business Leadership Group to an Open Day at its new offices at Prudential House, Topping Street, Blackpool.

The event, which is being held between **11am and 2pm on Wednesday 30th May**, will give employers an opportunity to meet A4e’s specialist advisors and trainers, and discuss recruitment support.

NSPCC APPEAL LAUNCHED

The NSPCC has unveiled a £2.5m fundraising campaign to help vulnerable children and families in Blackpool.

As part of the *Turning The Tide For Children* campaign, the charity is intending to open a new service centre in Layton to combat cases of child abuse.

The NSPCC is relying on a huge fund-raising drive to ensure that a range of support services are delivered to those who need them.

Fund-raising events in May included the annual Blackpool 10k Fun Run, a civic day and a concert on North Pier.

The Glitter Ball event, which was scheduled to be held on May 19 at the Tower Ballroom, but which was postponed due to the clash with Blackpool FC's play-off final at Wembley, will now take place on **November 24**, again at the Tower Ballroom.



AWARDS 2012

The annual celebration of youth enterprise across Blackpool and the Fylde Coast will take place on Thursday 28th June at Blackpool Football Club.

The HERO awards recognise the hard work, positive attitudes and entrepreneurial spirit of 11-19s and the event is supported and attended by teachers, parents and businesses alike.

The awards are being supported this year by the Premier League Enterprise Academy at Blackpool Football Club, but there are various partnership and sponsorship opportunities available to businesses.

Any business interested in sponsoring an award or offering In-kind sponsorship in the form of trophies or other prizes, design and printing, room decorations, refreshments or volunteers to help staff the event should contact: Alison Sadler on 07743 851 975 or alison.sadler@unity.blackpool.org.uk

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