



BLACKPOOL BUSINESS LEADERSHIP GROUP

Business Partnerships Report – September 28th, 2012

Section 1: Enterprise & Funding Opportunities

EMPLOYEE OWNERSHIP OF SKILLS FUND

Blackpool's bid to secure £1m to develop a Tourism Academy and tourism apprenticeship scheme has been unsuccessful.

A consortium of businesses including Pleasure Beach, Merlin, Sandcastle, Zoo, Crown Leisure and Blackpool Transport put forward the bid to the Employer Ownership of Skills fund to develop skills within Blackpool's visitor economy.

A total of 269 applications were made across the country, seeking over £400m of public investment. Of that total, 157 were appraised on various criteria including value for money, private sector leverage, partnership, innovation, quality of training and feasibility. The Blackpool bid made it to the final stage of evaluation.

Initial feedback suggests that it scored very highly on innovation, but lost marks in other areas such as the level of private sector leverage. However, the consortium is being encouraged to strengthen the bid and then re-submit it into the second bidding round, which is expected to be announced over the next few weeks.

Pleasure Beach, which led the bid, has already expressed its willingness to work with partners on a revised submission.

- Meanwhile, Bournemouth is to host Europe's first National Coastal Tourism Academy after securing £2m over two years from the Coastal Communities Fund. The academy is being delivered by the School of Tourism at Bournemouth University in collaboration with Bournemouth Council and local tourism businesses.

COASTAL COMMUNITIES FUND

A Blackpool-based bid to the Coastal Communities Fund was submitted on September 21st. The bid, entitled "South Beach Renaissance" is being led by Groundwork on behalf of a cross-sector partnership committed to reversing the decline in the South Beach area. It seeks to target three areas of activity:

- Business and social enterprise support to help new and existing businesses to become more sustainable
- Development of training and skills to help South Beach residents access job opportunities
- Revitalising the image of South Beach, increasing footfall and attracting new trade into the area

Activities will be focused on three existing assets – the New Blackpool Enterprise Centre on Lytham Road; the new Oracle youth enterprise hub adjacent to Palatine School; and Motocare, a high street outlet that will provide retail and creative space for new ventures.

The total bid amounts to £1.3m, comprising of £1.13m of revenue and a further £187k of capital.

Among the bid partners are Blackpool Council, Blackpool & The Fylde College, Blackpool Bay Area Co, Lancashire Constabulary, South Beach Business Forum, Federation of Small Businesses, North & Western Lancashire Chamber of Commerce, The Volunteer Centre and Social Enterprise Solutions.

APPRENTICESHIP ROADSHOW

An apprenticeship roadshow is being staged at The Hilton Hotel between 8am and 10am on November 14th.

The roadshow will give employers an insight into how to get involved in apprenticeship schemes and give them an opportunity to discuss training requirements with an apprenticeship advisor.

Places for the event are being allocated on a first come, first served basis. If you are interested in attending email Kathie at admin@lancsforum.co.uk

- Blackpool Council has pledged its support to the North West TUC Charter for Young People, which seeks to improve employment prospects for young people by providing them with sustainable apprenticeships or work experience. The Council has already taken on 12 young people since launching its own apprenticeship scheme in April, with a further eight to be taken on later this year.

CREATIVE PEOPLE & PLACES

A consortium made up of Blackpool Council, Blackpool Coastal Housing Association, Merlin Entertainments Group, Wyre Council, and the Grand Theatre has made a successful bid to the Arts Council of England securing the maximum award possible of £3million from the Creative People and Places Programme.

The consortium's proposal, entitled *Playground of Wonders, Daring Delights*, will enable people in Blackpool and Wyre to experience high-quality arts events and activities which celebrate and build on our seaside entertainment heritage, magnificent venues and stunning coastal and natural landscape.

As well as addressing inequalities in cultural participation, the programme will enable local arts organisations to become more sustainable. The consortium, chaired by Blackpool Coastal Housing Association, is now working on a detailed three-year business plan that has to be approved by the Arts Council before the full award can be drawn down.

FUNDING FOR LOCAL ENTERPRISE PARTNERSHIPS

Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) are set to benefit from more than £24m of funding over the next three years under plans unveiled by the Government.

An interim £5m funding package will be made available immediately for all LEPs to draw upon for the remainder of this financial year. This will be followed by up to £250,000 per LEP per year for the following two years.

The funding is intended to help the Enterprise Partnerships develop their economic growth priorities.

There are 39 LEPs across England, including Lancashire. Each LEP is made up of businesses working in partnership with a combination of local authorities.

REGIONAL GROWTH FUND

A Government Public Accounts Committee has revealed that only £60m of the flagship Regional Growth Fund has been distributed to front line projects so far.

The £1.4bn fund was launched in June 2010 by Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg as a key Government strategy for stimulating investment and job creation.

Blackpool's bid in support of a second phase of the Central Business District was unsuccessful in the first competitive bidding round.

The CBI (Confederation of British Industry) is pressing the Government to simplify the RGF application process.

LEARNING DISABILITY SURVEY – LAST CHANCE TO PARTICIPATE

The deadline for local businesses to give their views on the employment of people with learning disabilities is midnight on **Friday 28th September**.

If you haven't already done so, can you please try to complete before the deadline (it only takes a few minutes to complete). The survey can be found at:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/NH8Z7VK>

The survey is being co-ordinated by Blackpool Council and is aimed at removing some of the barriers to recruiting and employing people with learning disabilities.

The results of the survey will be fed back to the November meeting of the Blackpool Business Leadership Group.

Section 2: Town Centre Economy

CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT UPDATE

Work is now underway on the first phase of the £220m Central Business District (Talbot Gateway) development.

It is being delivered by Muse Developments in partnership with Blackpool Council between 2012 and 2014.

This first phase sees Talbot Road multi-storey car park fully refurbished with new retail units created, a new Sainsbury's foodstore with parking and the development of new Blackpool Council offices.

As part of the preliminary works, Swainson Street car park is to permanently close to the public. People will only be able to use the car park up until October 1, after which it will close so that development work can officially begin on the site of the new Blackpool Council offices.

The nearby Seed Street car park will remain open to the public until November (date to be confirmed) when work will start on the Sainsbury's site.

During the next couple of weeks, building contractors will erect hoardings around part of the site, displaying images of the new developments and setting out the economic benefits the project will bring to the town.

Key facts:

Talbot Road Multi-Storey:

- Car park will close on November 5
- A full refurbishment will take place before it re-opens in July 2013
- Retail units will be created on the ground floor

Council Offices

- 125,000sq ft building, with works expected to start on site in October 2012 with completion by April 2014

Sainsbury's

- Work due to commence in December 2012 with completion by January 2014
- 400 jobs to be created in store
- 600 new car parking spaces

A Central Business District website is also to be established in the next few weeks to enable businesses to keep up to date with the development as it progresses.

In the meantime, you can view details (including a detailed map of the development) at www.blackpool.gov.uk/cbd

VACANT SHOPS

The Association of Town Centre Managers (ATCM) has written to the Local Data Company, urging it to stop releasing "fatally flawed" retail vacancy figures.

The LDC regularly names Blackpool as one of the worst town centres in the country for empty shop units, citing figures as high as 25%.

The association is challenging the figures, claiming that the town centre boundaries that are used by the LDC for Blackpool and various other places have not been updated since 2004. In Blackpool's case, the vacancy rates include areas such as Central Drive that are not part of the "core" town centre.

Our own vacancy rate count for Blackpool town centre compiled at the end of August was 16.6%.

FUTURE HIGH STREET X-FUND

Another pool of money aimed at regenerating high streets across the UK has been launched by the Government. The Future High Street X-Fund is partly aimed at those town centres that missed out on the early round of the Portas Pilot Fund.

The £1m fund will be shared among the applicants that can demonstrate the most innovative ways to re-invigorate their town centres.

The Blackpool Town Team is working with the Town Centre BID to determine whether a credible bid can be made to the X fund. The deadline for applications is early December.

Section 3: Visitor Economy

PLEASURE BEACH INVESTMENT

Pleasure Beach Resort has announced a £5m investment in a new Wallace & Gromit-themed ride. The Thrill-O-Matic family ride will replace the Gold Mine which closed at the end of the 2011 season.



The ride, which is now under construction and due to open in time for Easter 2013, has been part-funded by a £2m loan from the Growing Places Fund, facilitated by Lancashire Enterprise Partnership.

Creators Aardman are working with the Pleasure Beach's own design and engineering team on the attraction which will take a trip through the Wallace & Gromit film collection including A Grand Day Out, The Wrong Trousers, A Close Shave and A Matter of Loaf and Death.

TURNING TIDES SUMMIT

See attached briefing paper on the summit held at the Winter Gardens earlier this month.

- The Sea Life Centre in Blackpool took a lead role in Blackpool's first organised "beach clean". The event took place on Central Beach on September 15. All businesses in the Blackpool Business Leadership Group were invited to join the event, arranged in association with the Marine Conservation Society. The clean-up was partly aimed at making people aware of the impact of discarded litter on Blackpool's beaches.

TOURISM MINISTER STANDS DOWN

John Penrose has stepped down as the Government's tourism and heritage minister - a role in which the Weston-super-Mare MP had served for more than two years.

The Department for Culture, Media and Sport has confirmed the tourism portfolio will no longer be a "standalone position", with one of the current ministers expected to take on the briefs covered by Mr Penrose.

At the request of the Blackpool Business Leadership Group, Mr Penrose visited Blackpool last November and spent a day meeting with businesses and Council officers to look at ways in which Government could help Blackpool maintain the momentum gained in recent years.

Section 4: General Information

WARBURTONS CLOSURE

Warburtons has announced plans to close its bakery in Blackpool. The company has entered into a 90-day consultation period with 73 employees over the proposed closure of the site in Brinwell Road. It is not clear as yet whether the distribution depot on Blackpool Business Park will be affected.

Blackpool Council has committed to providing whatever support is possible to assist staff at risk and Gordon Marsden, MP for Blackpool South has written to the company asking what redeployment opportunities there might be.

Warburtons employs about 5,000 employees in 12 bakeries and 13 depots across the UK, and produces over two million bakery products each day.

WEBSITE DEVELOPMENTS

www.bblq.co.uk

The Blackpool Business Leadership Group website is now live at the above address. It includes reports on activities involving the group, an archive of Partnership Reports and notes of meetings, and a directory of participating businesses.

I would appreciate it if individual businesses could check their directory entries – you will find them by clicking on the “About The Group” section on the home page and then clicking on “Associated Businesses” in the left hand column. Please send any amendments directly to me at philip.welsh@blackpool.gov.uk

www.BlackpoolUnlimited.com

We are working closely with the Department of Business, Industry and Skills to ensure that the BlackpoolUnlimited.com business support website remains fit for purpose when the national Business Link website is closed down at the end of October.

The Government is migrating all online business support to a new Gov.UK platform with effect from November.

BlackpoolUnlimited.com is unique in that it currently offers a mixture of local business support and enterprise activities online, as well as a comprehensive feed to the Business Link site. In order to ensure a smooth transition, BIS has designated the BlackpoolUnlimited.com site as one of a handful of digital partners across the UK.

www.Blackpool.gov.uk

Blackpool Council's main website is to undergo a major overhaul in coming months.

Although business support is largely housed on the BlackpoolUnlimited.com site, the Blackpool.gov site does incorporate various business-related applications including information relating to licensing, planning, commercial waste, business rates and procurement.

In order to gauge the level of business usage of the Blackpool.gov site, a short online survey will be sent to all members of the Blackpool Business Leadership Group at the start of October.

I would appreciate it if you could take a few minutes to complete the survey when the link is sent out, as it will help the Council to shape the site so that it is as “business friendly” as possible.

WEST COAST MAINLINE

The deal to hand the West Coast Main Line rail franchise to First Group remains on hold following a legal challenge by current operator Virgin Trains.

Virgin launched the challenge after losing its attempt to continue operating the route. Under the terms of the competition, the new arrangements are intended to start in December.

It is understood that both bidders are committed to the reinstatement of direct Blackpool North to London services from 2013.

FOXHALL NEIGHBOURHOOD

A new 400-home development is to go ahead in the heart of Blackpool.

A preferred developer has now been chosen to deliver Blackpool Council’s £50m vision of creating a distinctive, residential-led neighbourhood by the seafront.

The development will take place on the area of land between Central Drive and Tyldesley Road; Princess Street and Rigby Road, to both the west and east of Seaside’s Way.

The site, which has been used as railway sidings, municipal incinerator and for gas production, will need to be cleaned up before any development can begin. A limited amount of demolition work within the former gas holder site has already taken place. The major part of the remediation contract will start at the beginning of 2013 and will take about nine months to complete.

Hollinwood Homes, part of the Marcus Worthington Group, has been chosen to develop the site after a detailed design competition.

There will be opportunities for local companies to be involved in the development, as well as a commitment to employing local people and creating apprenticeship roles.

The site will be developed in phases over approximately the next 10 years, with homes being built progressively on both sides of Seaside’s Way and the link between them along Rigby Road being improved and landscaped.

In the first phase, 70 homes will be built for Great Places Housing Group to be rented to local working families but the rest of the homes will be for sale.

THE BIBAS

The Ink Squid – specialists in provision of compatible printer ink and toner cartridges for branded printers – flew the flag for Blackpool at the annual Lancashire BIBA Awards.

The company, based on Sycamore Trading Estate, Blackpool, won E-business Of The Year.

Other Fylde Coast winners included:

- Creative Business Of The Year: Kaos Adventure, Lytham
- Exporter Of The Year: Andrews Bowen, Singleton
- Manufacturer Of The Year: Universal Products, Kirkham
- Entrepreneur Of The Year: David Andrews, Andrews Bowen
- Businesswoman Of The Year: Janet Thornton, Inspired Energy, Kirkham
- Inspiring Business Of The Year: Gretone Engineering, St Annes
- Business Of The Year: Universal Products, Kirkham

This year's BIBAs moved to Preston to mark Guild Year, but is expected to return to Blackpool in 2013.

Philip Welsh
Head of Partnerships & Business Development