



# BLACKPOOL BUSINESS LEADERSHIP GROUP

## Business Partnerships Report – September 30, 2016

### Section 1: Visitor Economy

#### **ILLUMINATIONS SWITCH-ON WEEKEND**

##### Friday Night Switch-On

Blackpool's Illuminations season got off to a spectacular start with one of the best-attended Switch-On events in years.

Produced in association with Nickelodeon and Club MTV, the concert showcased a star-studded musical line-up including The Vamps, Fleur East, Diversity, Fatman Scoop, DJ Fresh and some of the best of Blackpool's home-grown talent including 15-year-old Verity Kinnon.

The actual Switch-On was carried out in front of almost 20,000 spectators by Dame Barbara Windsor, who had previously revealed that turning on the Illuminations was a lifelong ambition. You can view the highlights of the Switch-On celebration on this link: <https://www.youtube.com/embed/6YQk4zHIE64>



The ticket ballot for the 2017 Switch-On is already open and has, to date, attracted more than 8,000 applications.

##### Nickelodeon SLIMEFEST

The UK's first ever SLIMEFEST took place in the Empress Ballroom on the Saturday of Switch-On weekend.

Two shows were held featuring Diversity, Alesha Dixon, Conor Maynard and new American band, The Tide. The SLIMEFEST concept has already taken off in America, Australia and Europe, and Nickelodeon chose Blackpool for the UK debut.



Both concerts sold out and an hour-long broadcast of show highlights was premiered on the Nickelodeon TV channel the following weekend and repeated numerous times since.

### Nickelodeon Outdoor Festival

The final element of the Switch-On partnership with Nickelodeon was a free outdoor family event on the Tower Festival Headland.

Although Saturday was badly affected by torrential rain, Sunday attracted hundreds of people who were able to take part in a wide range of family-friendly activities.



Both days included an outdoor cinema screening of the latest Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles film.

### **BBC LIVE LOUNGE SYMPHONY**

BBC Radio 1's Live Lounge series is to culminate in a performance by the BBC Philharmonic and rock band The 1975 in the Tower Ballroom. The concert, which sold out within minutes, will be held in the famous ballroom on Friday 30 September 30, marking the end of a month-long series launched by Justin Bieber in Los Angeles on September 1.

Live Lounge Month showcases a wide range of musical genres from emerging artists to big-name acts as part of the station's continued commitment to bringing the best new and live music to young audiences.

### **STRICTLY IS BACK!**

The 14<sup>th</sup> series of Strictly Come Dancing is now underway – with another live show planned for the Blackpool Tower Ballroom.



This year's celebrity line-up includes Will Young, Anastacia, Louise Redknapp, Ed Balls, Laura Whitmore, Judge Rinder, Lesley Joseph and Greg Rutherford.

The Blackpool show will be broadcast over the weekend of Saturday 19 and Sunday 20 November. The ballot for tickets for the show has now closed.

### **VALHALLA WINS AGAIN**

The Valhalla thrill ride at Blackpool Pleasure Beach has been named as the world's best water ride for the second year running. The accolade was announced at the annual Golden Ticket Awards in America.

### **WORLD FIREWORKS**

Fireworks season comes to an end on the evening of Friday 30 September with a showcase performance by UK manufacturers. During the previous three Fridays, spectacular displays have been staged by Australia, Slovakia and the USA. The winner will be announced following the UK display.

## LIGHTPOOL 2016



The spectacular £2m LightPool programme for 2016 is now underway with a series of new projections, art installations and live performance.

Key elements of LightPool 2016 include three newly commissioned projection shows on the front of The Tower building; a Neon exhibition at The Grundy Art Gallery; a LightPool “village” on the Comedy Carpet; and a free festival taking place during October half-term.

The programmes are financed in the main by a grant from the Coastal Communities Fund, with additional contributions from Blackpool Council, LeftCoast and the Arts Council. The different parts of the programme are outlined below:

### LightPool Projection Shows

Three new shows have been commissioned for 2016 and these will be projected on the front of The Tower building each night during the Illuminations season.

The Comedy Carpet on the Tower Festival Headland is the main viewing area for the free shows and this year it has been enhanced by the introduction of a LightPool “village” with catering facilities, official souvenirs and photo opportunities. The three new shows are:

1. *Down The Rabbit Hole*

The award-winning Czech-based digital art collective The Macula, have produced a spectacular space-themed show which charts the journey of an astronaut exploring new worlds.

2. *Chasing Stars*

This exciting collaboration between the European Space Agency, astronaut Tim Peake and The Projection Studio, provides an eight-minute intergalactic tour to entertain and inspire the next generation of space travellers. It includes a commentary by Tim Peake, incorporates drawings from local school children and a soundtrack by international music star, Vangelis.



3. *Enchanted Blackpool*

A magical, fairy-tale journey produced by creative designer Laurence Llewelyn-Bowen and his daughter, Cecile. It looks at the wonderful architecture of the Blackpool Tower building and brings it to life through a series of colourful characters specially created for the projection show.

### NEON: The Charged Line

Tracey Emin, one of the UK's foremost talents, joins other notable artists from America and Europe as part of *NEON: The Charged Line* which opened on September 1 and runs until 7 January 2017.



The exhibition at the town centre Grundy Art Gallery brings together some of the most internationally renowned neon artworks from the 1960s to the present day.

It features works by 25 of the world's leading artists working in this medium, including Emin (*whose work is pictured above*) and "Young Brit" artist Gavin Turk. The exhibition has received extensive national and international publicity since it was launched.

### New LightPool Festival



A new addition to LightPool for 2016 is a free festival which will take place during the October half-term – thanks to a £48k grant from the Arts Council.

The festival, which will run from October 28 to November 2, will transform the town centre with a series of stunning light-based artworks as well as live performances each night in St John's Square.

The artworks will create a spectacular walking route to link together the town's iconic buildings and history.

Confirmed acts for the live performances include the French Compagnie Bilbobasso who will bring a combination of fire and tango to the streets, and the Worldbeaters return to Blackpool with their exciting drum extravaganza, Spark! (pictured above).

All the events will be free to attend and accessible for the whole family.

### **RIDE THE LIGHTS**

Blackpool Pleasure Beach opened its doors to cyclists as the theme park joined in the annual Ride The Lights event.

Thousands of cyclists took to the Promenade which was closed to traffic for one night only to give people a sneak preview of the

Illuminations display prior to Switch-On. For the first time, cyclists were able to take a detour through the Pleasure Beach via the north gate.



### **IMPERIAL HOTEL SALE**

Blackpool's famous Imperial Hotel has been put on the market with a price tag of £12m. The four-star venue is one of 10 regional hotels in the UK being sold by parent company, The Hotel Collection.

The Imperial on North Promenade features 180 bedrooms as well as a restaurant, bar, health club and 14 conference rooms catering for up to 600 delegates.

Since it opened in the 1860s it has hosted many famous guests including Charles Dickens, Winston Churchill, Fred Astaire, The Beatles and Princess Anne. For many years, it was the base for all major party political conferences and accommodated numerous Prime Ministers of the day.

### **RETURN OF BLACKPOOL CARNIVAL**

Plans are in development to relaunch Blackpool Carnival next year.

The Blackpool Carnival Group has won £10k of Lottery funding to kickstart the event which will be held on Sunday 23 July. The group is inviting local schools, sports groups, organisations and businesses to participate in the parade which will go from North Pier to South Pier.

The event will be free to attend with a series of live acts and activities on the Waterloo Headland. Further information is available from Susanne Johnson, chair of the South Beach Beacons, part of the Carnival organising group. Email: [JohnsonsNeedlework@Yahoo.co.uk](mailto:JohnsonsNeedlework@Yahoo.co.uk)

### **BAR 380**

Blackpool Tower has opened a bar with a unique view. Bar 380 is located within the enclosed viewing platform in the Tower Eye. It will be open throughout the Illuminations season (with the exception of the main half-term holiday week in October).



## **NEW CONFERENCE CENTRE**

Almost £800,000 has been set aside by Blackpool Council to take the proposals for a new Winter Gardens conference centre to the design stage.

Around £220,000 has been allocated to engage a firm of architects with a further £550,000 agreed for the design concepts.



The Council is bidding for £18m from the Government's Growth Deal and the Coastal Communities Fund to create the state-of-the-art conference facility with a capacity for 1,500 delegates on the Leopold Grove side of the Winter Gardens.

Councillors were due to consider outline plans for the 1,500-capacity venue on September 27. Detailed designs and planning permissions will need to be in place in order to secure external funding.

## **NEW SHOWS**

### Return of Dirty Dancing

After a hugely successful run at the Opera House this summer, Dirty Dancing – The Classic Story On Stage will return to Blackpool's Winter Gardens next year.

It will run from Tuesday August 29 to Saturday September 2. During its two-week run in August, the cast performed to a standing ovation every night.



### Sister Act



The hit West End musical, Sister Act, has been booked at Blackpool Opera House from August 22-27 next summer.

The show, which is an adaptation of the film starring Whoopi Goldberg, is directed and choreographed by Strictly's Craig Revel Horwood.

It stars singer Alexandra Burke who won the fifth series of The X-Factor.

### Grand Theatre Autumn Launch

The Grand has launched its autumn programme of shows with a range of top-quality drama, musicals, dance, opera, music and comedy. Productions vary from Aida to Little Shop Of Horrors and from the thriller Who Killed Santa Claus to the return of the Royal Shakespeare Company with The Tempest. Full details at [www.blackpoolgrand.co.uk](http://www.blackpoolgrand.co.uk)



### **RUNNING WILD**

Photo: Johan Persson

A new stage show is lined up for Blackpool Grand Theatre next April.

Running Wild, which enjoyed a highly-acclaimed summer season at Regent's Park Theatre in London, is an epic production complete with life-size animal puppets.

Based on Michael Morpurgo's novel, this adaptation tells the story of a little girl who takes an elephant ride before becoming lost in the rainforest.

Running Wild will be staged at The Grand from April 4-8 and will include special school performances on Wednesday 5 April at 1.30pm and Thursday 6 April at 10.30am. The UK tour of the award-winning show is supported by Arts Council funding.

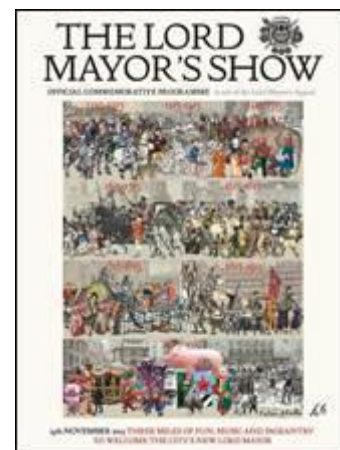
### **LORD MAYOR'S SHOW**

Blackpool will have its own cameo role in the Lord Mayor of London's Show in November.

A specially-designed float will be part of the annual procession that is expected to attract more than half a million visitors to the streets of London on Saturday 12 November.

The float pays tribute to Blackpool - the home town of the new Lord Mayor of London, Dr Andrew Parmley.

It celebrates Blackpool's standing as the nation's favourite seaside resort. The design includes images produced for this year's LightPool shows by Laurence and Cecile Llewelyn-Bowen; The Blackpool Tower; and references to the town's array of seaside entertainment, music and dance



The show commences with a flotilla of barges along the Thames, followed by a procession from Mansion House. Last year, there were more than 7,000 participants, 20 bands, 150 horses, and hundreds of other carriages and vehicles.

### MISS PEREGRINE CINEMA RELEASE

Tim Burton's latest Hollywood blockbuster, partly filmed on location in Blackpool last year, opens in cinemas worldwide on September 30.

Miss Peregrine's Home For Peculiar Children, which stars Samuel L Jackson, Dame Judi Dench and Eva Green, features numerous scenes of the resort including The Tower, Circus, Promenade and North Pier.



Copyright: 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox

As you will see from the picture above, the pier has been remodelled and moved a few hundred feet down the promenade thanks to the wizardry of special effects! Clips of the resort feature in a number of promotional trailers.

As part of ongoing discussions with 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox, VisitBlackpool has been given the rights to promote the film's links with Blackpool.

Part of this arrangement includes the creation of a Peregrine collection game which will encourage people to visit the various location scenes, as well as posters and website banners with the hashtag "Magical Blackpool".



Due to the unavailability of the main stars, the film will open without a formal premiere event.

### SOUTH BEACH APARTMENTS

A £12m scheme to convert a former care home and several hotels into residential apartments at South Beach has been approved by planners.

The new glass-fronted six-storey building on the corner of Harrow Place and New South Promenade will provide 86 apartments and parking spaces.

The development is being delivered by a consortium led by hotelier Tony Banks, who runs the Blackpool Promotions company.



## Section 2: Town Centre Economy

### HOME & HQ



The former Rumours nightclub in Talbot Square has undergone a multi-million pounds conversion into a new night-time entertainment venue.

The bar and nightclub development, Home & HQ, is led by the Nordwind family who have operated a number of high-profile venues in the resort including The Bizness, Main Street and the award-winning Syndicate superclub. The development also incorporates The Urban Lounge.

The venue is open to the members of the Blackpool Business Leadership Group for exclusive previews from 7pm on Thursday 29 and Friday 30 September. If you wish to attend, please RSVP to [info@homehqvenues.co.uk](mailto:info@homehqvenues.co.uk)

### REGENT RE-OPENS

An historic town centre cinema has re-opened. When The Regent on Church Street originally opened its doors in 1921, it boasted more than 1,000 seats and a retractable roof.

It operated as a cinema for several decades before being converted into a bingo hall in 1969 and was latterly used as a pool and snooker hall before closing three years ago.

Businessman Richard Taylor subsequently bought the Grade II listed building and refurbished the cinema and converted the ground floor into an emporium. At the end of July this year, the cinema finally re-opened as an independent operator with a showing of Pulp Fiction.



### CENTRAL BUS HUB

A new bus “hub” is being explored as part of the second phase of the Central Business District development. Although a new bus station has been ruled out, Blackpool Council and Blackpool Transport are discussing how to integrate a hub with a number of bus stops at the proposed new tramway interchange on the site of the Wilko building next to North Station. This would give passengers access to trams, trains and buses in one location.

The Department of Transport has decided not to hold an inquiry into the proposed tramway extension from North Pier to North Station. Instead, it will be handled through written representations.

## Section 3: Enterprise & Economic Development

### **SISTER CITIES**

A new “sister city” agreement that could bring improved links to trade, education, tourism and culture has been signed by Blackpool and the Chinese seaside resort of Sanya.

The Leader of Blackpool Council, Cllr Simon Blackburn, formally signed the agreement during a visit to the resort by a delegation from Sanya which also included representatives from the Chinese consulate in Manchester.

In the last few years, Blackpool has seen a marked increase in visitors from Asia while the world-famous Blackpool Dance Festival has recently expanded to China. A twinned festival started in Shanghai this summer, generating £500,000 worth of investment to the Winter Gardens.

Sanya is the southernmost city on the Chinese island of Hainan. It is a comparatively newly-developed tourist resort and is actively pursuing relationships with a number of cities including Cannes in France, Miami in the USA and the Gold Coast in Australia.

It is particularly interested in a connection with Blackpool because of its heritage in the tourism industry and because of its fame as the ballroom dancing capital of the world.

**NOTE:** Presentations on the Blackpool Dance Festival in China and on the potential opportunities for Blackpool arising from the Sanya agreement will be made at the BBLG meeting on September 30.

### **ENTERPRISE OFFICE GROWTH**

Blackpool Council’s EC<sup>2</sup> office services are experiencing an upsurge in interest from small businesses.

Ten extra office spaces have been let to new and expanding businesses at the Enterprise Centre on Lytham Road and FYCreatives on Church Street so far this year. Fledgling firms include soft toy suppliers, accountants, training providers and social media experts.

That means 39 of the 45 fully-serviced offices available are now in use across the two sites, with ongoing negotiations for some of those remaining.

Both buildings feature a range of high quality and affordable facilities to compliment the serviced offices, including reception services, informal meeting areas, meeting rooms, hot desking and virtual office services.

EC<sup>2</sup> office services are designed to meet the needs of young and growing businesses, whether working from home, moving to a first office, or looking for space to grow the business. Companies can also take advantage of the in-house business support services provide by Blackpool Council with advice and support from the Business Growth team and Get Started.

Further information from [david.slater@blackpool.gov.uk](mailto:david.slater@blackpool.gov.uk)

### **APPRENTICE LEVY BRIEFING**

Local businesses are invited to attend a free briefing session relating to the Government's proposed new Apprenticeship Levy scheme.

From May 2017, large businesses will contribute to a levy scheme intended to deliver high-quality apprenticeships and change the way training and apprenticeships are funded throughout the UK.

In essence, the levy will be paid by employers with around 150 employees.

Lancashire Business View, in partnership with Lancashire WBL Executive Forum, the Lancashire Enterprise Partnership and the Lancashire Colleges, are holding a series of sessions to advise businesses on what the scheme means for them.

The events will provide a full update on the key facts about the levy and will give employers the chance to put questions to a panel of experts.

The West Lancashire event will be held between 10am and 1.30pm on Wednesday 26 October at Ribby Hall Village, near Kirkham.

Note: The events are free to attend for businesses with 150 plus employees only and a maximum of three employees per business. Please do not register if you have less than 150 employees.

[Click here to register now](#)

### **APOLLO HOUSE OPENING**

A new office complex has been officially unveiled on the Whitehills Business Park on the outskirts of Blackpool.

The three-storey Apollo House on Hallam Way is available as a whole unit, or as self-contained suites on each floor.



Further details are available from the developers, Henco, or from the agents, Duxbury Commercial.

## Section 4: General News

### **GREAT EXHIBITION OF THE NORTH**



Blackpool is awaiting the verdict of a judging panel which will determine whether the resort should stage the Great Exhibition Of The North in 2018.

Blackpool is one of four destinations vying to host the exhibition, which will run for at least two months and showcase the creative, cultural and design sectors across the whole of the North of England.

As part of the bidding process, Blackpool and Marketing Lancashire produced a brochure (above) illustrating the rich heritage of the town as well as highlighting the extensive regeneration of the resort offer. A short film with contributions from various local and celebrity “ambassadors” for Blackpool was also produced.

The shortlist will now be assessed by the Great Exhibition board before a final selection is made by ministers. The chosen venue will be announced in the autumn.

The Government is contributing £5m towards the exhibition and a further £15m to a legacy fund to attract further cultural investment in the North.

If the bid is successful, the exhibition will be focused around the Winter Gardens, supporting the ambition to make the entertainment centre a leading UK venue for popular culture.

### **RANGE OPENING**

National retail group, The Range, has taken over the former Homebase store site on Waterloo Road, Blackpool. The store, which will create around 80 new jobs, offers products across 16 departments including DIY, arts and crafts, homeware and furniture.

### **KEEP BLACKPOOL TIDY**

A campaign has been launched by Blackpool Council to keep the town free of litter. As part of the plan to make the resort the cleanest seaside town in the country by 2020, an enforcement team has been employed to combat litter louts with additional bins provided along the promenade.

The 3GS Environmental Services team will operate in and around the town centre and Promenade, with the authority to hand out £80 on-the-spot fines to anyone caught littering, dropping cigarette ends or not cleaning up after their dogs.

The initial 12-month contract with 3GS is intended to be cost-neutral, with the company receiving a percentage of the money recouped from paid fines, with any remaining monies used to support the Council's street cleaning services. The company's performance will be monitored by the Council to ensure that fines handed out are appropriate and fair.

The Council has also deployed an additional 20 large volume bins, meaning there is now one for every single set of access steps to the beach between North and South Pier.

### **DANCING WITH DEMENTIA**

A "Dancing with Dementia" event is returning to the Blackpool Tower Ballroom for the third year running following the huge success of last year's event when more than 500 people took part. People with dementia and their carers are invited to participate in the event which will be held between 11am and 3.30pm on Friday 14 October.

Guests will enjoy an afternoon of ballroom dancing and refreshments, and a host of dementia-friendly activities. Semi-professional dancers will also take to the floor throughout the day with entertainment provided by the Fylde Ukulele Network.

### **BIBA WINNERS**

A host of Blackpool businesses celebrated success at the Be Inspired Business Awards (BIBAs) at the Tower Ballroom. They were:

- ✨ Leisure Business Of The Year: **The Winter Gardens**
- ✨ Third Sector Business Of The Year: **UR Potential CIC**
- ✨ Medium Business Of The Year: **Voiteq**
- ✨ Most Inspiring Person: **Jake Adams**, chairman of Blackpool Youth Voice

A number of Fylde Coast-based businesses also won awards **Excel Fostering**, St Annes – Employer Of The Year and Service Business Of The Year; **Nature's Aid**, Kirkham – Exporter Of The Year; **Clifton Homecare**, St Annes – New Business. The prestigious Lancastrian Of The Year Award went to **Mike Peters**, founder of Kirkham-based Universal Products.

### **RAIL CHANGES**

The first changes to rail services between Blackpool North and Preston will take effect from October 3 as the electrification of the line gathers pace. The changes will initially impact on early morning and late evening services, including the direct Blackpool to London service.

**Note:** Network Rail will give further details on the latest timetable for service changes at the September 30 meeting of the BBLG.

## Section 5: Requests for private sector support

### **CHRISTMAS TREE FESTIVAL**

The annual Christmas Tree Festival in aid of the Winter Gardens renovation programme will take place on Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> and Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> November in the Derham Lounge. There is a £10 charge for businesses to enter a tree into the competition, which is judged by the general public. Entry forms can be obtained from Elaine Smith. Email: [elainemithmbe@outlook.com](mailto:elainemithmbe@outlook.com)

**Philip Welsh,  
Head of Visitor Economy**