



BLACKPOOL BUSINESS LEADERSHIP GROUP

Business Partnerships Report – January 30, 2015

Section 1: Visitor Economy

NEW DAWN FOR ILLUMINATIONS

Blackpool's world-famous Illuminations are to be reinvented following the award of a £2m Government grant.

The Coastal Communities Fund has announced that Blackpool Council's bid to transform the Lights show has been accepted in full.

With further contributions from the Council and from Left Coast, it means that the Illuminations will benefit from a £2.4m investment over the next few years.

New attractions within the "Lightpool" project will include:

- Digitally-mapped projections on to the Blackpool Tower building, enhanced by bespoke audio tracks
- Digital festooning leading people from the Promenade into Brilliance on Birley Street, where there will be a new sound and light event space
- New gateways at the promenade and Central Car Park arrival points with illuminated kiosks and navigational signage
- A new artistic light installation at the Grundy Art Gallery
- Employment of Illuminations "ambassadors" to improve the overall visitor experience.



Work on the scheme will commence from April, with some elements in place by the start of this year's Illuminations season.

It is estimated that the investment will generate an additional two million extra visits to Blackpool over the next five years.

The project will involve extensive partnership working between public, private and community sectors, the strength of which was recognised and praised by the funders.

The Blackpool grant was announced alongside a range of other CCF bids which, collectively, amounted to £36m of investment in seaside towns. Coastal Communities Minister Penny Mordaunt visited Blackpool Tower to announce the successful bid to media.

The Coastal Communities Fund is financed by the Government through revenues earned from the Crown Estate's marine activities.

Illuminations: Business Donations

The new-look Harry Ramsden's restaurant on the Promenade has donated £1,000 to help fund the Illuminations.

Although the annual lights season is now at an end after a very successful 2014 which saw millions of visitors flock to the resort to see the show, businesses are still being urged to show their support for the display by contributing financially.

It follows donations from a huge range of business including official sponsors, BES Utilities, who showed their support for the resort by agreeing to donate the electricity to power the display for 2014 and heavily discount the supply for 2015.

Other key backers include Beaverbrooks, eviivo, Burbage Holiday Group, KRS, Graham and Brown and McDonalds.

The Friends of Blackpool Illuminations - a group of volunteer local business people who strive to promote the display - have raised a further £13,000.

Illuminations: Sponsorship Event

The Illuminations' creative curator Laurence Llewelyn-Bowen will be hosting a cocktail and canapés reception for local businesses on Thursday 26 February.

The event will be held between 5.30pm and 7.30pm in the newly-refurbished Theatre Bar in St John's Square (the former Bar Red) and will give businesses a chance to get a preview of the various sponsorship and advertising opportunities associated with the 2015 Illuminations display.

There will also be an update on some of the new content planned for this year's display which commences on Friday 4 September, along with further insights into commercial opportunities linked to the newly-announced Coastal Communities "Lightpool" project.

RESORT PASS

The Blackpool Resort Pass is to be re-launched for 2015 with a credit card style pass used by leading destinations across Europe including London, York, Paris and Amsterdam. The pass will allow customers to pre-book the resort's main attractions at a heavily discounted price. More than 13,000 passes were sold during the 2014 season.

MUSEUM FOR BLACKPOOL



The Manchester-based architects, Buttress, have been appointed to develop proposals for the planned £20m Museum For Blackpool in the Winter Gardens.

The museum aims to bring together artefacts, stories and memories, which together tell the story of the seaside resort.

The project will be part of the ongoing redevelopment of the Winter Gardens and, subject to funding, will be built within the Pavilion Theatre and associated Horseshoe. Buttress has produced initial concepts for the space, one of which is shown above.

A £1.2m Heritage Lottery Fund grant was secured in May 2014, which will pay for the first development phase. Blackpool Council and Buttress will apply for a £20m round two heritage lottery application later this year to put together the museum and artefacts.

Buttress says the proposed museum will be "a dynamic and celebratory space to capture the essence of Blackpool; a blend of museum, visitor attraction and theatre, filled with artefacts, film, music and performance". The museum is scheduled to open in 2018.

Meanwhile, the recruitment of the new in-house project team for the museum is now complete, with eight new posts created. The project director is Belinda Betts, who joins the Blackpool Council-based team from Newcastle, Australia. Belinda has experience of managing big capital developments within the museum sector, including a major development at the London Transport Museum. The full team will be in post in Blackpool early in the New Year.

An external project management company to support the project has been appointed. They are the Prince's Regeneration Trust which is one of The Prince of Wales's charities which works to deliver regeneration projects for historic buildings and sites.

SHOWZAM! 2015



Blackpool will welcome performers from across the globe when Showzam! 2015 rolls into the resort with a “Circus Town” theme.

Highlights of Showzam! 2015 include:

- The Columbian-based Circolumbia: A circus school that works with children training future circus stars. Circolumbia will be performing daily throughout Showzam! in the Blackpool Tower Circus
- More than 100 free performances in Showzam! Central in the Winter Gardens’ various venues including the Floral Hall, Horseshoe, Pavilion and Derham Room
- Street theatre throughout Blackpool town centre
- The Carnival Ball: Back by popular demand, one of Blackpool’s biggest nights of the year as the Tower Ballroom is packed with party-goers seeking a night of entertainment, live music and dancing with a truly international theme

This year’s festival has been programmed by Left Coast in association with VisitBlackpool. To find out more about Showzam! 2015 go to www.showzam.co.uk

Business Support for Showzam!

LeftCoast is appealing to businesses to support the programme in a number of ways:

- Contributions to Showzam! goody bags which will be produced for performers, volunteers and attendees of the four street arts conferences during the festival. If you want to promote your business, you can provide LeftCoast with promotional items or other merchandise for inclusion in the bags
- Provision of discounts to ticket bookers, performers or volunteers. There are four paid-for shows at this year’s event and LeftCoast is keen to give people the best possible experience by providing them with other promotional offers
- Featuring the Showzam! media pack on your website or social media, or by displaying posters and leaflets.

For information on any of the above contact Duncan Hodgson, email duncan.hodgson@leftcoast.org.uk or call 01253-477973.

BLACKPOOL'S BACK!

The Blackpool's Back destination marketing campaign - which played such an integral part in the resort's hugely successful season in 2014 - is to be repeated this year.

Blackpool Council and Merlin Entertainments have agreed to part-fund the £700k campaign, with contributions from other businesses within the visitor economy.

The campaign will again comprise a mix of TV advertising, digital activity and PR. It is anticipated that the TV ad will be largely based on the 2014 ad with some minor changes to the content. This year, the campaign will start earlier with a scheduled Easter launch.

The new investment was announced by Nick Varney, the chief executive of Merlin, who also revealed that the 2014 campaign had helped his Blackpool attractions out-perform all of his other UK-based operations in terms of increased revenue.

In 2014, the marketing campaign was credited with helping Blackpool grow its visitor numbers by over 200,000 visitors during the May to August period and growing the number of overnight stays by 30% compared to previous year.

VISITOR NUMBERS

Blackpool has enjoyed one of its best tourism seasons for many years, a visitor research study has confirmed.

After a huge upsurge in visitor numbers and overnight stays during the peak summer season, the latest independent Omnibus research shows that the resort saw further growth in September and October with over 1m adult visits in each of the two months.

It means that for 2014 as a whole Blackpool experienced an increase of more than 300,000 adult visits – from 9.8m in 2013 to 10.1m in 2014.

The latest research covering the September to December period confirms the enduring appeal of the Illuminations - with over half of the 3.5m adult visits directly associated with the annual Lights show.

Visitor satisfaction levels in the autumn period rose to a record level of 95% compared to 88% in the same period in 2013.

BLACKPOOL HOTELS TOP-RATED

A number of hotels and guest houses in Blackpool have featured highly in this year's Travellers' Choice Awards.

The Doric on Queen's Promenade was named Best Family Hotel in the UK, with the Premier Inn on Yeadon Way, the Big Blue Hotel at Blackpool Pleasure Beach and Clifton Court Hotel on Clifton Drive all featured in the top 25 compiled by Trip Advisor.

The Kenley and Cherry Tree House Hotel were rated in the top 25 B&Bs and the Queen's Promenade Hotel, New Guilderooy and Maples Hotel all figured in the top 25 Bargain Hotels.

For more information on the Travellers Choice Awards 2015, visit

www.tripadvisor.co.uk/TravelersChoice

JOHN BISHOP IN WAX

North West comedian John Bishop is to be immortalised in wax at Blackpool's Madame Tussaud's. The model, dressed in a suit donated by the star himself, is the only brand new waxwork to be installed at the attraction this summer. He was chosen by public poll. It will take specialists several months to painstakingly mould, sculpt and finish John's wax double.

PIGEON FANCIERS RETURN

Organisers have confirmed that the British Homing Pigeon World Show will be returning to the Winter Gardens next year. There has been some media speculation that the show could move to another destination but the show committee has announced that it will be staged in Blackpool on January 16 and 17, 2016.

The annual show attracts upwards of 20,000 spectators to Blackpool, providing a substantial boost for the visitor economy over the first month of the new year.

2015 SHOWS & CONCERTS



Rock legend Neil Diamond is bringing his world tour to Blackpool's Bloomfield Road Stadium this summer. Event promoters Cuffe and Taylor have announced the singer-songwriter will play at Blackpool FC's stadium on Thursday July 23.

It is the only outdoor stadium gig in the entire tour and will see Blackpool hosting the final show of the European leg of his world tour.

Last year, Cuffe and Taylor brought the first ever concert to Blackpool FC when Rod Stewart played to almost 20,000 people.

Saturday Night Fever

A brand new production of Saturday Night Fever will run at The Grand Theatre from February 17-21. The show features some of the all-time Bee Gees classics including Staying Alive, Night Fever and Jive Talking.

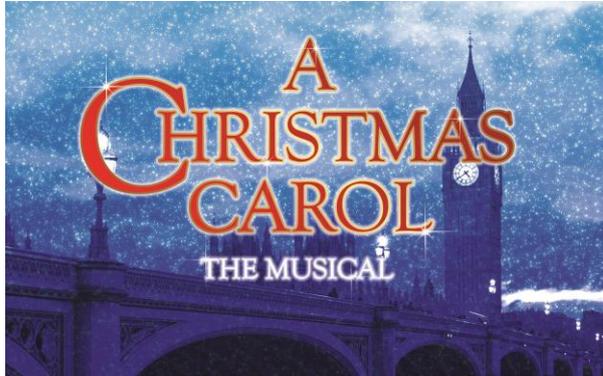
Jesus Christ Superstar

West End star Glen Carter leads a star line-up in the production of Jesus Christ Superstar which is being staged at the Opera House from March 10-14. The cast also includes X-Factor finalists Rhydian Roberts and Rachel Adedeji.

The Prodigy

The Prodigy have included Blackpool on a UK tour commencing in May. The band will play at the Empress Ballroom on May 9.

A Christmas Carol



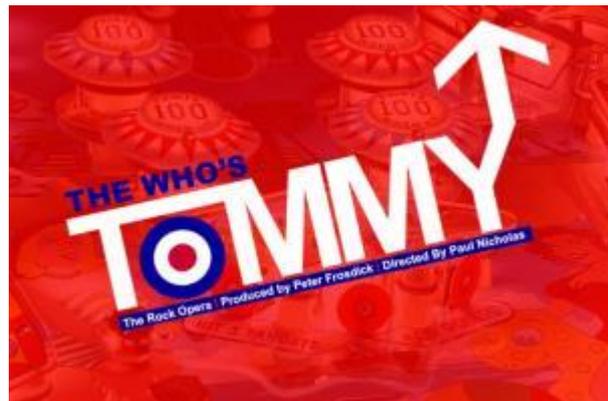
Hit musical, A Christmas Carol, has been added to the Opera House 2015 season with Paul Nicholas taking a starring role as Ebenezer Scrooge. The musical will open on Friday 4 December and run until Sunday 3 January. The spectacular musical – based on Charles Dickens' classic tale - ran for 10 years at Madison Square Garden in New York.

Summer Season

Negotiations are continuing over the Opera House summer season line-up following the fantastic success of Mamma Mia! in 2014. The full programme is expected to be announced in early February with tickets going on immediate sale. It is also intended that the summer season show will be promoted within the new Blackpool's Back TV and marketing campaign.

Tommy The Rock Opera

The UK premiere of a new production of The Who's classic rock opera, Tommy, will be staged at the Opera House from September 11-27. The smash-hit West End show will be produced by Paul Nicholas, who starred alongside Elton John, Tina Turner and Roger Daltrey in the 1975 film version of the show. The new show coincides with the 40th anniversary of the film release.



LYTHAM FESTIVAL

The new-look Lytham Festival (which replaces Lytham Proms) is scheduled to take place between August 2 and 9.

The event will span a whole week encompassing music, comedy and literary elements for all ages.

International R&B sensation Billy Ocean is to top the bill at the festival's '80s v 90s' themed night on Friday 7 August on Lytham Green. Ocean will be joined by other acts of the era with Chesney Hawkes, Jimmy Sommerville, East 17, Sinitta, 5ive and Vengaboys.

The Royal Philharmonic Orchestra will be joined by special guests Marti Pellow, Elaine Paige, Jonathan Antoine and Laura Wright who will take to the stage on Sunday 9 August.

There will also be additional events including comedy, literature and even more music featuring at other venues across Lytham throughout the week.

The Assembly Rooms will host a Jazz Café, while festival-goers can venture to Hewitt Lecture Rooms to discover spoken word and poetry plus a comedy Big Top will pop up at Park View 4U play area.

Further information about Lytham Festival 2015 including the headline Saturday night concert will be announced soon. Updates and at www.lythamfestival.com

BOOST FOR NORTHERN TOURISM

Discussions are continuing over a potential £10m boost for tourism in the North of England.

The fund was announced by Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg in November last year and there has since been two meetings involving representatives from Local Enterprise Partnerships and Destination Marketing Organisations (including VisitBlackpool) to discuss how it can be best utilised.

It has already been made clear that the fund, which is for one year only, must be used in 2015/16 to promote international tourism, selling the many assets of Northern England to overseas markets. It is likely that match funding will be required.

VisitEngland, which is co-ordinating the activity, has been tasked with submitting an agreed proposal to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister by the end of February.

Initial suggestions include:

- Maximising the potential of established international routes into key northern gateways such as Manchester Airport, which already has flights from the USA, China and Europe
- Improving international media coverage for the North of England in key markets, possibly through the hosting of a large-scale Press and travel trade programme
- Development of web-based travel itineraries, focusing on the unique selling points of individual destinations (eg, Blackpool being the spiritual home of ballroom dancing)
- Investment in new editorial content and digital/film assets for use by all DMOs
- Bidding for international conferences and having a North of England presence at business tourism exhibitions in Europe and America

Section 2: Town Centre Economy

TOWN CENTRE IMPROVEMENTS

Maintenance work is being carried out at various sections of the pedestrianised zones in Blackpool town centre. The remedial repairs will make good the patches of footway that have been damaged by wear and tear, or by work carried out by utility companies.

Work has already been completed on Abingdon Street and Clifton Street, with further works during January on Victoria Street, Bank Hey Street and Market Street. A full resurfacing of The Strand (between Talbot Road and Queen Street) will take place in February.

CRACKDOWN ON ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

Blackpool Council is considering adopting new anti-social behaviour powers to clean up the town. It is planning a 12-week consultation commencing in May over the adoption of two Public Space Protection Orders - one for Blackpool Town Centre and Promenade, and another for all of Blackpool's parks.

The town centre proposal comes in response to public calls to tackle issues like street drinking, begging and alcohol-related crime and anti-social behaviour.

If approved, it could see it made illegal to:

- Drink on the streets
- Take legal highs
- Sell "lucky charms" or heather
- Sell magazines or publications not for legitimate charities (this would not affect sales of The Big Issue)
- Loiter around cash machines and shop entrances

Current regulations allow open alcohol containers to be seized but do not prevent drinking on the street. Stag and hen parties wearing inappropriate attire or carrying offensive items will also be included in the proposed crackdown.

The parks proposal, if approved, will see the council gain further powers to tackle issues like graffiti, criminal damage, youth nuisance and substance misuse, and would replace out-of-date by laws which date back more than a century.

YATES'S SITE

Whitbread has confirmed that it wants to open a 150-bedroom Premier Inn on the site of the former Yates's pub in Talbot Square, Blackpool. It is proposed that another of its brands, Beefeater, will operate a pub restaurant on the ground floor.

A planning application has been lodged for the latest proposal, which would represent a £10m investment, creating around 70 new jobs. The proposed design for the site includes an Art Deco style tower facing Corporation Street.

WINTER GARDENS CINEMA

12 Films Of Christmas

The first Christmas film festival staged at The Opera House using new state-of-the-art cinema equipment has been hailed a great success with 5,670 people attending the different films with over 2,300 of those attending two performances of a sing-a-long version of Frozen.

Backstreet Boys On Film

A new music documentary commemorating the 20th anniversary of one of the world's biggest ever boy bands will be released at the Opera House cinema on Thursday 26 February. Backstreet Boys: Show 'Em What You're Made Of is being screened at selected cinemas across the UK on the night and will be followed by an exclusive live performance by the band, broadcast via satellite into the cinema.

HOUNDS HILL

A designer fashion and footwear store is the latest to open at Blackpool's Houndshill Shopping Centre. Footasylum joins Menkind, Bowtique, Room and Phone Inn who are also recent additions to the centre.

Further changes include the relocation of Trespass, which is now trading from a larger unit within the mall.

Refurbishments to improve the canopy area on Victoria Street are also underway. This has incorporated the repainting of the main metal structure, installation of a new poly carbonate roof and the introduction of LED strip lighting to the underside of the existing canopy.

CHILLI FIESTA

The Blackpool Chilli Fiesta returns to the town centre on Saturday 11 April for the third year running. It will be staged by Blackpool BID between 10.30am and 5pm on St John's Square, with more than 25 different stalls selling chill-based products as well as a "Chilli Bar" serving flavoured beers and ciders.

THEATRE BAR

The former Bar Red building in the St John's section of the Winter Gardens is being refurbished to create a new bar and eating establishment. It will be known as The Theatre Bar and is expected to open in mid-February.

WEAVER WALK

The new walkway behind the Blackpool Council offices at Bickerstaffe Square has been officially named as "Weaver Walk" in memory of the Council's former Chief Executive, Steve Weaver who was killed in a cycling accident in France last year.



GRUNDY ART GALLERY

Blackpool's Grundy Art Gallery will see 14 drawings illuminated by a single 'breathing' light bulb for 24 hours a day, seven days a week as it hosts its latest exhibition, Ian Whittlesea's *Breath is Life*, which runs until March 14.

The drawings relate to the famous Bauhaus Art School of 1930s Germany. There will also be a talk by the artist on Saturday 14 March at 2.30pm. The talk is free but places must be booked in advance by calling Grundy Art Gallery on 01253 478170 or emailing: grundyartgallery@blackpool.gov.uk

Section 3: Enterprise & Economic Development

SHALE GAS

Planning Applications

At the request of energy company Cuadrilla, Lancashire County Council has agreed to defer two planning applications to start fracking for shale gas at two exploration sites near Blackpool.

The request followed a recommendation from planning officers to refuse the applications at Little Plumpton and Roseacre Wood due to concerns over noise and traffic.

The county council's development committee was due to hear the planning applications on January 28 and 29, but following submission of further information from Cuadrilla, has now deferred the applications for eight weeks pending further consultation.

The planning officers have already accepted that fracking could be carried out safely and that impacts on air quality, greenhouse gas emissions, water resources, landscape and seismic movements were low.

The recommendations for refusal were based on concerns over noise pollution for the Little Plumpton application for a site north of Preston New Road and over an increase in heavy goods traffic at the Roseacre Wood site.

Note: An update on the planning process will be provided at the BBLG meeting on January 30.

Supply Chain Portal

An online supply chain portal has been established for local businesses seeking to take advantage of potential opportunities in the shale gas industry.

The portal - www.shalegaslancashire.co.uk - has been set up by the North Western and East Lancashire Chambers of Commerce.

It allows local companies to register their interest in becoming a supplier to Cuadrilla, keep up to date with latest developments including future contracting opportunities, and find out how to meet the required quality and safety standards.

Businesses are invited to register on the portal.

Investment Fund

An investment fund is to be established for the North of England which will be aimed at job creation and capturing the economic benefits of shale gas.

The fund, announced in the Chancellor's Autumn Statement, will be created from tax revenues from areas hosting shale gas developments.

NORTH SOUTH DIVIDE

The gap between economies in northern and southern English cities has dramatically widened in 10 years, according to a new study by the Centre For Cities.

The study says for every 12 jobs created since 2004 in southern cities, only one was created in cities elsewhere.

The contrast is particularly stark in Blackpool and the Fylde Coast. While the number of jobs created in London rose by more than 17% between 2004 and 2013, there was a fall of 10% on the Fylde Coast.

The Centre for Cities warns there is a danger that smaller places could fall behind further as growth patterns become entrenched.

MENTAL HEALTH PILOT

Blackpool is one of four areas in England set to benefit from a new Government pilot designed to help people with mental health conditions return to work.

The pilot aims to test a more integrated approach to supporting unemployed residents affected by common mental health conditions. A new team of employment and health professionals will be formed to speed up access to a range of talking therapies, work readiness and in-work support, aiming to assist around 1,000 residents to improve their mental well-being and back to work focus.

Blackpool is to receive £1.1m from DCLG's Transformation Challenge Award fund towards a £2.2m project, with the balance to be met via the European Social Fund.

The pilot, which will run for two years from April 2015, will be project managed and co-delivered by Blackpool Council (led by Positive Steps into Work) and NHS Blackpool CCG, and supported by Jobcentre Plus and the Lancashire Enterprise Partnership. The programme is entirely voluntary.

BLACKPOOL AIRPORT

Operations Resume

Blackpool Airport re-opened for small aircraft and helicopters in December. The re-opening has facilitated the return of independent aviation businesses to Blackpool, including Bond Offshore Helicopters, which services oil and gas rigs in the Irish Sea.

A new company called Squires Gate Airport Operations Limited has been established by site owner Balfour Beatty.

The airport is now fully operational and the facilities are sufficient for the operators who are currently signed up to use it.

The new management company is keen to get more users signed up and will respond to the increased service levels required as they come on board. This will mean further jobs at the airport beyond the 35 people who are already back working there.

Discussions are underway with a couple of companies who wish to expand the airside use of the airport. Balfour Beatty closed the airport in October last year after failing to secure a buyer, with the loss of about 100 jobs.

Enterprise Zone Bid

Meanwhile, following the lobbying in Parliament regarding the closure of Blackpool Airport the Government response has been to invite an application for Enterprise Zone status to be awarded to the site.

Three councils - Lancashire, Blackpool and Fylde - have considered this carefully with the major landowners on Squires Gate Lane and agreed that the benefits of an Enterprise Zone would help to grow businesses at the airport and consolidate the airside use by using that as a key part of the offer for the site.

The submission had to be with Government by 22 January and the suggested site area includes all of the Squires Gate Lane frontage and the land going towards the runway. The runway and key operational areas are excluded from the application to help ensure that any future stakeholders continue to protect the airside use.

An Enterprise Zone already exists at Warton and Samlesbury primarily promoted by British Aerospace. These two areas are seeking to attract businesses that are in the supply chain for British Aerospace and related industries. The Blackpool Airport site could attract up to 3,000 jobs without affecting the operational side of the airport under this initiative.

An Enterprise Zone has a number of benefits including either Business Rate relief of up to £275,000 over five years or capital allowances on investment on plant and machinery.

The application is supported by the Lancashire Enterprise Partnership and will also attract investment in infrastructure through the LEP from any increases in Business Rate income as a result of new businesses locating there. We expect to hear the result of the application before the end of March.

BLACKPOOL BUSINESS EXPO

Blackpool's first business expo takes place next month. It will be staged at Ribby Hall Village between 8.30am and 3pm on Wednesday 25 February when more than 50 businesses will exhibit their products and services.

The event, which is being co-organised by Blackpool-based management consultancy, Rosewood Keen Management Services (RKMS) and Launch Events North West, will also include free business seminars, information and advice.

There will be a number of seminars during the day and former BBC Apprentice star Neil Clough will host a motivational speaking session during the day. The event is free to attend. To register or to find out further information about the event, visit www.blackpoolexpo.co.uk

TANGERINE CONFECTIONERY

Positive Steps into Work is coordinating support for 111 Tangerine Confectionery staff facing redundancy by the end of March 2015 due to the closure of the Clifton Road site.

A range of key support services are assisting including Jobcentre Plus, the National Careers Service, the Money Advice Service, Get Started and a number of local training providers to help staff in the difficult transition to alternative employment.

An additional 35 jobs have already been safeguarded by the Council's financial intervention, relocating two production lines to Vicarage Lane plant by the end of February.

GET STARTED

Blackpool Council's Get Started service continues to be in high demand by Blackpool residents. Between April and November 2014, 240 residents benefited from various workshops and one-to-one advice, resulting in 63 new businesses being formed.

In the same period, £247,000 of start-up finance has been secured to assist these businesses, bringing the total start up finance secured since 2012/3 to £635,000. Get Started remains on target to assist 90 new business starts in 2014/5. A diverse mix of new businesses has been formed ranging from a florist, an e-commerce business to a learning assessment consultant.

Get Started is supporting a new Blackpool youth enterprise initiative to be launched this month. The Young Enterprise Solutions (YES) project, co-ordinated by One Blackpool, has received £50,000 sponsorship from the Royal Bank of Scotland. The project will work with unemployed young people aged 16-24 in Blackpool to promote enterprise and social enterprise as a viable career pathway.

ACCESS TO FINANCE

A seminar to help businesses unlock finance is being staged in Blackpool in March. The full-day Investment Readiness workshop has been developed by Access To Finance North West in association with North and Western Lancashire Chamber of Commerce.

It will be staged from 9.30am on Wednesday 4 March at the Chamber of Commerce offices at Lockheed Court on Blackpool Business Park and will provide businesses with information and guidance on developing business plans and sourcing the right type of financial products.

There will also be an opportunity to meet a range of local funding providers including banks, Rosebud and North West Business Angels. One-to-one appointments with Access To Finance specialists can also be arranged.

This event is free to attend but numbers are strictly limited. If overbooked, priority will be given to SMEs in Lancashire.

To book your place, you can register to attend at: chamberevents@lancschamber.co.uk

Alternatively you can email maria.ramsdale@a2fnw.co.uk or call 07500064823

Section 4: General News

RAIL SERVICES

Service Changes

There are a number of service and route changes in the offing that could have an impact on Blackpool.

From September this year, Northern Rail is planning to terminate some direct services from Liverpool Lime Street to Blackpool North at Preston station. This is a result of changes in rolling stock which will provide an additional 900,000 seats per annum on the route, but will mean that only some services will run straight through to Blackpool North.

Northern Rail is exploring a number of options to mitigate the impact of this change including the introduction of a shuttle service between Preston and Blackpool, and the extension of the current services between Hazel Grove and Preston to start/terminate at Blackpool North. More details are likely to emerge towards the end of February.

Earlier this month, Transpennine also announced that there would be more seating capacity created on the Blackpool to Manchester Airport but confirmed that the carriages on almost half of the services would be downgraded to older rolling stock with no first class or catering facilities on board.

Cllr John Jones, Blackpool Council's Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport is intending to write to both rail operators and the Transport Secretary to protest over the proposed reductions in quality of services to and from Blackpool's main rail station.

Note: Transpennine Express will be attending the BBLG meeting on January 30 to talk through their proposals.

Blackpool To London

VisitBlackpool worked closely with Virgin Trains on the launch of the new Blackpool to London direct service in December. Virgin has agreed to stock copies of the Blackpool Destination Guide and the Blackpool Conference Guide in the lounge areas at London's Euston Station. Further partnership working will be undertaken in coming months to ensure that the new direct services add value to Blackpool's leisure and business tourism markets.

BLACKPOOL COUNCIL BUDGET

Blackpool Council has announced proposals to achieve £25.2m of savings in the next financial year, 2015/16.

It is expected to result in 300 job losses. The local authority is anticipating a further £19.7m of cuts in the following year.

The budget cuts in 2015/16 will see reductions across most areas, with some hit harder than others. Areas such as libraries, school crossing patrols and front line social workers within Children's Services will be protected.

VisitBlackpool's events and marketing budget will be cut, but the Council has already stated that the core summer events programme will go ahead as planned. The Illuminations budget has also been reduced and this will be addressed through operating efficiencies and income generation.

BUDGET CONSULTATION

Blackpool Council's budget consultation meeting for businesses is being held at the Town Hall at 11.30am on Friday 13 February. Any business interested in attending, please email me at Philip.welsh@blackpool.gov.uk as soon as possible.

A&E CAMPAIGN GETS WIDE ACCLAIM

An awareness campaign launched across the Fylde Coast to reduce pressures on over-burdened emergency health services has generated acclaim locally, nationally and internationally.

Think! Why A&E?, devised, developed and currently being delivered by NHS Blackpool Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG); Fylde and Wyre CCG; and Blackpool Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust has so far reached almost 400,000 users on Twitter, as far afield as Russia, America and Belgium. The campaign has also featured on both BBC and ITV news channels.

The campaign, which signposts members of the public to healthcare services appropriate to their needs, is now being adopted by various organisations across the country including Milton Keynes Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust and London Ambulance Trust. For more information on the campaign go to the dedicated website: www.WhyAandE.nhs.uk

FREEPORT

Fleetwood Freeport outlet centre has reported record sales for 2014. Sales showed a year-on-year increase of over £500,000. In the last week before Christmas, sales were almost 10% ahead of previous year. 2015 sees Freeport celebrating its 20th anniversary.

STORE CLOSURE

An independent department store founded more than 100 years ago on the Fylde Coast has closed after failing to secure a buyer. All 60 staff at J.R. Taylor in St Anne's Square have been made redundant. The store had been put into administration in December.

COMMUNITY SPORTS AWARDS

The Altogether Now Community Sports Awards 2015 will take place on Thursday 12 March recognising the achievement and commitment of individuals, teams, coaches and volunteers in Blackpool across 12 categories.

Altogether Now Health Ambassadors including champion boxer Brian Rose; Paralympian Shelly Woods; football legend Jimmy Armfield CBE; Lancashire country cricketer Steven Croft; and Blackpool FC Manager Lee Clarke will be presenting the prestigious trophies at the event, which will be held in the Sponsors Lounge at Blackpool Football Club.

The closing date for nominations is Saturday 31 January. Submissions can be made online at www.altogethernowblackpool.com/awards or downloaded and returned completed to: Altogether Now – a Legacy for Blackpool Community Sports Awards 2015, Stanley Park Offices, West Park Drive, Blackpool FY3 9HU.

ROAD SCHEMES

Project 30

Blackpool Council's transformational road improvement scheme – Project 30 – has helped the local authority win the award for the most improved organisation in the National Highway and Transport survey into public satisfaction.

Project 30 entailed a £30m revamp of around 40 miles of roads and footpaths across the town, with 600 roads and 300 pavements resurfaced.

Around 70,000 responded to the survey which found public satisfaction in the condition of Blackpool roads had gone up by 9.9 per cent, with praise for the speed at which the works were carried out and the overall quality of the programme.

In addition to Project 30, 16,000 streetlights and 100 traffic signals have now been replaced as part of a private finance initiative contract with the Community Lighting Partnership.

Talbot Gateway

Improvements are to be made to crossings at Blackpool's Talbot Gateway Central Business District to help people cross the road more safely.

Since the new road and footpath layout was introduced, concerns have been raised by a large number of people about the safety of the existing crossings.

After lengthy consultation, a solution has now been reached which will see zebra crossings introduced at:

- Talbot Road between Sainsbury's and Blackpool North Station
- High Street between Blackpool North Station and Wilko's
- Dickson Road between Wilko's and Ma Kelly's

New tactile paving will also be included while marker studs will be added to help drivers recognise the crossings.

Yeadon Way

A project to preserve and repair Yeadon Way - one of Blackpool's most important traffic routes - is now 10 weeks in and progressing well.

A huge amount of work is being carried out by contractors Galliford Try to repair the structure of the road as part of a £3.6m scheme.

The work comes as a result of a gradual deterioration in the road over time. It links directly to the M55 and carries huge volumes of traffic, particularly during the tourist season.

The work has been scheduled over the winter months with a view to it being completed in time for the Easter holidays.

For more information please visit www.blackpool.gov.uk/yeadonway

United Utilities Roadworks

A major United Utilities programme to replace one of the biggest water mains in Blackpool will get underway over the coming weeks to ensure Blackpool continues to receive a high standard of clean water.

The first phase of work runs from Rigby Road, along Central Drive into the town centre then along Adelaide Street and north along Dickson Road on to Warbreck Hill Road.

The work on this phase will take about eight months to complete.

The bulk of the work will initially concentrate on the town centre in order to finish in this area before the summer season kicks in.

A site investigation and CCTV works on Dickson Road will start in mid-February before the main works start a couple of weeks later in Central Drive and Adelaide Street.

As work progresses, there will be further updates for residents and businesses so they are aware in advance as to how the work will impact on them.

For a map showing the work programme go to: <http://www.unitedutilities.com/cleaner-water-for-Blackpool.aspx>

BABY BUDDY

Vulnerable pregnant teenagers and young mums are being targeted with a new mobile phone app called Baby Buddy - an initiative backed by Blackpool Council, the Department of Health, Royal College of Midwives and other professional health bodies.



Young mums are more likely to have premature babies, suffer from mental health problems and their babies are more likely to have learning difficulties. They are also less likely to get reliable information about their pregnancy (eg, the effect of alcohol on the foetus). The new Baby Buddy app is free and can be customised to suit the user.

It gives mums-to-be all the information they need to get them through a healthy pregnancy, birth, breastfeeding etc. It also addresses mental health eg, the signs to look out for which could mean post-natal depression.

It's being piloted in Blackpool and has been trialled by hundreds of pregnant women and health professionals.

BBLG: MEETINGS/VENUES FOR 2015

Friday 27 March – Rowley's/Blackpool FC Hotel

Friday 29 May – Pleasure Beach

Friday 31 July – Winter Gardens

Friday 25 September – Imperial

Friday 27 November – The Hilton

MARTON MERE DEVELOPMENT

Blackpool has secured a Heritage Lottery Fund grant of almost £330,000 to undertake one of the biggest green space projects the town has seen in many years.

Blackpool Council, The Conservation Volunteers, Blackpool Environmental Action Team (BEAT) Nature Watch group and Bourne Leisure are teaming up to develop a new visitor centre, build new and renovate existing bird hides, and carry out a whole host of environmental improvements at Marton Mere Local Nature Reserve.

Marton Mere is the only designated Local Nature Reserve and Site of Special Scientific Interest within the town and is nationally recognised for its bird populations. It also supports a number of other regionally important species such as otters, dragonflies, butterflies and orchids.

A project manager will be allocated to the reserve to oversee the works and encourage the local community to get involved as well as develop volunteer and education programmes.

Bourne Leisure has agreed that the new visitor centre can be sited on the fringe of the Marton Mere Holiday Village site.

HEALTHIER CATERING AWARDS

The annual Healthier Catering and Health At Work Awards are to be held at Blackpool Sixth Form College at 2pm on Wednesday 25 March. The awards are open to businesses in Blackpool and aim to recognise:

- Local food outlets that provide and promote healthier choices by increasing options available and making small changes to food preparation and cooking methods
- Businesses that promote good health in the workplace

The ceremony will be attended by those businesses already engaged in the scheme, but the event is also open to businesses who wish to find out more. If any business is interested in attending, please contact Rachael Wilkinson by emailing Rwilkinson@ablhealth.co.uk

Section 5: Requests for private sector support

ILLUMINATIONS BANQUET & BALL

The Friends of The Illuminations are hosting a banquet and ball at Viva Blackpool on Friday 17 April supported by the Blackpool Combined Association. Proceeds will go to the Blackpool Illuminations fund. Tickets are available, price £25, from either shirley.hunt1@btopenworld.com, Clare Taylor on clare@duxburyscommercial.co.uk, or Jill on illuminations.admin@blackpool.gov.uk or for enquiries call 01253 476406.



GIVE A LITTLE

Blackpool Council has passed on its appreciation to the business community for supporting the annual Give A Little Christmas campaign. The various donations resulted in more than 750 children and young people in the town being able to celebrate Christmas.

BUSINESS IN THE COMMUNITY

Business In The Community (BITC), one of The Prince's Charities, is leading a programme to help recruit trustees to charities across Blackpool, Wyre and Fylde.

BITC is working with the Blackpool Volunteer Centre and CVS (Council for Voluntary Service) to support many charities who have trustee vacancies and would really appreciate help from skilled business people.

Ian Fogg, the BITC Place Coordinator for Blackpool, is arranging for more information sessions for individuals interested in volunteering. To find out more, contact Ian on 07917 270561 or by email to ian.fogg@bitconnect.org

CARERS BALL

Carers Trust Fylde Coast is holding its 10th Anniversary Ball at The Village Herons' Reach on Saturday 31 January. There is still a small number of tables available for any businesses or individuals interested in attending. Tickets are £39.50 per person. For further information, contact Kay on 01253 393748

LANCASHIRE ENTREPRENEURS LUNCH

The Lancashire Entrepreneurs' Comedy Lunch will be staged at Blackpool Pleasure Beach on February 27. The networking event, which is being staged in the Paradise Room, attracts businesses from across the county. It includes drinks reception, lunch and entertainment by various comedians.

There are still some places remaining at £40 per person or £380 for a table of 10. For bookings and further information on the lunch please call 0871 222 2121 or visit www.blackpoolpleasurebeach.com/comedylunch

ASPIRED FUTURES WEBSITE

Blackpool-based children's charity, Aspired Futures, is looking for business feedback on its newly-re-launched website. The website can be viewed at www.aspired-futures.com. Please pass on any feedback to Carmen Conquer at office@aspiredfutures.onmicrosoft.com

CIVIC TRUST AWARDS

Blackpool Civic Trust's 40th Annual Dinner and Awards Ceremony will take place on the evening of Friday 27th February 2015 at Viva Blackpool. Tickets are available, price £30, from Sharon Sanderson-Roberts on 01253-315162

MANCHESTER DOGS TRUST

Fylde Coast-based Astute Motoring is supporting an appeal to help the Manchester Dogs Trust Rehoming Centre. The trust is looking for any donations of unwanted duvets, blankets, soft beds, dressing gowns and jumpers. Any donations can be dropped off at the Astute offices at Beacon Road on the Poulton industrial estate.

FAIR TRADE FORTNIGHT

Blackpool businesses are being encouraged to participate in Fairtrade Fortnight which is being held between February 23 and March 8.

One of the features of the campaign is for residents and businesses to send in a photo or video of the most interesting and creative way to show your support for Fairtrade.

The picture can be taken at home, in one of our visitor attractions, in a supermarket – anywhere as long as the location is in Blackpool.

The entrant who sends in the most interesting photo will get a certificate and win a hamper full of Fairtrade products. Their photo will also be shared on social media and in the local press highlighting their support for Fairtrade in Blackpool.

The deadline for entries is Friday 6 March. Photos can be sent via:

Twitter: @bpl_Fairtrade

Facebook: BlackpoolFairtrade

Email: blackpool_fairtrade@outlook.com

Please include contact details.

AND FINALLY.....

Congratulations to Laila Remtulla, founder of Blackpool-based Laila's Fine Foods, who was awarded an MBE in the New Year Honours for services to the food and drink industry.

Philip Welsh
Head of Visitor Economy