

## Section 1: Town Centre Economy

### **BICKERSTAFFE SQUARE**



The new public space that will form the main area of the Central Business District is to be called Bickerstaffe Square in memory of Blackpool Tower benefactor, John Bickerstaffe.

The name was the winning submission from two sets of students at Blackpool Sixth Form College and Unity College as part of a competition run by Blackpool Council.

It means that the name of John Bickerstaffe, who originally commissioned the building of The Tower in 1891, will be immortalised for future generations.

The Central Business District is a £220m scheme that will regenerate the area around Talbot Road, Cookson Street and Larkhill Street in Blackpool.

The district is being developed by Muse Developments in partnership with Blackpool Council. Four sections have been granted planning permission:

- Refurbishment of the Talbot Road multi-storey car park, creating new retail space
- Development of a new office building for both public and private use.
- A flagship 60,000 sq ft Sainsbury's superstore, along with a 600 space car park at the top of the building.
- New petrol filling station

Work has now commenced on extensive refurbishment of Talbot Road multi-storey car park. The refurbished car park should reopen in time for October half-term.

## **HOUNDSHILL**

Savills has been appointed to manage Houndshill Shopping Centre in Blackpool. The centre is jointly owned by Blackstone and Catalyst Capital and includes the town centre's main multi-storey car park with 750 car parking spaces.

The site was sold in December 2011 after the centre's previous owner, a subsidiary of Modus Corovest (Blackpool), went into administration.

- John Holt, manager of the Houndshill and a member of the Blackpool Business Leadership Group for several years, has now retired and has moved to Bath.

## **YATES'S SITE**

Developers have put forward a scheme that would see a TGI Friday restaurant open on the site of the burnt-out Yates's Wine Lodge in Talbot Square.

The development would see TGI occupying most of the ground floor, along with some retail space, and Cosmo, a pan-Asian buffet-style restaurant, occupying the upper floor.

The developers are now in discussions with Blackpool Council's planners.

## **TALBOT SQUARE**

The creation of an enhanced public space around Talbot Square should be completed by Easter. The scheme has created new pedestrianised areas in front of the Town Hall and the Clifton Arms. Renewal of the traffic signals will be completed within the next few weeks.

## **ABINGDON STREET MARKET RESTORATION**

Work has now commenced on the restoration of the Abingdon Street market frontage.

The scheme, which should be completed by the end of April, will see the restoration of original features to the building including traditional shop bays to the ground floor, the restoration of traditional sash windows, and reinstatement of the carriage arch lantern and gothic porch to the Solicitors' Chambers above.

## Section 2: New Investment & Opportunities

### **REGIONAL GROWTH FUND**

The Lancashire Enterprise Partnership (LEP) is offering to work with local businesses that are considering making a bid to the next round of the Regional Growth Fund. £1bn is available nationally for bids for individual projects or combined programmes of projects.

These can either be private sector-led investments or private/public partnerships, but all bids are required to deliver economic growth and private sector employment. The minimum bid threshold is £1m.

If any potential bidders require support and/or advice with developing a submission, they should share their draft proposals with Andy Walker, Head of Business Growth, at Lancashire County Council. Potential bidders should look to contact him by April 30 at [andy.walker@lancashire.gov.uk](mailto:andy.walker@lancashire.gov.uk)

Lancashire was successful in accessing £7.5m under Round 2 of RGF to encourage investment from manufacturing-related businesses. Blackpool Council's economic development team is working with a range of Fylde Coast partners to seek out potential business applicants. Any business interested in exploring this funding should contact: [peter.legg@blackpool.gov.uk](mailto:peter.legg@blackpool.gov.uk)

### **BETTER BUS AREAS FUND**

A joint bid by Blackpool Council and Blackpool Transport Services has secured more than £1m from the Government's new Better Bus Areas Fund.

The £1m of capital and £41,000 of revenue will enable:

- Installation of number plate recognition technology that will recognise where bus services are delayed and automatically prioritise traffic signals in order to improve reliability of services
- Provision of a contraflow bus lane on Central Drive (from Albert Road southbound) to allow key services to bypass one-way systems, again increasing reliability and potentially increasing frequency
- Creation of a "virtual" town centre bus and tramway interchange to make it easier for passengers to move between bus and tram
- Improved town centre bus accessibility, upgrading of bus shelters and provision of better quality passenger information

The Blackpool Business Leadership Group endorsed the bid along with the Town Centre BID company and a range of individual businesses.

## **TRAMWAY LAUNCH**

The Fylde Coast's £100m new tramway will finally be launched next week.

The official launch will take place on April 3, with the tramway reopening to the public the following day.



The scheme, which has been funded by Blackpool Council, Lancashire County Council, the Department of Transport and Interreg, sees the introduction of new, state-of-the-art trams running alongside Blackpool's famous heritage trams between Starr Gate and Fleetwood.

In addition to the ordering of 16 new Bombardier Flexity2 trams, a purpose-built tram depot has been constructed at Starr Gate and new raised platforms have been constructed along the entire route.

The trams will operate from 5am to midnight, Monday to Saturday and 7am-11pm on Sundays. In the early part of the season, early morning services on Monday to Saturday will be half-hourly, moving up to every 20 minutes between 9am and 6pm.

An extensive marketing campaign will be rolled out to market the new tramway to both residents and visitors. Daily saver tickets which give unlimited travel on the tram network will be available for £3.50 for adults, £2 for children.

## Section 3: Visitor Economy

### **OLYMPIC TORCH RELAY**

The route that the Olympic torch will take when it travels through Blackpool has been revealed.

The torch will arrive in Blackpool from Cleveleys on 22 June, travelling along Anchorsholme Lane, Fleetwood Road, Devonshire Road, Warbreck Hill Road before joining the Promenade at Gynn Square.

The torchbearer will carry out a short circuit around the town centre before arriving at Blackpool Tower shortly after 6.30pm where the torchbearer will carry the Olympic Flame around and into The Tower.

When it reaches ground level again, the Flame will light the cauldron on the Tower Festival Headland, where it will stay lit throughout the evening celebration event which is now being planned in association with LOCOG (the London Organising Committee of the Olympic Games) with key sponsors Coca Cola, Lloyds TSB and Samsung.

The following day, the torch will head through Lytham St Annes towards Preston. The full route of the torch with expected arrival times at each location can now be viewed at <http://www.london2012.com/games/olympic-torch-relay/index.php>

### **OPEN GOLF**

Blackpool Airport is to become a major gateway for competitors, spectators, officials and sponsors visiting the Fylde Coast for the British Open Golf Championships at Royal Lytham from July 15-22.

The airport and Pool Aviation will be providing a wide range of VIP services including flight arrival and departure formalities as well as shuttle transfers directly to the course. It is anticipated that the airport, which is only a 10-minute car journey from Royal Lytham, will see record numbers of passengers during the tournament.

Blackpool Airport commenced its summer flying schedule on March 25. Destinations include Alicante, Palma, Malaga and Paris North Albert.

- Thanks to all those businesses that took part in the workshops hosted by Blackpool Airport. A number of businesses contributed to the discussions on the future of the airport, including how to stimulate inbound tourism and the development of more business flights. Formal feedback will be provided by Sue Kendrick, the airport's Corporate Affairs Manager in due course.

### **ELTON JOHN IN BLACKPOOL**

Tickets are still available for the Elton John outdoor concert to be staged on the Tower Festival Headland on June 16. The singer, who has not appeared in Blackpool for 30 years, will perform in the shadow of Blackpool Tower on the newly-created headland arena. Around 10,000 fans are expected to turn out to watch the two-hour performance.

Other events already lined up for the headland include a concert starring McFly and The Wanted on June 24 and the Illuminations Centenary Switch-On on August 31<sup>st</sup>.

## **GAZETTE VAT CAMPAIGN**

The Gazette newspaper has taken up the Blackpool Business Leadership Group's campaign for special measures to help the resort's visitor economy.



The campaign, which is supported by MPs Gordon Marsden (Blackpool South), Paul Maynard (Blackpool North and Cleveleys) and Mark Menzies (Fylde), calls for a headline reduction in VAT on the tourism industry and the designation of Blackpool as a pilot "tourism regeneration zone".

Tourism Minister John Penrose was asked to consider both measures when he visited Blackpool at the request of the Business Leadership Group last November.

## **CENTENARY ILLUMINATIONS**

The planning of the 2012 Illuminations display is now well underway.

A schematic for the display has been agreed with designer Laurence Llewelyn Bowen and a key element of this year's display will be the inclusion of illuminations created by a mix of professional artists and community groups.

Existing features such as the Haunted Hotel tableau are being upgraded and the festoons on the North Shore stretch will be reinstated.

A more detailed presentation on the 2012 display will be made at the Blackpool Business Leadership Group meeting at the end of May.

## Section 4: General Information

### **CHANGES TO PROMENADE**

Improvements to the new area of Promenade in front of the Tower are to be implemented following some complaints from residents and visitors over accessibility and safety issues.

The changes include:

- Making it easier for pedestrians to cross between The Tower and Comedy Carpet
- Installation of permanent street furniture at various junctions (including Adelaide Street) to clearly designate pedestrian and driving spaces
- Monitoring and possible altering of traffic light signals at the junction with New Bonny Street to reduce traffic congestion
- Installation of permanent 20mph speed limit signs at the junctions with Talbot Road and New Bonny Street to indicate the change in speed limit
- Replacement of stone blocks on the east side of the Promenade with seating bollards in order to reduce the risk of tripping
- Introduction of bus shelters at bus stops along the route

A small section of the Comedy Carpet that ran alongside the tram track has also been removed following safety concerns expressed by the rail regulators. The section that has been removed comprises five slabs containing the names of the artist and people involved in the construction, and represents around 1% of the overall artwork installation.

### **PROM CLOSURES**

The Promenade between New Bonny Street and Talbot Square is likely to be closed for three forthcoming events on the Tower Festival Headlands:

The Elton John Concert on June 16<sup>th</sup>, the Olympic Torch Relay on June 22<sup>nd</sup> and the Illuminations switch-on event on August 31<sup>st</sup>.

A brief presentation will be made at the Blackpool Business Leadership Group meeting on Friday 25<sup>th</sup> May to ensure that businesses are aware of the implications and extent of these proposed closures.

### **FAIRNESS COMMISSION**

Applications are still being accepted from businesses wanting to participate in Blackpool Council's new Fairness Commission. A number of representative business groups have already expressed an interest in taking part, though there is still room for key employers to come forward. For more information, visit the website at <http://blackpoolfairness.wordpress.com>

The Fairness Commission replaces the old Blackpool Strategic Partnership. Its aim is to find new ways to improve the quality of life by making Blackpool a fair place for everyone that lives or works here.

## BBLG WEBSITE



The mini-website for the Blackpool Business Leadership Group is now nearing completion (see example page left).

The site will include details about the group, its members and an archive of Partnership Reports, meetings notes and associated reports.

Once it goes live, users will be able to access it directly or via the BlackpoolUnlimited.com business support site.

## SELECTIVE LICENSING

Blackpool Council's new Selective Licensing scheme is now being rolled out across the South Beach area of Blackpool.

The scheme means that all private-rented properties in the area - around 750 in total - will require a licence. To get a licence, property managers are required to meet a number of conditions designed to ensure that all properties are well-managed.

A fee is payable that covers the whole five-year licence period, and is used to fund the licensing process, enforcement of licence conditions, and assistance for landlords to address anti-social behaviour by tenants. Housing enforcement officers will assess all properties (for physical condition) and licensing officers will assess management arrangements.

The impact of the scheme will be carefully monitored, with a view to similar licensing schemes being undertaken in other areas of Blackpool during 2012.

**Philip Welsh**  
**Head of Partnerships & Business Development**