



# BLACKPOOL BUSINESS LEADERSHIP GROUP

## Business Partnerships Report – November 28, 2014

### Section 1: Visitor Economy

#### **BLACKPOOL APPROVED ENTRY LEVEL ACCREDITATION**

A new entry level scheme for visitor accommodation is to be introduced in Blackpool in 2015.

The Blackpool Approved scheme, which is accredited by VisitEngland, ensures that a property is “legal, safe and clean”, meets all requirements with regard to health and safety, and also demonstrates good customer practice.



Although it does not give an indication of a property’s quality or facilities, it allows potential visitors to be assured that the accommodation they are considering is a correctly registered and properly-run business. The scheme allows accommodation providers to become part of a recognised accreditation standard at much less cost and with little intrusion, and requires only a short visit from a trained assessor.

The introduction of the scheme means that accommodation providers who achieve the accreditation will be able to appear in a designated “entry level” section on the VisitBlackpool website, participate in a wide variety of marketing campaigns and feature in the annual Destination Guide. Until now, VisitBlackpool has only traded with star-rated accommodation approved by VisitEngland and/or the AA.

In Blackpool, there will be three ways in which accommodation can get the Blackpool Approved entry-level accreditation:

1. Via Stay Blackpool, the hotel association, representing only nationally accredited accommodation businesses in Blackpool, which will have its own VisitEngland approved assessors
2. Via Yes Hotels, an independent association, which will also have VisitEngland approved assessors
3. By applying directly to Quality In Tourism for a local assessment to be carried out

Assessments/visits will be carried out annually and assessors will check websites on a regular basis to ensure guests are not being misled. Accreditation in the Blackpool Approved scheme will cost about a third of the full national schemes.

## **BOOST FOR NORTHERN TOURISM**

Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg has announced plans to make £10m available from the Regional Growth Fund for the development of a new northern tourism strategy.

Ring-fenced funding will be channelled into the national tourist body VisitEngland, with support from the Department for Culture, Media and Sport.

Clegg highlighted that there are 29 separate tourism bodies pulling visitors to their individual localities in the north and said a central focus was required in order to attract more visitors from home and abroad.

## **BATHING WATER RESULTS**

All of the Fylde Coast's bathing waters have passed this year's water quality tests. The Environment Agency's official statistics revealed that all eight bathing waters passed this year's Bathing Water Directive – the best results since 2005.

As well as passing the minimum standards, bathing waters at Bispham and St Annes North also achieved a higher level pass, putting them on a par with some of the best coastlines in the country. The results are based on weekly samples taken by the Environment Agency between May and September.

This year's success comes three years into a ground-breaking partnership of local agencies aiming to improve the quality of the sea water on the Fylde Coast. The partnership's ultimate aim is for all eight bathing waters in the area to meet the stricter revised directive, which comes in to force in 2015.

From next year, under the revised Bathing Water Directive, the results will be based on bathing water samples taken over the previous four years, with new classifications awarded. These are Excellent, Good, Sufficient and Poor.

These revised classifications will be displayed on the existing bathing water information signs from 2016. In a new move, EU regulations will also require those bathing waters which are classified as 'Poor' to display a sign advising against bathing.

Four of the Fylde's bathing waters – Bispham, Blackpool South, St Annes North and St Annes - are now predicted to pass the revised directive next year.

The predictions for Blackpool South, St Annes North and St Annes have been upgraded from last year as a result of United Utilities' new £160m storm water tunnel that reduces the amount of wastewater spills into the River Ribble.

The Fylde Peninsula Water Management Partnership - made up of Blackpool Council, Wyre Council, Fylde Council, Lancashire County Council, Environment Agency, United Utilities, Merlin Entertainments and Keep Britain Tidy - is now working with Turning Tides to enable the remaining four bathing waters on the Fylde coast to reach the new standards.

## **HOLLYWOOD FILM IN BLACKPOOL**

A new Hollywood film has been partly filmed in Blackpool. A Monster Calls, based on an award-winning children's fantasy novel, stars Liam Neeson and Sigourney Weaver. Sequences were shot at Blackpool Pleasure Beach and North Pier. The film is due to be released in 2016.

## RETURN OF STRICTLY



The BBC brought a 200-strong crew to Blackpool to stage the eighth episode of Strictly Come Dancing at the Tower Ballroom.

As always, the show generated huge publicity for the resort both in the build up to the show and during several hours of prime time TV coverage on the Saturday and Sunday nights. Viewing figures for the Blackpool show averaged over 10m.

A number of businesses in the resort benefited directly from the cast and crew staying over.

- The resort was also featured extensively on the BBC on the eve of the Strictly weekend when the North West regional broadcast for Children In Need was staged at the Tower Circus. This was in addition to coverage the previous week for the Rickshaw Challenge

## DESTINATION MANAGEMENT PLAN

The first draft of a new three-year Destination Management Plan (DMP) for Blackpool is nearing completion.

The DMP seeks to build on the substantial investment that has already been made in Blackpool over the past few years.

The action plan is underpinned by an aspirational re-positioning aimed at changing any negative perceptions of Blackpool by creating a high-quality, year-round family destination that is capable of supporting a wider economic regeneration.

## SHOWZAM! 2015

The annual Showzam! festival will have a circus theme when it is staged in Blackpool during next year's February half-term.

For the first time, the festival will be a partnership between VisitBlackpool and LeftCoast.

"Circus Town" will be held between February 14 and 18 with circus companies and performers from across the UK presenting shows in various event spaces. There will also be a new fringe programme of evening performances, as well as the annual Carnival Ball which will be held on the first night of the festival.

## **BLACKPOOL'S BACK!**

A review of the *Blackpoolsback* destination marketing campaign has confirmed that it had a huge positive impact on the summer visitor figures.



The campaign, a joint initiative between Merlin Entertainments and Blackpool Council, featured TV advertising, digital and social media activity, press trips and a PR stunt which resulted in Blackpool claiming the record for the world's biggest beach ball.

It was aimed at changing negative perceptions of the resort and driving up visitor numbers.

The independent Omnibus survey covering the May to August trading period revealed:

- The overall number of adult visits grew by 200,000 compared to last year
- The number of overnight stays increased by 30% compared to 2013
- Visitor satisfaction levels improved from 84% last year to 89% this year
- The *Blackpoolsback* TV campaign directly influenced around 350,000 visits to the resort

As a result of various organised press trips, Blackpool was showcased in a wide range of publications including six national newspapers, 29 regional titles and four consumer magazines. The value of PR activity during the campaign was estimated at more than £1m.

During the May to August period, Blackpool hosted a range of high-profile events including Armed Forces Week; the two-day Blackpool Air Show; Rebellion Punk Festival; a 12-week run of the international production of MAMMA MIA!; a stadium concert by Rod Stewart; Ride The Lights, and a three-day Illuminations Switch-On Festival Weekend.

The figures for May to August follow a hugely successful start to 2014: Between January and April, the first Omnibus survey of the year revealed growth of 25% or 600,000 visits compared to 2013. This means from January to August visits were up by 800,000 compared with 2013. The final survey of the year will include the 10-week Illuminations period and the World Firework Championships.

Discussions are now underway as to how to build on the *Blackpoolsback* destination marketing for the 2015 season.

## **BLACKPOOL TOPS AUTUMN CHART**

Blackpool was named the UK's most popular beach destination by one of the world's leading online travel providers, with bookings up 76% compared to last year in the autumn period.

Research by Expedia put Blackpool ahead of rival seaside towns including Brighton and Bournemouth when it came to bookings for September and October.

The resort was in first place in the Top 10 most popular UK beach destinations based on bookings made on Expedia over a 90-day period.

## **HOLIDAY ACCOMMODATION SURVEY**

A survey of holiday accommodation in Blackpool has revealed that the number of properties on the market has again fallen.

The survey of around 1500 holiday accommodation businesses shows that there were just over 300 on the market in October, equating to around 20% of the total stock. This figure has been gradually falling since July 2010 when over 25% of Blackpool's holiday stock was on the market.

## **2015 EVENTS PROGRAMME**

A provisional programme of events has been confirmed for the 2015 season by VisitBlackpool. The programme includes:

- Armed Forces Week, 22-28 June
- Blackpool Air Show, 9-10 August
- Ride The Lights, Tuesday 1 September
- Switch-On Festival Weekend, 4-6 September
- Illuminations Season, 4 September-8 November
- World Fireworks Championships, Friday 11, 15 and 25 September and Friday 2 October

## **2015 DESTINATION GUIDE**

The new Blackpool Destination Guide for 2015 has now been published.

It features a much more family-friendly approach, building on the 2014 Blackpoolsback destination marketing campaign, which focused on Blackpool through the eyes of a child.

The new guide, which will be formally launched before the end of the year, contains a significant amount of new photography which is intended to showcase the significant improvements to the visitor offer in recent years.

If you wish to view the online version of the guide, it will be available from Monday 1 December at the following link:

<https://asp-gb.secure-zone.net/v2/index.jsp?id=2191/2855/9330&lng=en>



## **BEACH HUTS**

A tender process is underway for the introduction of beach huts on Blackpool Promenade. The idea to provide facilities similar to those already installed at St Annes has been put forward by an independent trader.

The tender process allows for a five-year licence to construct, locate and manage five beach huts on the Promenade close to Waterloo Road headland. The huts would be rented out to visitors for day use.

## **BLACKPOOL ONLINE CONFERENCE GUIDE**

A new online infographic showcasing Blackpool's conference offer has been produced. It features the resort's traditional conference venues as well as the more unusual locations such as The Tower, Zoo, Pleasure Beach and Madame Tussauds.

It can be viewed at: <http://www.visitblackpool.com/business tourism/>

## **MILIBAND CONFERENCE PLEDGE**

Labour leader Ed Miliband has given a strong hint that he would like to bring the annual party conference back to Blackpool.

Speaking at the North West Labour Party Conference at the Imperial Hotel in Blackpool during November, he said he was committed to the return of the full conference, last held in Blackpool a decade ago.

The three-day regional conference, which attracted around 500 delegates, has been held here for three successive years.

## **BLACKPOOL FC CONCERT**

Promoters Cuffe & Taylor are to stage another large-scale outdoor concert at Bloomfield Road following the highly-successful Rod Stewart concert last summer. The concert will be staged on Thursday 23 July, with a headline act to be announced at the start of December.

## **BLACKPOOL ROCKS**

The second Blackpool Rocks event will be held at Blackpool Tower on December 20. It will feature 20 music acts including artistes and guest DJs in 10 themed rooms in The Tower. The event starts at 8pm on the Saturday evening and closes at 6am the following morning.

## **BLACKPOOL ILLUMINATIONS**

The Illuminations season ended on November 9, with promenade collections reaching a record high of £133k - £7k ahead of last year. This year, the collections have been aided by the distribution of free Illumination maps incorporating discounted parking and admission to attractions. Business collections are spread across a wider period than just the Illuminations season and the final tally will not be known until early in the New Year. There is still an opportunity for businesses to contribute by using this link:

<http://www.visitblackpool.com/shop/5-contribution-to-the-blackpool-illuminations-fund>

Meanwhile, a £2m bid to develop the Illuminations has been submitted to the Coastal Communities Fund. The "LightPool" project seeks to deliver a radical transformation of the show and help create a sustainable commercial business model. If successful, the funding bid will provide new digital technology to project on to Blackpool Tower; new digital festooning; and performance events on the promenade and town centre. It will also fund an improved marketing strategy to expand the current visitor base, encouraging overnight stays and return visits. The outcome of the bid should be known in early 2015.

## **2015 SHOWS**

Negotiations are underway for the 2015 show season at the Winter Gardens following the box office success of MAMMA MIA! this year. A number of shows are being considered for the Opera House during the summer and autumn seasons. It is hoped that the line-up will be confirmed before the end of this year to enable marketing and promotion to get underway. The Winter Gardens has secured a number of high profile one-off concerts for autumn including comedians Peter Kay and Lee Mack, as well as a Christmas film season.

Meanwhile, Blackpool Grand Theatre has confirmed that the hit show, Return To The Forbidden Planet, will be returning to the resort as part of the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary tour of the UK. The show will run from Monday 27 April to Saturday 2 May.

## **BLACKPOOL MUSEUM PROJECT**

Progress continues to be made on plans to develop a Museum for Blackpool within the Winter Gardens.

An initial £1.2m grant has enabled the team to begin a development phase which will lead to a full-scale application for £20m of funding being submitted towards the end of 2015. There are three major contracts to award during the development phase – project management, architect design team and interpretative design team.

As part of this initial phase, eight new posts have been created to support the scheme including a project director. The new jobs have caused significant interest with in excess of 400 applications being received from across the UK and internationally. It is anticipated that the full team will be in place by the New Year.

## **PLEASURE BEACH AND RED ARROWS JOIN FORCES**

Blackpool Pleasure Beach has joined forces with the world-famous Red Arrows to bring a unique thrill ride to the park for 2015.

It will become the world's first tourist attraction to have a ride based on the RAF's aerobatic display team.

Sky Force is a 72ft-high white-knuckle ride, featuring 12 planes in Red Arrows livery which riders can control themselves.

The development, which should be open in the spring, will also include a dedicated Red Arrows shop selling exclusive merchandise and souvenirs.



## **CENTRAL STATION SITE**

Talks are at an advanced stage with Lancashire Police over the potential relocation of the Blackpool headquarters from Bonny Street to a site in the south of the resort.

Subject to the relocation going ahead, it will free up more land on the former Central Station site, which is earmarked for a large scale leisure development.

## **LANCASHIRE TOURISM AWARDS**

The Winter Gardens won two awards at the Lancashire Tourism Awards, being named as Cultural Venue Of The Year and Meeting and Conference Venue Of The Year.

The awards were judged by an independent panel and awarded in front of more than 500 industry professionals at the Tower Ballroom. The awards follow a record breaking year for the Winter Gardens which has seen the venue celebrate over one million visits and the summer season run of MAMMA MIA! break all box office records.

- Sue Copp, Guest Service and Inclusion Manager at Sandcastle Waterpark, was named as Lancashire's Tourism Superstar at the same awards. Sue has worked at the water park for more than 20 years.

## **HARRY RAMSDEN'S**

Harry Ramsden's fish and chip restaurant is reporting a record-breaking summer, following a £1m investment in its outlet opposite the Tower Festival Headland. The company says its Blackpool restaurant is now seen as the brand's flagship property in the north of England.

## **LYTHAM PROMS RE-BRAND**

The annual Lytham Proms summer concerts have been rebranded as the Lytham Festival. The programme, which commences on the first weekend of August, has been extended to create more of a town-wide feel incorporating comedy and other cultural activities, as well as the annual music events. Last year's Lytham Proms weekend was headlined by Tom Jones.

## **NEW WETHERSPOONS**

Work is underway on a new Wetherspoons pub on South Promenade. The pub, which has been named the Velvet Coaster, is being developed on the site of the former Lucky Star amusement centre. It is scheduled to open in March 2015.

## **CARNESKY'S**

The Carnesky's Ghost Train attraction (sited next to the new Velvet Coaster development) has now closed and is being dismantled. Future use of the site has yet to be determined.

## **SANDCASTLE WORLD RECORD**

Sandcastle Waterpark and Radio Wave broke the Guinness World Record for the most number of people down a waterslide in one hour! A total of 289 people participated, breaking the previous record of 213.

## **ART B&B**

LeftCoast, the partnership established to deliver the Creative People and Places Programme in Blackpool and Wyre, has been successful in a bid to the Clore Prize Fund. It has been awarded a prize of £50k for an innovative project based on the traditional Bed & Breakfast experience.

A new social enterprise will be set up to create the first ever "Art B&B", which will be a fully functional space. The project will support people recovering from addiction, enabling them to work alongside artists to create every element of the B&B experience from a virtual landlady to the bedroom décor.

Blackpool's bid was the only successful award in the north of England.

## Section 2: Town Centre Economy

### **CAR PARKING**

Blackpool Council and the Blackpool Town Centre BID have joined forces to launch two festive car parking offers ahead of the Christmas shopping period. The first offer, aimed at helping local firms and encouraging visitors and residents to discover Blackpool's wide variety of small shops on national "Small Business Saturday", will see free parking offered at all Council car parks on Saturday 6 December. The offer is available throughout the day and evening.

The second offer will see shoppers offered "Parking for a Pound" in four town centre car parks – West Street, Central, Talbot multi-storey and East Topping Street. This offer will run on the four Thursday late-night shopping events on November 27 and December 4, 11 and 18 from 5pm until midnight and on four Sundays – November 30, December 7, 14 and 21. The HoundsHill Shopping Centre car park will also be £1 to park from 5pm-midnight on the four Thursdays.

### **WINTER CINEMA**

The Opera House cinema within the Winter Gardens is staging a Christmas festival of family favourites and cult Christmas films from Saturday 20 December until Friday 2 January.

The '12 Films of Christmas' season will make use of the 3D technology within the cinema for the first time with screenings of Polar Express; Lion King; Maleficent; Nightmare Before Christmas; Disney's A Christmas Carol; and Despicable Me 1 & 2, all in 3D.

The classic 'It's a Wonderful Life' will launch the film festival on Saturday 20 December. On Sunday 21 December a Sing-A-Long-A version of hit movie Frozen will return to Blackpool for just one performance. Other films include Bad Santa, Muppet Christmas Carol and Love Actually.

### **TOWN CENTRE SURVEY**

A survey is being carried out by Blackpool Council on people's perceptions of Blackpool town centre. The survey will canvass the views of consumers and businesses.

Members of the Business Leadership Group are being encouraged to participate. The survey will only take a few minutes and can be completed using this link:

[www.letusknow.org.uk/towncentre](http://www.letusknow.org.uk/towncentre)

Although the public consultation ends on November 30, businesses have been given extra time to complete the survey. Please aim to do so by close of play on Friday 5 December.

### **BLACKPOOL GRAND THEATRE**

Plans have been submitted for a major facelift for The Grand Theatre.

The ground floor and box office will be extensively refurbished and the work will also provide enhanced dressing rooms and rehearsal spaces.

The refurbishment is expected to cost around £1m, with a £700k grant from the Arts Council and a £200k contribution from the Friends Of The Grand. Subject to planning approval, work will commence in the New Year.

## EMPTY SHOPS

The latest survey of vacant town centre units shows another reduction in the overall vacancy rate.

The survey carried out in November reports a net decrease of two vacant units in the town centre, bringing the overall total to 117 units and reducing the vacancy rate to 17.8%.

Looking at the Principal Retail Core (predominantly around the HoundsHill Centre), the performance is even better with a vacancy rate of 12.3%, the lowest rate ever recorded.

Newly vacant units include: Phones 4 U (Bank Hey Street); Cheque Centre, Accident Claims Solutions (Birley Street); Kiss & Make up (Clifton Street); HM Revenue Enquiries, Rawcliffes (Talbot Road); Fill (No. 1 Bickerstaffe Square); Butterfly (Deansgate); Kennedy's Kitchen (Cedar Square); Dazzles (Houndshill) and Bill-Bo Bobby's World Café (Promenade).

Since August a number of businesses have occupied previously vacant units. These include: The Chinese Buffet, Discounted Greeting Cards (Church Street); UIKO Clothing, Bowtique (Victoria Street); Trespass (Houndshill); Baroque (Clifton Street); Blackpool, Fylde & Wyre Credit Union (Birley Street); Lilly and Peach (Topping Street) and Affordable Signs (Cookson Street).

The overall statistics as at November are as follows:

Area	Total Units <sup>1</sup>	Total Vacant Units	Vacancy Rate
<b>Principal Retail Core</b> (Local Plan boundary based around Houndshill, Victoria Street, Bank Hey Street, Church Street, Corporation Street and Adelaide Street West)	163	20	12.3%
<b>Core Retail Area</b> (as above but also including Topping Street, Queen Street, Clifton Street, Birley Street, Market Street, Talbot Road, Abingdon Street and Cedar Square)	470	68	14.5%
<b>Town Centre Boundary</b> (as above but also including the Promenade, Springfield Road, Dickson Road, King Street, Cookson Street, Counce Street and the new Talbot Gateway area)	658	117	17.8%
<b>Periphery Town Centre Area</b> (the Town Centre Boundary area excluding the units contained within the Core Retail Area)	188	49	26.1%

<sup>1</sup> Excluding the properties to the south of the Palatine Buildings; development sites (old Yates's site, Tower Street site, 35 Cookson Street site); units within Blackpool North Station and Talbot Road Bus Station; community sites (e.g. churches, libraries, schools etc.) and civic sites (e.g. Town Hall).

## YATES'S SITE

A revised planning application has been submitted for the derelict Yates's site in Talbot Square. The application is for a six-storey building with a hotel on the upper floors and a restaurant and bar on the ground floor.

In the meantime, Blackpool Council is looking at how best to repair or replace some of the fencing around the Talbot Road end of the site, which was badly damaged by gales.

### **TALBOT GATEWAY HOTEL**

Discussions are continuing over the proposed development of a large nationally branded hotel at the new Talbot Gateway development.

It is intended that this would be built by Blackpool Council and its development partner, Muse, and then leased back to a hotel group. A number of operators have expressed interest in the opportunity to open a four-star rated (or equivalent) hotel on the site.

Subject to Council approval the hotel, which would have 130 rooms and a ground floor restaurant, would be built on the East Topping Street car park, behind Talbot Road multi-storey car park.

### **NEW RESTAURANT AT TALBOT GATEWAY...**

A new 300-seater restaurant is to open beneath the newly-refurbished Talbot Road Car Park. Mr Basrai, the founder of "live" world cuisine cooking in Scotland, has secured the largest unit at Talbot Gateway Central Business District making it the third venue in his restaurant business.

Situated at the corner of Deansgate and Cookson Street, the restaurant will feature live cooking stations and enable customers to eat anything from Indian and Japanese to roast dinners and pizza. A £1m fit-out of the unit is expected to start soon, with the restaurant likely to open in the first quarter of 2015. Other Mr Basrai's World Buffet restaurants are located in Ayr and Edinburgh.

Other retail units available at the scheme range from 1,000 sq ft and are being marketed by Montagu Evans and Duxbury's Commercial.

### **....AND AT ST JOHNS SQUARE**

Plans have been submitted for a complete refurbishment of the Bar Red premises on Church Street, turning it into a theatre bar with gourmet burger offer. The proposed refurbishment includes an external seating area and a new shop frontage to complement the renovation of the Opera House frontage which is currently underway.

### **HAUNTED GRUNDY**

A new exhibition has opened at The Grundy Art Gallery.

Haunted House, which runs until January 17, draws on stories of haunted artworks from The Grundy's own collection, as well as the history of Gothic literature.

It sees paintings, artefacts and furniture placed along artworks by some of the most celebrated and critically acclaimed artists working today including David Hockney and Turner Prize winners Susan Philipsz and Martin Creed.



Running alongside the exhibition is a programme of events, performances and screenings, including the reading of selected ghost stories in the gallery, horror film nights, ghost stories and family workshops. Full details at: <http://www.grundyartgallery.com>

## Section 3: Enterprise & Economic Development

### **ENERGY COLLEGE FOR BLACKPOOL**

Blackpool and The Fylde College has been announced as the UK hub for the National College for Onshore Oil and Gas.

The National College is being set up to meet the industry's future skills needs and help the UK to become an international centre of excellence for onshore operations.

The news was announced by the Rt Hon Matthew Hancock MP, Minister of State for Business and Enterprise and Minister of State for Energy when he visited the College earlier this month.

The Minister also laid a foundation stone at the College's Advanced Technology Centre, which will deliver core advanced engineering skills required for progression paths into the energy sector.

As the UK hub, the College will deliver a comprehensive range of advanced qualifications, up to and including honours degree programmes.

The College was supported in its bid by a number of industry-leading organisations including Centrica Energy and Cuadrilla Resources, which is leading on shale gas exploration on the Fylde Coast.

The location of the centre has not yet been determined, although the College is looking at sites to the south of Blackpool within easy access of the M55 motorway.

### **GETTING STARTED**

Blackpool Council's Get Started service continues to provide extensive support to residents wishing to start a business.

In the six month period from April to September 2014, some 177 residents sought advice from the Get Started team, with 42 new businesses commencing trading. The target is to assist 90 new business starts in 2014/15. Since 2012/13 the team has unlocked £617,000 in approved funds for Blackpool's new-start businesses.

### **TOURISM ACADEMY**

Blackpool Council is working closely with the newly-formed private skills partnership, Blackpool Tourism Academy, as it seeks to uplift the skills of tourism workers in the resort.

It has recently launched a new skills initiative called WorldHost, aiming to transform the quality of customer service training. WorldHost is an internationally acclaimed programme that was used to good effect in training 10,000 London Olympic volunteers and has since been adopted by a wide range of hospitality and leisure companies.

- Full details of the roll-out of the World Host scheme in Blackpool will be presented at the November 28 meeting of the BBLG

## **BOOTH'S EXPANSION PLANS**

Lancashire supermarket chain Booth's is preparing to undertake the most ambitious expansion programme in its history after reporting a rise in annual pre-tax profits. It is preparing to open five additional stores by 2016, including one in St Annes and another in Poulton-le-Fylde.

The store group is also planning to offer nationwide delivery for the first time during the festive period.

## **DIGITAL MARKETING FOR TOURISM**

A free digital training programme is being offered to local businesses operating in tourism and hospitality. The digital marketing and social media course will be staged over two days – December 4 and December 18 - at Blackpool Football Club.

On completion of the course, eligible delegates will receive a City & Guilds Award in Social Media For Business.

Delegates can attend on their own or on behalf of a small to medium enterprise (less than 250 employees) registered as trading with HMRC.

The course is being delivered by PERA Training as part of the Lancashire Skills Support ESF Programme.

To book a place, go to this link: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/digital-marketing-and-social-media-for-tourism-tickets-14418870229>

## Section 4: General News

### **NEW HOUSING DEVELOPMENTS**

#### Foxhall Village

The Foxhall Village development close to Blackpool Football Club is progressing well with the first residents due to move in before Christmas. The developers, Hollinwood Homes, are on target for 70 homes to be complete by the end of March next year. These properties will be for affordable rent and will be let to working families.

The response for private sales to home owners has been strong and the show homes are now starting to be built on the eastern part of the site off Rigby Road. As part of the development, the high retaining wall to Seasiders Way on the western site is being replaced by new fencing and repairs are also underway to Princess Street Bridge. This work will be completed before Christmas and will add to the improvement that is taking place in this area.

#### Queens Park

The first phase of construction at Queens Park is progressing well with all 92 homes at various stages of construction from foundations to final finishes, snagging and external works installations. Infrastructure construction is also advanced with deep sewer connections completed and highway and site boundary construction continuing. At the end of September there were 10 apprentices on site, including bricklayers, joiners, plasterers, painter and decorators and ground work apprentices. Local labour accounted for 34% of the total workforce.

### **FIT TO WIN**

An innovative project to help youngsters in Blackpool to be fitter, healthier and happier has won a major North West award.

The Fit2Go project, which is being delivered as part of Altogether Now, A Legacy For Blackpool was named as Community Initiative Of The Year at the prestigious MBNA North West Football Awards. Altogether Now is a collaborative programme involving the NHS in Blackpool, Blackpool Football Club and Blackpool Council.

Fit2Go won the award despite competition from other community initiatives led by Everton FC, Wigan Athletic, Bolton Wanderers and Morecambe FC.

The six week programme is delivered in all of Blackpool's 30 primary schools by Blackpool FC Community Trust, under the banner of Altogether Now and has, to date, reached more than 10,000 children.

It aims to encourage children to lead healthier lives, take part in regular physical activity and to join in with local sports clubs and community programmes to ultimately improve their overall health and wellbeing.

### **SALE OF PROGRESS HOUSE**

Work has commenced on the demolition of Progress House, Blackpool Council's former office building on Clifton Road, Marton (next to Tesco superstore).

The majority of the 700 staff who occupied the premises have now relocated to the Bickerstaffe Square headquarters in Talbot Gateway

The Council, which is keen to see the site retained for employment, is now in talks with a potential buyer.

### **FURTHER CONSULTATION OVER FRACKING SITE**

The Environment Agency has invited local residents and interested parties to comment for a final time on Cuadrilla's applications for environmental permits for the proposed shale gas exploration sites at Preston New Road and Roseacre Wood, near Blackpool.

The agency has been carrying out a rigorous assessment of Cuadrilla's applications and the comments made by the public during the first period of consultation, which closed in August.

Based on this assessment they said they were minded to grant Cuadrilla the environmental permits needed to carry out their operations but would welcome any new relevant information for consideration before making a final decision.

This further stage of consultation is intended to give the public and interested groups an opportunity to see the decision making process and have their say on the draft environmental permits.

Any comments relating to the Preston New Road site should be made by 15 December and for the Roseacre Wood site by January 6, 2015.

## **VIRGIN RAIL LAUNCH**

The new direct rail services between Blackpool and London will be launched on Monday 15 December.



Virgin Trains is planning to launch the service with various PR activities at Blackpool North Station on the morning of the inaugural service.

The train company has also agreed to provide copies of the new Blackpool Destination Guide and the Blackpool Business Tourism Guide in the first class lounge at London Euston station.

Virgin has indicated that it is interested in expanding the Blackpool to London timetable if it can make the new service a success.

The electrification of the rail line between Blackpool and Preston is due to be completed by 2016, allowing faster and more frequent rail services to and from the resort.

## **BLACKPOOL AIRPORT TO REOPEN**

Operations at Blackpool Airport will hopefully resume in December, following the establishment of a new company – Squires Gate Operations Ltd.

The move by airport owners Balfour Beatty will support the return of independent aviation businesses to Blackpool, including Bond Offshore Helicopters, which operates services to oil and gas rigs in the Irish Sea.

Discussions are continuing with other small operators including City Wing, which suspended its flights following the closure of the airport in October.

The company says that the establishment of the new company and the reopening of the airport on a limited basis is the first step towards securing a sustainable future for the airport.

The original closure resulted in the loss of 100 jobs, but the new company has begun recruitment of air traffic controllers and other staff to work at the airport from December 1.

## **CREDIT UNION SHOP OPENING**

Blackpool, Fylde & Wyre Credit Union has opened shop premises in the heart of Blackpool town centre.

The credit union was launched five years ago as an employer-led organisation with partners including Blackpool Council, Blackpool and the Fylde College, and NHS Blackpool.



It has since gone on to partner with Fylde and Wyre Councils, Fylde Coast YMCA, and has recently brought in Preston Council as a partner.

It has become one of the fastest growing credit unions in the country and now has over 5,000 members. The new shop premises are based on Birley Street.

### **YEADON WAY CLOSURE**

The £3.6m project to repair Yeadon Way is now underway.

The main route into Blackpool will be closed until March 2015 to allow vital works to be carried out.

A clearly signed diversion route is in place from the end of the M55 via Progress Way, Squires Gate Lane and Lytham Road.

All update information and a map of the diversion route can be found at:

[www.blackpool.gov.uk/yeadonway](http://www.blackpool.gov.uk/yeadonway)

### **ACCOUNTANCY MERGER**

Private equity firm Sovereign Capital has bought Blackpool-based Nixon Williams and merged it with Hertfordshire-based SJD Accountancy as part of a deal worth £100m.

The two acquisitions and merger will create an accountancy services group employing about 280 staff and offer clients services including year-end accounts, corporation tax, book-keeping, payroll services and quarterly VAT calculations.

Nixon Williams which specialises in the IT contractor market, was founded in 1995 by Alan Williams and Andy Nixon and has more than 4,000 clients.

### **AIR POLLUTION SURVEY**

Blackpool was one of only five areas to comply with the EU restrictions on nitrogen dioxide pollution.

A report submitted to the European Commission showed that the EU's limit for NO<sub>2</sub> pollution was exceeded in 38 out of 43 areas of the UK last year. The others that complied were Scottish Borders, Highland, Northern Ireland and Preston.

## Section 5: Requests for private sector support



Blackpool Council has now launched the 2014 *Give A Little* Christmas campaign to distribute donated gifts to children and young people in need across Blackpool.

Over the past three years, the campaign has been heavily supported by the Blackpool Business Leadership Group and the private sector has helped contribute more than £150,000 in cash, gifts and vouchers for events and attractions, ensuring that more than 1,000 children from vulnerable families received Christmas presents each year.

Any businesses interested in supporting the appeal can do so by:

- Donating new toys, games, books, toiletries, clothing or experiences
- Encouraging their own staff to donate

Please note that the campaign is aimed at children and young people aged from 0-19 years old in Blackpool. In all cases, gifts should be new, unwrapped and in their original, unopened packaging. Cash donations can also be made.

Items can be donated at all the main Council offices including the new offices in Bickerstaffe Square (opposite Blackpool North railway station).

The deadline for all donations (cash and/or gifts) is **Monday 8 December**.

If you need any further help or advice, then please email me at:  
[philiip.welsh@blackpool.gov.uk](mailto:philiip.welsh@blackpool.gov.uk).

Otherwise, more details about the campaign can be found at  
[www.blackpool.gov.uk/givealittle](http://www.blackpool.gov.uk/givealittle)

### **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@bitcconnect.org](mailto:ian.fogg@bitcconnect.org)

## **COMMUNITY FOUNDATION**

The Community Foundation for Lancashire has launched its Surviving Winter Appeal.

The annual campaign helps elderly and vulnerable people facing fuel poverty in the colder months.



Last year, the Office for National Statistics estimated that 30,000 more people in England and Wales died in the winter months, an increase of 29% on previous years.

The Community Foundation for Lancashire is just one of 33 community foundations running the campaign across the UK, which last year raised almost £1.5m and helped 23,000 individuals.

Surviving Winter started as a vehicle to recycle Winter Fuel Payment that people had received but didn't feel that they needed. It quickly expanded to take in donations from people of all ages, and of all amounts, which are directed to the local groups supporting vulnerable people in winter. Donations pay for everything from individual bursaries for fuel bills and hot water bottles to lunch clubs for older people and boiler repairs.

If you wish to donate, please visit [www.localgiving.com](http://www.localgiving.com) and search Community Foundation for Lancashire.

## **CHARITY DINNER**

A corporate Christmas event featuring sporting personalities Neil Ruddock and Paul Merson is being staged at the Hilton Hotel on December 10.

Members of the BBLG can obtain a 10% discount for the dinner and charity auction, which has been negotiated by the One Blackpool organisation.

To qualify for the discount, members should quote "One Blackpool" under the additional comments on the booking form and this will be discounted at the point of payment.

For further information, go to:

<http://www.platinumeventprofessionals.co.uk/pec-events/sportsmans-dinner/>

**Philip Welsh**  
**Head of Visitor Economy**