



BLACKPOOL BUSINESS LEADERSHIP GROUP

Business Partnerships Report – November 30, 2012

Section 1: Enterprise & Funding Opportunities

ORACLE CHALLENGE

The search is on for Blackpool's next young entrepreneur. The Oracle Young Enterprise Challenge, which has been launched by Blackpool Council, supported by The Gazette, invites young people to turn a bright idea into a thriving business.



The winner of the challenge will receive £1000 to develop their own business, as well as free use of an office in the young people's hub The Oracle for six months.

The challenge will take place over the next three months, with contestants taking part in a set of workshops to build and develop a basic idea into a potential business, before pitching it to other local entrepreneurs, with the overall winner being selected in January 2013.

Note: A full presentation on the Oracle Challenge – with details of how businesses can get involved - will be made at the November 30 meeting of the Blackpool Business Leadership Group.

GROWING PLACES FUND

Work is now well underway on the new Wallace & Gromit themed ride at Pleasure Beach Resort following the approval of a £2m loan by Lancashire Local Enterprise Partnership. The ride is scheduled to open in time for Easter 2013.

BLACKPOOL TOURISM ACADEMY: SECOND ROUND BID

The consortium of local businesses that submitted an unsuccessful bid to develop a Blackpool Tourism Academy is to make a second attempt to secure £1m of funding.

The consortium met in early November to review Government feedback about the failed bid to the Employer Ownership Of Skills fund and to look at areas in which it would need to be strengthened if a Round 2 bid was to be successful.

Blackpool's bid was one of the 157 appraised in the first round and informal feedback from the Department of Business, Innovation and Skills, indicated that it made it to the final shortlist.

The formal written feedback highlighted the need for a firmer delivery plan, but praised it for being innovative and recommended that a revised proposal be submitted.

The original consortium – comprising Pleasure Beach, Sandcastle, Zoo, Merlin, Cuerden Leisure, Blackpool Transport and Blackpool & The Fylde College - will be strengthened by the inclusion of StayBlackpool and Marketing Blackpool, who will look to develop bespoke training packages for smaller businesses.

Discussions are also taking place with People 1st – the sector skills council for hospitality and visitor economy – to determine whether their involvement could benefit the bid.

The Government published the prospectus for Round 2 in mid-November, revealing that there would be a pot of £150m for businesses to compete for with a deadline of February 28, 2013, for submission of bids. Blackpool Council will provide bid-writing support for the project.

COASTAL COMMUNITIES FUND: SOUTH BEACH

A decision is still awaited on the £1.3m bid to the Coastal Communities Fund submitted by Groundwork at the end of September.

The bid brings together a range of private, public and third sector partners to halt the decline of the South Beach area of Blackpool by supporting economic and cultural activity that complements the housing and social interventions already underway.

The funders carried out an “application interview” in early October in order to clarify some of the outputs relating to job creation, skills development and new business start-ups, and are expected to give a decision before the end of the year.

FUTURE HIGH STREET X FUND

The Blackpool Town Team and other stakeholders including the Blackpool, Fylde & Wyre Economic Development Company have decided not to submit a bid to this fund because of the demanding bidding requirements – one of which requires clear evidence of a scheme that has transformed the High Street since May 2011.

Instead, the Town Team will focus its attention on maximising the £100,000 awarded through the High Street Innovation Fund to benefit Blackpool town centre.

REGIONAL GROWTH FUND

Thornton-based aerospace component company Kilgour Metal Treatments, has submitted a successful £1.2m bid to the Regional Growth Fund.

It will help facilitate the expansion of its operations into Bispham, bringing a vacant 40,000sq ft building back into use and creating 60 new jobs. The bid has been approved subject to due diligence.

CREATIVE PEOPLE & PLACES FUND

Following the Arts Council's award of £3m to Blackpool and Wyre, a full project delivery plan is now being developed by the various bid partners. The plan will span a three-year period commencing spring 2013. Bid partners included Blackpool Grand Theatre, Blackpool Coastal Housing, Merlin, Blackpool Council and Wyre Council.

Note: Polly Hamilton from Blackpool Council will be providing a detailed presentation on the Creative People & Places fund and its potential benefits for Blackpool at the November 30 meeting.

CITY DEAL

Representatives from Cabinet Office and the Department of Business, Innovation and Skills visited the Fylde Coast in September to explore whether the area could bid for a "City Deal" under which more decision-making powers are handed over to local government in exchange for delivery of economic growth.

After exploring various options, it was subsequently announced that Preston would be the only area within Lancashire to be invited to bid for City Deal status. If the bid is successful, it is anticipated that the wider community across Lancashire could benefit and Blackpool Council is already exploring ways in which it can contribute growth plans.

Section 2: Town Centre Economy

TALBOT GATEWAY CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT UPDATE

Work has started on the transformation of the run-down Talbot Road multi-storey car park into a modern and family-friendly car park.

The work will include a glass façade, new lifts and refurbishment of stairwells. The ground floor will be converted into six retail units (see artists' impression below).

Once completed, the car park will provide over 600 spaces – roughly the same as now with the loss of spaces on the ground floor being replaced by the reopening of the rooftop car park. It is anticipated that the work will be completed by the start of the 2013 summer season.



Work has also commenced on the construction of the new Blackpool Council offices. This will comprise a five-storey building with retail units on the ground floor and rentable office space on the first floor, with the remaining three floors occupied by Blackpool Council staff. The scheduled completion date is spring 2014.

Preparation works are also underway for the start of construction works on the new Sainsbury's supermarket. The store, which will include a two-storey car park with over 600 spaces, is also due to be handed over in the spring of 2014.

There will be various traffic restrictions in place during the construction stages. Up-to-date information on road closures and diversions will soon be available on a dedicated website which is being created by Muse, the lead developers for the Talbot Gateway scheme. The website address is www.talbotgateway.com

TOWN CENTRE TRAVEL OPTIONS

In the meantime, town centre businesses are being urged to look at different travel options for their staff as work on the Central Business District temporarily limits availability of car parking spaces, with planned closures at Grosvenor Street, Seed Street car parks and Talbot Road multi-storey.

In order to free up as many spaces as possible for shoppers, town centre businesses are being asked to encourage their staff to look at alternatives to the car such as public transport, cycling or walking, rather than taking up car parking spaces. Blackpool Council staff are being encouraged to do likewise.

Blackpool Council's Sustainable Travel Team is offering to support businesses by providing personal travel plans for individuals, giving information on public transport services, or offering advice on the best cycling or walking routes.

Any business interested in working with the team should contact Adamene Banks on 01253 476261 or e-mail sustainable.travel@blackpool.gov.uk

BIRLEY STREET SHOP RE-BUILD

A town centre shop that was seriously damaged by fire is to be re-built. The Crowdstopper discount store, next to the Co-operative supermarket on Birley Street, has lain partly derelict since the fire destroyed over half of the property including the front façade and roof. Architects say that the plans for the re-build feature a more traditional design for the shop frontage.

VACANT SHOPS

The number of vacant units in Blackpool town centre has fallen from 16.3% to 14.2% over the past three months. A premise-by-premise survey carried out in November showed that a number of empty units had been occupied, some of them by Christmas "pop up" stores, including the former Poundland store on Church Street.

TOWN CENTRE CHRISTMAS CAMPAIGN

The Town Centre BID has co-ordinated a Christmas campaign centred on St John's Square. The festive fair runs for six weeks (until January 4) and includes:

- Family fun fair with rides for children and adults
- A food and drink emporium and Santa's grotto
- Light show with lasers, projected images and illuminated figures
- On-stage entertainment includes local choirs and bands

Free parking is available at West Street and East Topping Street car parks and at the Houndshell Centre on Thursday evenings between 5pm and 9pm until December 20.

TOWN TEAM UPDATE

The Town Team is scheduled to meet on Friday 7th December to focus attention on two issues - empty shops and the night-time economy. The meeting will take the form of a two-hour workshop. An update will be provided at the next BBLG meeting.

NEW BID CHAIRMAN

Michael Williams of Cuerden Leisure (operator of the Winter Gardens) has been appointed chair of the Blackpool Town Centre BID board. He replaces Ed Christiano who left the board earlier this year.

Section 3: Visitor Economy

VISITOR NUMBERS

Blackpool has enjoyed its best summer visitor numbers for four years – despite some of the worst weather on record.

The latest national Omnibus survey reveals that Blackpool enjoyed 6.96m visits between May and August – compared to 5.2m visits over the same period in 2011.

At the same time, visitor satisfaction ratings for the resort have risen to a record high of 95%, compared to 90% in the same period last year.

The increase of approximately 1.7m visits has been reached through a sharp increase in the number of day trippers. These day trips accounted for 58% of all trips recorded between May and August, with the remaining 42% involving at least one night overnight stay.

Single most important reasons for visiting the resort between May and August were:

- Coastal location including beach and seafront (22% of all respondents)
- Pleasure Beach Resort (16%)
- Family friendly attractions including Zoo, Sandcastle, Tower etc (14%)
- Entertainment/nightlife (11%)

The Illuminations switch-on event, which featured a host of stars from the London 2012 Olympics, was the best-attended event during the four-month period.

Year-to-date (January to August), the total number of visits is 11.89m compared to 10.57m last year.

The Omnibus survey is a national survey based on more than 4,000 household interviews across the UK.

COMEDY CARPET AWARD

The Comedy Carpet has beaten off competition from across the UK to win a prestigious sculpture award.

The landmark attraction opposite Blackpool Tower, which features jokes and catchphrases from world famous comedians, has won the prestigious Marsh Award for Excellence in Public Sculpture.

It was named as joint winner with the Indian Ocean Tsunami Memorial in London.

The carpet, created by Gordon Young, was shortlisted against seven other major works of art including a controversial 7ft 6in statue of Michael Jackson commissioned by former Harrods owner Mohamed Al-Fayed at Fulham Football Club.

Founded in 2005, the Marsh Award is the main award for public sculpture for the UK.

CAMELOT CLOSURE

Camelot Theme Park at Charnock Richard has closed, with the operator blaming a decline in visitors for the decision. Operators Knights Leisure said the attraction, which has been open for 29 years, would not re-open for the 2013 season.

BATHING WATERS

New figures illustrate the scale of the challenge facing Blackpool in attempting to meet the rigorous new quality standards due to come into place in 2015.

Results produced by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs revealed that 80% of beaches in the North West achieved compliance with the minimum European water quality standard, but only 10% (and none on the Fylde Coast) achieved the more rigorous standards that will form the basis of compliance required from 2015.

Beaches that achieved the minimum standard were Blackpool Central, St Annes, St Annes North, Bispham and Fleetwood. Blackpool South, Blackpool North and Cleveleys all failed.

Various partners including DEFRA, United Utilities, the Environment Agency and the Fylde Coast local authorities are seeking to address the problems that contribute to the bathing water issue – and particularly those arising from heavy rainfall.

It is believed that some of the disappointing results throughout the UK were the result of one of the wettest summers on record. During periods of intense rainfall, pollution from farmland, roads and drains is washed into water courses.

- Thanks to those businesses that responded to the SeaLife Centre's appeal for volunteers to take part in Beach Clean events in Blackpool during October.
- Please note that Annie Heslop, the newly appointed Fylde Beach Care Officer has joined the Blackpool Business Leadership Group and will act as a liaison officer between the business community and the Fylde Peninsula Water Management Group. A more detailed update on the bathing waters issue will be provided at the January 2013 meeting.

SANDCASTLE CLOSED FOR WINTER

The Sandcastle Waterpark closed at the end of the Illuminations season to enable the installation of a new combined heating and power unit. This will ensure that the temperature within the waterpark can be maintained at a constant 84 degrees.

The waterpark will be closed for the remainder of this year and is scheduled to reopen in time for the February 2013 half-term holiday.

Section 4: General Information

999 WHAT'S YOUR EMERGENCY?

To date, the chairman of Channel 4 has not responded to the letter that the Blackpool Business Leadership Group sent to him after its last meeting, challenging him about the negative impact that the programme was having on Blackpool.

However, Claire Smith (Number One Hotels) has received a response from Blast, the company that produced the documentary series, and Martin Long, the chair of the BBLG, has received a formal response from Chief Supt Richard Debicki, the divisional police commander for the western division.

Copies of all correspondence are being sent out with this report and a discussion on how Blackpool can start to over-turn some of the negative perceptions created by the programme is scheduled for the November 30 meeting of the BBLG.

COLLECTIVE ENERGY SWITCHING

Blackpool Council has joined a collective energy switching scheme which enables households to join together as a single unit to negotiate cheaper energy bills. It is estimated that residents could see energy savings of between £60 and £200 a year.

Twelve local authorities (led by Peterborough) have joined forces in the scheme which will eventually be opened to small to medium enterprise businesses too.

In this first phase, residents (and employees of businesses) are being encouraged to visit www.readytoswitch.co.uk between now and **Monday 17th December** to register their details free of charge, giving current energy usage figures for gas and electricity. Residents who use pre-payment meters can also register.

The scheme works by means of a reverse auction where energy suppliers will be invited on December 18 this year to bid the lowest price to supply the energy to all those signed up for the scheme.

Residents will then be sent an offer to switch provider and accept their new energy rates and could be on a new lower energy rate by the start of 2013.

A list of frequently asked questions about the scheme is available on the "Ready to Switch" website www.readytoswitch.co.uk. Alternatively, residents can contact Blackpool Council Customer First on 01253 477477 for more information or help with offline registrations.

The scheme will also be the first in the UK to invite small and medium enterprises (SMEs) to take part, which could result in savings for over 100,000 businesses. Registration and auctions for this phase will be held in January 2013.

NOTE: Businesses are being invited to draw their employees' attention to the scheme. A flyer will be circulated to members of the BBLG immediately after the November 30 meeting. Note that the deadline for initial registration is December 17.

POLICE & CRIME COMMISSIONER FOR LANCASHIRE

Clive Grunshaw has been elected as Lancashire's first Police and Crime Commissioner. Mr Grunshaw has been a Wyre councillor for 18 years and is the leader of Wyre Labour Group. He is also a member of Lancashire Police Authority.

MANX2.COM

Flight booking company Manx2.com has undergone a management buyout. The company, which sells domestic flights from the Isle of Man to UK airports including Blackpool, will become Citywing from January 2013.

The buyout was led by managing director David Buck and the new company will remain in the Isle of Man with locally based staff. All existing bookings will be automatically transferred to Citywing.

BARNARDO'S AT RETAIL PARK

Children's charity Barnardo's has taken a lease at Cherry Tree Road retail park in Blackpool. The 6,000sq ft unit will be converted into a Barnardo's donation centre to allow members of the public to drop off donations including larger items such as furniture. The unit will also feature a retail area.

WEST COAST MAIN LINE

The decision to award the West Coast Main Line rail franchise to FirstGroup has been scrapped by the Government.

The Transport Secretary said there were "significant technical flaws" in the bidding process because of mistakes by Department for Transport staff.

FirstGroup was due to take over from early December. Virgin Trains is continuing to operate the line until the issue is resolved.

FIRE SAFETY COURSES ON OFFER

Following recent media coverage relating to fire safety in businesses, Blackpool Airport has asked me to draw attention to the range of fire awareness and safety courses that it can offer.

The courses are offered by the airport's own fire and rescue service and are designed to ensure that employers comply with legal requirements under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order.

The courses available are:

- Fire Safety Awareness
- Fire Warden
- Manual Handling
- Training consultancy and advice

If anyone is interested they can contact the Fire Service team on: 01253 472525 or email fire.training@blackpoolairport.com

The link to the airport's Fire Service website with details of the courses is as follows: <http://www.blackpoolinternational.com/fire-training/about-us>

YEADON WAY CLEAN-UP

One of the principal gateways into Blackpool has been given a facelift. Yeadon Way was closed for two weeks in November to enable a full programme of improvement works to be carried out including repairs to the road surface, cutting back of overgrown vegetation and installation of new street lights.

CYCLE SCHEME

Blackpool Council's hire-a-bike scheme is taking a break over the winter months. The bikes were removed and put into storage at the end of the Illuminations season so that they can be maintained and repaired. The bikes will return in spring 2013.

The break in operations will also allow the Council to review the number and location of "bike stations" across the town.

If any seafront hotels or businesses are interested in hosting bike stations please email me, philip.welsh@blackpool.gov.uk

BBLG MEETINGS 2013

These are the provisional dates for the 2013 meetings of the Blackpool Business Leadership Group:

- Friday 25 January, The Oracle
- Friday 22 March
- Friday 31 May
- Friday 26 July
- Friday 27 September
- Friday 29 November

All meetings start at 8am for 8.30am. Venues for the March, May, July, September and November meetings to be confirmed.

Section 5: Requests for Private Sector Support

GIVE A LITTLE

Last year Blackpool Council launched its inaugural Give A Little Christmas campaign to distribute donated gifts to children and young people in need across Blackpool.

The campaign was endorsed and extensively supported by the Blackpool Business Leadership Group. In total, the private sector helped contribute more than £50,000 in cash, gifts and vouchers for events and attractions, ensuring that more than 1,000 children from vulnerable families received Christmas presents.

The appeal was so successful that the Council has decided to run its campaign again this year. The chair of the BBLG, Martin Long, has confirmed that the Business Leadership Group will again support the appeal as much as it is able. Any businesses interested in supporting the appeal can do so by:

- Donating cash, new toys or festive non-perishable food items (eg, selection boxes)
- 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 and in their original, unopened packaging.

Items can be donated at the reception points of all the main Council offices and The Gazette offices. Cash donations can also be made at Customer First on Corporation Street. The deadline for donations is **Monday 10th December**.

If you need any further help or advice, then please contact me direct. Similarly, a small number of posters and leaflets are available to promote the campaign. If you require any, please contact me at: philip.welsh@blackpool.gov.uk

SPIRIT OF LANCASHIRE AWARDS

The Community Foundation for Lancashire is returning to Blackpool to stage its annual awards event. It will be staged at the The Village Heron's Reach on the evening of February 21st, 2013.

Instead of a formal dinner, the event will include a reception and then a theatre-style awards ceremony with six awards being made to deserving individuals and organisations from across Lancashire.

There are a range of sponsorship packages available. Any businesses interested should contact Helen Goodwin. Tel: 0151-232-2416 or email helen.goodwin@lancsfoundation.org.uk

SNOW BALL

Blackpool Carers' Centre will be holding its Snow Ball event at The Hilton Hotel, Blackpool, on Saturday 19th January. Any businesses interested in taking a table at the event should contact Kay Shawcross. Tel: 01253-393748 or email: kay@blackpoolcarers.org

VOLUNTEERS SOUGHT FOR WORK FOUNDATION STUDY

The Work Foundation is looking for half a dozen businesses to take part in a study on youth unemployment.

The study is a national one, but the foundation is focusing on areas with higher than average levels of youth unemployment. They are hoping to speak to businesses in Blackpool about their experiences of employing young people in order to understand the barriers to work that they face.

Participation in the research consists of a short interview, the results of which remain anonymous within the study.

Can any businesses willing to take part please email me at philip.welsh@blackpool.gov.uk and I will pass on your contact details.

BLACKPOOL.GOV WEBSITE

Thanks to those businesses that responded to the survey on the future development of the www.blackpool.gov.uk website.

A total of 16 businesses responded, most of whom use the site on a regular basis. Almost half of them said they did not find the site particularly easy to use and a third were not impressed by the design or content of the site.

The comments have all been fed back to the development team who are working on the new-look site.

Philip Welsh
Head of Partnerships & Business Development