



# BLACKPOOL BUSINESS LEADERSHIP GROUP

## Business Partnerships Report – September 27, 2013

### Section 1: New Jobs & Investment

#### **QUINDELL/AI CLAIMS**

Quindell Portfolio plc, which acquired Blackpool-based Ai Claims Solutions in April 2012, has announced that it is to create 100 new jobs in the resort over the next six months.

Recruitment is currently underway which will take the total number of employees at the Blackpool site to around 600.

Quindell has also revealed that it will soon be re-branding Ai as Quindell Business Process Services. At the time of acquisition, Ai was one of the top three providers of accident management services to insurance companies, brokers and vehicle manufacturers.

#### **BURTONS**

Burton's – the company behind Jammie Dodgers and Wagon Wheels – is to invest £2m in its Blackpool site.

The Burton's Biscuit Company, which announced in the summer that it was being put up for sale, wants to establish the Blackpool manufacturing facility as the company's "Cookie Centre of Excellence".

The investment will enable cookie manufacturing capacity to increase by nearly 700 tonnes per year.

The move is part of part of a wider £13m investment in supply chain and manufacturing capabilities to help secure the future supply of products to retailers.

Burton's has stressed that although a process for the possible sale of the company would begin soon, it is "business as usual" for its operations in Blackpool and other parts of the UK.



## **CASDON**

Blackpool-based toy manufacturer Casdon has reported that it is planning to expand its operations following a rise in sales, underpinned by growth in the United States.

The company has revealed that it is embarking on its first recruitment programme in eight years and is looking to establish a permanent showroom in Hong Kong.

The company is seeking to recruit administrative staff to process overseas orders at its Blackpool head office.

## **FYLDE COAST MEDICAL SERVICES**

Around 100 jobs are being created at a call centre operating an advice helpline for elderly people. Fylde Coast Medical Services will operate The Silver Line, a service launched by Esther Rantzen and aimed at older people who feel isolated

The company won the contract to handle calls for the whole of the country following a successful trial period. Some of the new staff will be based at the existing offices on Whitegate Drive, Blackpool, with others based at Wesham, near Kirkham.

FCMS has been providing the clinical services for all out-of-hours medical matters for the Blackpool, Fylde and Wyre areas since 1994.

## Section 2: Enterprise & Funding Opportunities

### **SUPERFAST LANCASHIRE**

A free event is being staged for small to medium enterprises in early October as part of the roll out of Superfast Broadband.

It is being staged at Preston North End Football Club at 9am on **Friday 4 October**. The day will include an opening session with futurologist Dr Nicola Millard, followed by a keynote speech from Olympic gold medallist Chris Boardman on building a successful business.

There will also be a series of expert-led taster sessions on:

- Successful social media and digital marketing
- The World Wide Web, your website and you
- Building a business in the digital age
- What 'Cloud Computing' can do for your business

There will also be an opportunity to visit the Superfast Lancashire marketplace and find out about further business support opportunities. Food and refreshments will be provided throughout the day.

To register your interest, go to <https://www.superfastlancashire.com/free-event-4-oct>

## **BLACKPOOL INVESTMENT FUND**

The new Blackpool Investment fund, offering grants and loans to local businesses, was officially launched on September 17.

The fund has been established by Blackpool Council to assist businesses to bring forward investment plans to create growth and jobs in the local economy.

The fund is being launched at a time when a number of public funding opportunities are available across Lancashire. The Blackpool Investment Fund aims to complement these resources and, in certain cases, support investment that is not deemed eligible by these funds (eg, retail). The investment fund will support the following types of application:

- **Loan only** – towards an overall business expansion proposal
- **Capital grant only** – supporting investment in machinery, property improvement, building expansion, or associated infrastructure improvements
- **Loan and capital grant combination** – where there is a distinct need for capital investment as well as an additional loan requirement.



The Council is looking to co-invest in the following priority areas: Blackpool Town Centre; South Beach District Centre; existing businesses with growth ambitions; new businesses with growth potential

The application process is entirely online and in two stages. Applicants are required to complete a light touch expression of interest. Once eligibility has been confirmed, you will be invited to submit a full application to illustrate the business case for investment. To make an expression of interest go to:

<https://lancashireforms.evolutive.co.uk/formpreapp1.aspx>

Or, for further information, email: [bif@blackpool.gov.uk](mailto:bif@blackpool.gov.uk)

## **REGIONAL GROWTH FUND**

The fifth round of the Regional Growth Fund (RGF) will be launched in October, the Government has revealed. It is anticipated that around £300m will be available for businesses.

The round will require minimum bids of £1m for projects which can generate significant private sector investment and create sustainable jobs. Round 5 will open to applications on 11 October and close on 9 December 2013.

In July, it was announced that Lytham-based Helical Technology, which makes high-tech engine and exhaust components for some of the world's most famous vehicle brands and which recently opened a new technical centre at Warton, had been conditionally awarded a share of the £506m made available in Round 4 of the RGF.

## Section 3: Town Centre Economy

### **TALBOT GATEWAY**

A mix of local and international food businesses are set to become the first tenants to set up shop in Blackpool's new Talbot Gateway Central Business District.

Mr Basrai's World Buffet & Bar has signed up to move into one of the ground floor units being created in the former bus station below the multi-storey car park on Talbot Road.

Lunchtime take-away Snack, a family-run business owned by Blackpool-born husband and wife, Richard and Barbara Beckett, will open in the adjacent new office block, to be known as Number One Bickerstaffe Square. There will also be a new gym complex within the office complex.

The £220m Talbot Gateway scheme, being developed in conjunction with Blackpool Council's development partner, Muse Developments, will result in new retail, commercial and community space in addition to town centre parking and transport facilities.

The overall scheme includes a new public square, Blackpool Council offices, restaurants, retail units and a new Sainsbury's supermarket that will create 400 new jobs. Recruitment for Sainsbury's is expected to start before the year-end.

The scheme is expected to be completed in full by summer 2014 and further tenants are expected to be confirmed soon by joint letting agents Montagu Evans LLP and Duxbury's Commercial. **Note:** Duxbury's will be presenting on business opportunities within the Talbot Gateway scheme at the November meeting of the BBLG

After some delays, the Talbot Road Bus Station multi-storey car park is expected to reopen over the next few weeks.

### **TRAMWAY EXTENSION**

Blackpool's tram system is to be extended from the promenade at North Pier to Blackpool North railway station.

The £18m scheme has been included in a package of road and rail improvements put together by the newly-formed Transport For Lancashire group to boost economic growth across the region.

All of the schemes are to be completed over the next 10 years.

The tramway extension will improve access to the national rail network for people living in Blackpool, Fleetwood and Cleveleys and will also connect with the new Talbot Gateway development.

The Department for Transport will contribute £16.4m towards the project, with Blackpool Council contributing the rest.

### **YATES'S WINE LODGE SITE**

A £3million redevelopment has finally got underway at the former Yates's Wine Lodge site in Blackpool town centre.

National construction company RECO Build secured the contract to design and build a 26,000 sq ft leisure and retail project on the site of the burnt down and now demolished Yates's building opposite Blackpool Town Hall.

Plans are for two restaurants (including Cosmo, the pan-Asian banquet chain) and a retail unit at the new three-storey building. The project has been designed in a modern art-deco style that reflects the heritage of the landmark. It includes a clock tower in an ornate white stone and featured iron balcony.

The 40-week build means the businesses on the new site should be operational for the start of Blackpool Illuminations in autumn 2014.

RECO Build plans to use local sub contractors and construction workers during the project that should mean scores of semi-permanent jobs for bricklayers, glaziers and general building suppliers.

### **WINTER GARDENS CINEMA PLAN**

Plans have been submitted to enable Blackpool Opera House to be used as a high-quality film venue.

The installation of a giant screen with state-of-the-art sound and digital projection equipment will create the opportunity to screen international film premieres, live musical events and themed movie festivals.

The cinema will not compete with Blackpool Odeon by screening new film releases, but will instead focus on special events. Initially, the cinema experience would be confined to the stalls and circle, providing a capacity of 2,200 seats.

A planning application to install the equipment within the Winter Gardens has been received and is being progressed. It is hoped that the cinema will be operational by October.

### **EARLY MORNING RESTRICTION ORDER (EMRO)**

The hearing into the proposed EMRO order for Blackpool town centre is to be re-scheduled following the postponement of the original hearing that was set for September 4 and 5. It is estimated that the new hearing will run for five days.

Consultations over the revised date for the hearing are continuing as are discussions with businesses operating within the night-time economy.

### **BLACKPOOL, FYLDE & WYRE CREDIT UNION**

Blackpool, Fylde & Wyre Credit Union is seeking town centre shop premises after winning a £42k grant award from the Barclays Community Finance Fund. The credit union, which has around 3,500 members, is currently based in offices on Birley Street without any High Street presence. It is seeking a unit somewhere in the same area where it can more effectively compete with pay day lenders.

## **TOWN TEAM WALKABOUTS**

The pedestrianised area on Bank Hey Street (at the rear of the Tower buildings) is being given a facelift.

The general appearance of the area had been highlighted as a concern during a town centre walkabout undertaken by the Town Team earlier in the summer.

Some of the paving blocks have been replaced with Tarmac after various utility repairs and removal of public realm items over the years. These areas will be repaired with materials more in keeping with the street scene.

The Bank Hey Street work is one of several planned improvements in the town centre since the walkabout. These include re-painting of benches, cycle racks and lamp posts; repairs to shop frontages and canopies; and cleaning of more than 300 pavement gullies.

## **EMPTY SHOPS**

At the end of July, Blackpool town centre's vacancy rate stood at 14.9%, a vast improvement on the 16.2% seen at the same time last year. It declined steadily and remained stable from November 2012, but has seen a marginal rise this quarter. Meanwhile, the vacancy rate in South Beach District Centre has fallen from 28% in August 2012 to 24% in August this year – reflecting a net decrease of nine vacant units year on year.

## Section 4: Visitor Economy

### **ILLUMINATIONS SPONSORSHIP**

A more proactive approach to commercial sponsorship has boosted this year's Blackpool Illuminations display, with a number of this year's sections developed through collaborative projects with the private sector.

These include "Art for Walls", which has created the biggest gallery of original illuminated urban art anywhere in the world. Comprising 48 panels from 12 artists, these original street artworks were overseen by Blackpool resident Robin Ross and co-curated by Laurence Llewellyn Bowen. The exhibition has been sponsored by the international design and home décor firm, Graham and Brown.

The arches at South Shore have been given a major makeover for 2013 with a new, vibrant colour scheme, funded by sponsorship from event production firm, Knight Rigging Services.

An enhanced Rocket Tram at Gynn Island has been sponsored by lighting company, Blachere UK and the jewellery company, Beaverbrook's, which has a long association with the Illuminations, has this year taken over sponsorship of the "Bling" section in front of the Tower Festival Headlands.

### **ILLUMINATED WEDDING CEREMONIES**

For the first time in Blackpool's history, couples can say their wedding vows beside the Illuminations following the introduction of evening ceremonies at Festival House on the Tower Festival Headland. The evening ceremonies are available on Thursday Friday and Saturday at 6pm, 7pm, and 8pm each evening until November 9.

## ILLUMINATIONS APP



The 2013 Blackpool Illuminations marks the first venture into new, advanced technology that enables visitors to get an enhanced experience from the famous attraction.

The Blackpool Experience uses Augmented Reality technology to give users access to more than 40 3D holographic images using their own mobile phones and devices.

The special App can be sampled free of charge with a more comprehensive pack of content available for download at £1.99. Part of the proceeds is being donated to charity and the remainder will be reinvested in the Illuminations offer.

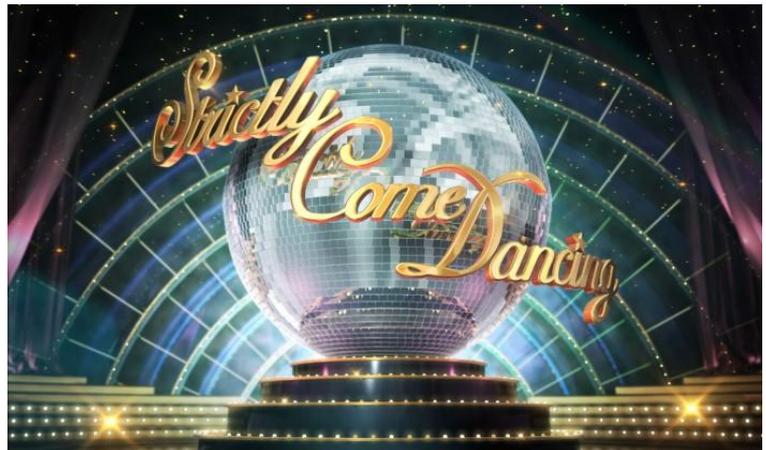
## WALKING TALL

Blackpool Pleasure Beach is giving thrill-seekers the opportunity to “WalkThe Big One” to get a bird’s-eye view of the Illuminations. For £35, guests can walk up the 420 steps to the top of one of Europe’s biggest roller coasters and take in the stunning views from the summit of the 42-acre amusement park. The remaining walks will take place on September 27<sup>th</sup> and October 4<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup>. There is a maximum of six climbers per walk.

## RETURN OF STRICTLY

The BBC has announced that its prime-time show Strictly Come Dancing is returning to Blackpool's Tower Ballroom this year.

The resort missed out on an annual visit from the celebrity dancing competition last year. The final of the 2011 show was filmed at the Tower attracting 12m viewers.



The Blackpool leg of the series will be staged on November 16.

## BEACH BANDS

A new scheme to keep children safe on the beach during busy holiday periods in Blackpool was trialled during the summer with the help of businesses.

Brightly-coloured wristbands were issued to children, on which parents can write down their mobile telephone number and the child’s name.

If a child appears to be lost they can then be easily identified and their parents contacted by the Beach Patrol team or another responsible adult.

The Merlin portfolio of attractions in Blackpool and McDonald’s on South Promenade assisted in giving out the wristbands. It is intended to expand the scheme to include other businesses next year.

## STEAM TOURISM REPORT

The Steam tourism report for Lancashire for 2012 has revealed that visitor numbers in the county increased by 3% (from 60m in 2011 to 62m in 2012) and visitor spend also increased by 3% (from £3.2bn to £3.4bn).

This was on the back of major events in 2012 including the Open Golf Championship at Royal Lytham and the Preston Guild celebrations.

The report shows that Blackpool continues to dominate the visitor economy in Lancashire – accounting for a third of the visitor spend (£1.2bn) and almost 30% of total visitors.

Jobs supported in Blackpool's visitor economy stood at 23,870 in 2012 – although this is a 3% decrease against the 24,570 supported in 2011.

## SAME SEX DANCE FESTIVAL RETURNS

The international Same-Sex open dance festival is to return to Blackpool in October. The event, which was launched in Blackpool last year, attracted competitors from all over the world. This year's festival will see the main competition in The Spanish Hall in the Winter Gardens on Saturday 19 October, with a welcome party at Funny Girls on the previous evening and a social dance at Blackpool Tower on Sunday 20.

Further details at [www.samesexdancefestival.com](http://www.samesexdancefestival.com)

## Section 5: General Information

### FYLDE FOOTBALL STADIUM

Plans to build an £18m football stadium and sports and science park on a site just off the M55 motorway have been revealed.

The proposed park, on a 32-acre site at Mill Farm, near Kirkham,

includes community sports and education facilities as well as new retail, leisure and commercial development. It also incorporates a new 6,000-capacity stadium for non-league football club AFC Fylde.



The plans were revealed by David Haythornthwaite, chairman of AFC Fylde club and owner of the Lytham-based agricultural company, Tangerine Group.

A new company called Mill Farm Ventures has been established to develop the plan, which also includes proposals for all-weather pitches for community use, a food store, distribution centre with associated office space, a 63-bedroom hotel, petrol station and a pub.

If the scheme goes ahead, it could create 200 new jobs within three years.

## **SELECTIVE LICENSING, CLAREMONT**

Blackpool Council has launched a consultation on a rollout of its Selective Licensing scheme in the Claremont area of Blackpool

Selective Licensing requires that all privately rented properties in the area have a licence and that landlords show they manage their properties effectively.

The 10-week consultation on extending the scheme, which is already in place in South Beach, began on September 9.

The proposal will vary slightly from the South Beach scheme, as Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) will be subject to additional licensing to help to tackle dangerous housing conditions.

During the 10-week consultation period there will be a series of public events to allow local residents, landlords and managing agents learn more about the proposal.

## **DRIVE-IN CINEMA**

Plans have been confirmed to stage an outdoor drive-in cinema at Whyndyke Farm (close to the Blackpool end of the M55 motorway) over the October half-term. Films will be shown on a massive screen over three days from October 25-27.

Each of the three days will feature three films, offering something for families and children; film-lovers and Halloween enthusiasts. Impact Events, which is staging the outdoor cinema, says that 100 cars will be allowed into each showing with sound beamed into car sound systems via FM transmitters.

## **BLACKPOOL TO LONDON RAIL LINK**

The Office of Rail Regulation has confirmed that it not going to allow the reinstatement of the Blackpool to London direct rail services in December.

After considering the various submissions and representations, the ORR reaffirmed the decision by Network Rail, stating that Virgin's proposal to reintroduce the services would have a detrimental impact on the journeys of millions of passengers using the route.

However, the ORR's chief executive, Richard Price, said pressure was being exerted on Network Rail to improve its performance and to carry out improvements on the West Coast Mail Line so that the question of new Blackpool to London services can be looked at again "as soon as possible".

Martin Long, chair of the BBLG, has subsequently written to Mr Price expressing extreme disappointment at the decision and pressing for the services to be reinstated as early as May next year.

## **MAYORAL BUSINESS MEETINGS**

The second of the Mayoral business networking meetings held on September 10 attracted around 30 businesses. It is intended to stage the next event at 4.30pm on **Tuesday 10 December**. Invitations will be sent out well in advance. All businesses will be welcome to attend, regardless of whether they have attended either of the first two sessions.

## **CONTRASTING PICTURES**

Blackpool is the poorest of England's larger seaside towns despite attracting the most visitors, a study has found.

The Office for National Statistics said it had the highest level of deprivation of 31 seaside towns analysed. Of the 31, 25 had a higher level of deprivation than the average for England as a whole.

Earlier in the summer, another report produced by the Government think-tank, the Centre for Social Justice, published a report which found that some seaside towns were stuck in a cycle of poverty with "severe social breakdown".

The report, which focused on conditions in five coastal towns including Blackpool, Margate, Clacton, Rhyl and Great Yarmouth, warned that such places with a relatively high proportion of cheap accommodation were in danger of becoming "dumping grounds" for vulnerable people such as children in care and ex-offenders

The report urges Government to ramp up efforts to revive Britain's coastal towns – "not just for visitors, but also for people who live there".

It also argues there is a case for devolving greater powers to district level so they can invest in more proactive services and take power and responsibility for local regeneration.

## **PRESTON CITY DEAL**

A historic City Deal for the Preston area which could help to create thousands of jobs and generate up to £1bn of economic growth has been signed off.

The Government said Preston's City Deal would allow Lancashire to take forward four new road schemes, build more than 17,000 new houses and create 20,000 jobs.

Of the investment needed to carry out the plans, about £130m will come from the Government, a further £130m from councils in Lancashire and £70m from developers.

Among the transport schemes at the centre of the proposal are the Preston Western Distributor, which will improve access to the Warton Enterprise Zone.

## **FOXHALL VILLAGE**

Proposals for a £50m housing development in Blackpool have been approved by planners. A total of 400 new homes will go on two plots of land off Rigby Road in a scheme being delivered by Hollinwood Homes in partnership with Blackpool Council.

The Foxhall Village development comprises two, three, and four-bedroom homes and also includes 70 social housing properties for Great Places Housing Group.

A series of walkways in the scheme will link both sites to Blackpool promenade, town centre and nearby parks.

## Section 6: Requests for Private Sector Support

### **WINTER WONDERLAND CHARITY BALL**

Claremont First Step Community Centre is staging a Winter Wonderland Charity Ball at the Imperial Hotel on **November 30**. Businesses are invited to support the event by buying individual tickets or tables. Further details from: [iamcathyadams@aol.com](mailto:iamcathyadams@aol.com)

### **ASPIRED FUTURES CELEBRATION**

Aspired Futures, the charity that supports local vulnerable children, is inviting members of the BBLG to its Outdoor Regeneration Celebration being held on **Tuesday 1 October** from 5pm at its base - The Lodge, 216 Whitegate Drive, Blackpool.

The event will showcase the newly-refurbished garden area of the Victorian villa, including outdoor classroom, hobbit house and story trail, all made possible due to the generosity of local businesses, charitable organisations and Rotary club donations plus a large grant from the rugby charity, Wooden Spoon. Former England captain Bill Beaumont will be guest of honour.

To attend the event, or to discuss Aspired's new sponsorship pack for businesses, call Lorna on 01253-769755 or email [aspired.futures@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:aspired.futures@yahoo.co.uk)

### **BLACKPOOL CARERS BALL**

Blackpool Carers' Centre is holding a Viva Las Vegas charity ball at The Imperial Hotel on **Saturday 1 February, 2014**. Tables of 10 are available at a reduced rate of £350 if booked and paid for by October 31. After that, tables will cost £395. Call Kay on 01253-393748 for further details. The organisers are also seeking prize donations for the raffle and auction.

### **VITAL SIGNS**

The Community Foundation for Lancashire is to launch a new scheme to help guide charitably-minded people businesses. "Vital Signs", which is based on key social issues together with local people's concerns and aspirations, will be launched on October 1. Further details at [www.lancashirevitalsigns.org.uk](http://www.lancashirevitalsigns.org.uk)

**Note:** The Community Foundation will be at the September 27 meeting to provide further details on Vital Signs.

## Section 7: Congratulations to....

### **BIBA 2013 WINNERS & FINALISTS**

Congratulations to three Blackpool companies that won coveted awards at the BIBA Lancashire business awards staged in front of almost 1,000 people at Blackpool Tower Ballroom on Friday 20 September. The Blackpool-based winners were:

**Manufacturer Of The Year:** Laila's Fine Foods

**Employer Of The Year:** F Parkinson Ltd

**Small Business Of The Year:** Healthpoint

Fylde Coast winners included:

**Most Inspiring Business:** Inspired Energy (Kirkham)

**Excellence In Customer Service:** Universal Products (Kirkham)

**Entrepreneur Of The Year:** Cuffe & Taylor (Lytham St Annes)

A host of Blackpool businesses were also named as finalists in various categories at the awards. These included:

#### **E-Business Of The Year**

Barcadia Media  
The iBox  
The Ink Squid

#### **Green Business Of The Year**

Playtime UK  
F Parkinson Ltd

#### **Exporter Of The Year**

Playtime UK

#### **Service Business Of The Year**

I Care GB

#### **New Business Of The Year**

Darbus  
The Ink Squid  
Colossal Training

#### **Manufacturer Of The Year**

SPS EU Ltd  
Playtime UK

#### **Entrepreneur Of The Year**

Adrian Meakin, The Ink Squid  
Lee Kirton, Colossal Training  
Bob Seddon, Healthpoint

#### **Leadership Team Of The Year**

Danbro  
F Parkinson  
Laila's Fine Foods

#### **Excellence In Customer Service**

Danbro

#### **Employer Of The Year**

Danbro

#### **Business Woman Of The Year**

Deborah Parker, Progress Employment

#### **Business Of The Year**

Danbro  
Laila's Fine Foods  
SPS EU Ltd

#### **Change For Growth Award**

SPS EU Ltd  
Danbro

#### **Medium Business Of The Year**

F Parkinson Ltd

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