



BLACKPOOL BUSINESS LEADERSHIP GROUP

Business Partnerships Report – January 31, 2014

Section 1: Visitor Economy



The 2014 Showzam! Festival of circus, magic and new variety takes place from February 14-23. This year's programme includes the specially commissioned No Fit State Circus, children's favourite Sooty, family show Meet The Hogwallops, the increasingly popular Carnival Ball and a variety of street performers.

There will also be a series of workshops and a wide selection of tours and talks including Pleasure Beach Resort Costume Tours, Palaces of Delight presented by Professor Vanessa Toulmin, and The Blackpool Tower and Circus Heritage Tour.

This year, children at more than 400 primary schools throughout Lancashire will be invited to create their own puppet shows during Showzam! They will all receive a selection of exclusive Showzam! finger puppets that they can customise and use to create their own show.

Details of the full Showzam! Programme can be found at www.showzam.co.uk

BLACKPOOL PRIDE FESTIVAL

The annual Blackpool Pride Festival is taking place over the weekend of June 14 and 15 at the Winter Gardens. The event will include entertainment, a parade on the Saturday, a marketplace within the Winter Gardens and a best dressed town centre business competition with a Mamma Mia! theme.



This year, the event will take place at the same time as the European Same Sex Dance Championships.

A launch party for the Pride Festival will take place on February 28 at Viva Showbar, Blackpool, followed by a Rainbow Resort weekend.

Note: The festival organisers are seeking private sector support by way of sponsorship, advertising or involvement in the marketplace. Contact advertising@blackpoolpridefest.com or visit the website www.blackpoolpridefest.com

MARKETING BLACKPOOL WOUND UP

The reintegration of the visitBlackpool team into Blackpool Council is now almost complete following the decision to wind up Marketing Blackpool as an arms-length company. A key aim of this process has been to ensure that it is “business as usual” for tourism and associated marketing activity during the transition. The marketing and events schedule for 2014 is nearing completion and it is anticipated that arrangements for the autumn Illuminations switch-on will be finalised in early Spring.

RESORT PASS LAUNCH

The 2014 Resort Pass will be launched in the next few weeks. The price of the main pass has been maintained at the 2013 price of £52.50 and includes entry to six attractions including Pleasure Beach and various Merlin attractions. The 2013 pass generated sales of around £1m in its first full year. The launch of the 2014 pass will be supported by extensive marketing and promotional activity.

HARRY HILL MOVIE

Blackpool was showcased to cinema-goers over Christmas with the release of The Harry Hill Movie. Various stars including Julie Walters, Sheridan Smith, Matt Lucas, Simon Bird and, of course, Harry Hill filmed in the resort during 2013.

Locations used in the film included Blackpool Pleasure Beach, Central Pier, The Blackpool Tower and the Comedy Carpet and Promenade.

The Harry Hill Movie was just one of more than 40 films and TV shows filmed in Blackpool during 2013.



ILLUMINATIONS EXTENSION

Blackpool Illuminations is to be extended for one week for a second year in a row.

Merlin Entertainments, who run a number of Blackpool attractions including Blackpool Tower, Sea Life Centre and Madame Tussauds, funded the move last year to help extend the resort's tourist season.

It means the 2014 Illuminations season will now run for 10 weeks from 29 August to 10 November.

UK INBOUND CONFERENCE

Hundreds of tour operators are heading to Blackpool to encourage overseas visitors to holiday in the resort. UKinbound, one of the leading trade associations and the only one which focuses solely on the interests of the UK's inbound tourism sector, is holding its annual two-day convention at The Hilton, Blackpool, on February 5/6. Delegates will take part in a familiarisation visit taking in attractions including Blackpool Pleasure Beach and The Blackpool Tower.

The Business Tourism team at VisitBlackpool successfully secured the conference after taking part in a bidding process with other UK destinations and cities.

COMEDY CARPET BOOK LAUNCH

A new book charting the creation of Blackpool's biggest piece of public artwork – The Comedy Carpet – has gone on sale.

The book, which is available for £25 at the Tourist Information Centre and The Grundy Art Gallery, documents the process of creating the granite artwork, from idea to launch.



Meanwhile, the artwork is receiving international acclaim. An exhibition about The Comedy Carpet has been unveiled at Shanghai's biggest ever design show, Aesthetics City and its creator, Gordon Young, won the Tokyo Type Directors Award, beating more than 350 entries from around the world.

The exhibition is being staged at Shanghai's Power Station of Art, China's equivalent to the Tate Modern. It is on display until the end of March.

HERITAGE MUSEUM

An application for a major grant was submitted to the Heritage Lottery Fund at the end of November 2013. This project is for the creation of a New Museum for Blackpool in the Winter Gardens, incorporating the Pavilion Theatre, Horseshoe and Olympia.

The interactive museum will tell the extraordinary story of Blackpool as the world's first working-class seaside resort, celebrating its contribution to British and Western popular culture.

The whole project totals £21m, although in the first instance Blackpool Council is requesting Heritage Lottery support for the development phase. A second application will be necessary (following the development phase), to release the full grant. External funding will be sought from other sources too.

A decision on the application will be made in April by the Heritage Lottery trustees.

GRUNDY CASH BID

The Grundy Art Gallery has applied for an £80k grant to help in the management of Blackpool's historic collections, including those of the Tower Company, the Winter Gardens and the Illuminations, together with the Grundy Art Gallery's own collection of Victorian, modern and contemporary art.

Together, these collections give an unparalleled view of the development of Blackpool as the first working-class seaside resort in the world. This work will also support the development of the Blackpool Museum project.

Section 2: Town Centre Economy

ST JOHNS SQUARE CONSULTATION

Consultation is underway on proposals to reopen St John's Square to public transport in an attempt to improve journey times and reduce congestion around the town centre.

If re-opened, buses and taxis would be able to travel one way from Church Street through to Abingdon Street. At the same time, more on-street parking and loading bays would be re-instated on to Topping Street.

Any views can be expressed via www.blackpool.gov.uk or by emailing traffic.management@blackpool.gov.uk before the consultation period ends on February 21.

WINTER GARDENS

2013 proved an exceptional year for the Winter Gardens on the back of top-quality West End musicals including Priscilla, Queen Of The Desert; Cabaret; Scrooge The Musical; Blood Brothers; and Joseph, enhanced by sell-out concerts by Bob Dylan, Gary Barlow and Arcade Fire.

Visit Britain has estimated that the Winter Gardens generated around £70m for the visitor economy in Blackpool during 2013, with spin-off benefits for hotels, restaurants and bars.

2014 will see the return of the first summer season-long West End musical in years when the international production of Mamma Mia! opens at the Opera House on June 20 for a 10-week run. That will be followed in the October half-term by a week-long run for Riverdance.

EMRO HEARING

The hearing into a proposed Early Morning Restriction Order (EMRO) in Blackpool town centre will take place between February 3 and 7.

Blackpool Council's licensing committee had previously adjourned the hearing following representations from legal representatives for a number of pubs and bars.

The proposed EMRO would prohibit the sale of alcohol between the hours of 3am and 6am, Monday to Sunday, in a designated area of the town centre.

It is aimed at addressing recurring problems within the town centre such as high levels of alcohol-related crime and anti-social behaviour that is not directly attributable to specific premises.

The areas affected (all or part of) are: Queen Street/Queen Square; Springfield Road; Promenade (between New Bonny Street and Banks Street); Bank Hey Street; Market Street; Dickson Road; Talbot Road; West Street; Corporation Street; Abingdon Street and The Strand. A total of 24 premises in this area currently have the ability to sell alcohol after 3am.

More than 70 submissions have been made to Blackpool Council over the proposal. These can be viewed at www.blackpool.gov.uk/emro

Section 3: Enterprise & Economic Development

SAINSBURY'S RECRUITMENT

The new Sainsbury's superstore within the Talbot Gateway development has begun its main recruitment drive. Over 300 jobs were on offer during two open days at the Winter Gardens at the start of January. Key supervisory posts have been available since November. Training for recruited staff will take place at neighbouring Bispham and Lytham stores in preparation for the opening later this year.

ASSISTED AREA STATUS

Blackpool is on the verge of being granted Assisted Area status by Government for the first time.

Eleven Blackpool wards, together with five from Wyre and two from Fylde have been included in the draft Assisted Areas map for 2014-2020.

Assisted Area status allows small businesses and large enterprises in less economically advantaged locations around the UK and Europe to benefit from additional support under EU Regional Aid guidelines.

- The Blackpool Business Leadership Group is invited to endorse the inclusion of Blackpool in the Assisted Areas Map. If the group is agreeable, a letter will be sent prior to the consultation closing on February 7.

BUSINESS GROWTH EVENTS

Blackpool Council's economic development team is organising a series of events in the first half of 2014 in order to stimulate business growth.

These include a range of bespoke business growth programmes under the Boost Business Lancashire programme including business growth coaching and mentoring; help in accessing finance; as well as free training under *Superfast Lancashire* demonstrating how businesses can work smarter with software and hardware designed for faster broadband capability (see below).

The next element in the programme is an hour-long workshop on HR and marketing delivered by *Propel* on February 13. A larger, day-long event is planned for March 13 with both established business support and a start-up strand. Further events are planned after March. Further details from peter.legg@blackpool.gov.uk

SUPERFAST LANCASHIRE

Another free event is being staged by Superfast Lancashire for SME businesses interested in accessing the new broadband services. It will be held on February 5 at Burnley Football Club and includes a keynote speech from Dragon's Den entrepreneur, Kirsty Henshaw.

It will also include expert-led taster master classes in social media and digital marketing, building a business in the digital age and cloud computing. There will also be a marketplace where businesses can learn about further business support opportunities in Lancashire.

To book a place, go to www.superfastlancashire.com

BLACKPOOL & FYLDE COLLEGE EXPANSION

Blackpool and The Fylde College has announced major investment plans to train the next generation of highly-skilled workers in the advanced engineering and manufacturing sectors.

The development includes building a new Advanced Technology Centre at the Bispham campus that will deliver the type of skills required by students wanting to work in the advanced engineering and



manufacturing industry. The skills shortage in that particular sector is one of the key priorities identified by the Lancashire Local Enterprise Partnership.

The £10m project will be part-funded by the Skills Funding Agency under its College Capital Investment Fund, aimed at supporting skills training in those sectors deemed vital for growing British industry. The project will also see the Construction Skills Centre developed further to support the construction and renewable technology industries.

Work on the Construction Skills Centre is scheduled to take place from March to December this year, and the Advanced Technology Centre from June 2014 to July 2015, opening to students in September 2015.

CITIES HEALTH CHECK

An annual health check of UK cities has warned that economic recovery is widening the gap between London and other towns and cities. The report by the urban economic think tank, Centre For Cities, shows that for every single public sector job created in London between 2010 and 2012, two have been lost in other parts of the UK.

The report makes particular reference to Blackpool as one of a number of areas that has seen net job losses in both public and private sector. The figures show that since 2010 (used as a starting point for the beginning of the economic recovery), Blackpool has lost 5,900 private sector jobs and a further 1,900 public sector jobs.

Section 4: General News

PROGRESS TO CEASE TRADING

Progress Employment Support has announced that it will cease trading from March 31 this year.

Progress, which is based at the New Blackpool Enterprise Centre on Lytham Road, was founded 25 years ago from within the local authority.

It was subsequently established as Progress Recruitment, a limited company and registered charity, and separated from the Council. Over the past 12 years, it has been able to support more than 2000 people with disabilities, though in recent years its operations have been affected by cuts and changes in funding streams.

The company has now entered a period of consultation with its employees.

HOUSING STANDARDS

Public consultation on the introduction of a second selective licensing scheme in Blackpool, covering the whole of Claremont ward, has been completed.

The scheme is planned to include additional licensing of Houses in Multiple Occupation. Like the first scheme in South Beach, all private rented properties would be required to obtain a licence from the Council and comply with licence conditions that aim to improve management in the private rented sector and help reduce anti-social behaviour. Subject to approval it is envisaged that the scheme will be launched during April.

Meanwhile, Blackpool Council has been given almost £293,000 by Government to help continue to tackle rogue landlords and drive up housing standards.

The money from the Department for Communities and Local Government will be used to pay for extra enforcement officers who will work with landlords to solve problems at dangerous and unfit properties.

There will be particular focus on ensuring that conversions of disused hotels and guest houses produce high-quality homes; tackling landlords and managing agents who rent out the largest numbers of sub-standard properties; and providing better guidance and training for landlords.

QUEENS PARK TOWER BLOCKS

Demolition has commenced on Queens Park estate to make way for the construction of the first 92 homes. Five blocks of maisonettes and two of the five towers will disappear from the town's skyline by March of this year.

The demolition will be undertaken in phases to enable construction to commence at the northern (Talbot Road) end of the site. Delivery of first homes for occupation is scheduled in stages from summer 2014. The project is currently on schedule to meet a completion deadline of March 2015.

FOXHALL VILLAGE

The first phase of the remediated site has been handed over to Hollinwood Homes and construction of the first homes is now underway. The first 70 new properties will be completed by March 2105.

Acquisitions in the Tyldesley Road/Blundell Street block continue to progress with Council ownership now exceeding half of the 44 properties with negotiation continuing on a number of further acquisitions.

CENTRAL DRIVE CONTRAFLOW

Work is continuing on the construction of the Central Drive bus and taxi contraflow scheme. The scheme is funded by Department for Transport as part of Blackpool Council's successful bid to the Better Bus Area fund.

Detailed traffic management plans for the works have been prepared to minimise disruption on this important route and it is intended whenever possible to maintain at least one lane open on Central Drive into the town centre through the works. Work is progressing according to the programme and should be completed in March 2014.

YEADON WAY PROJECT

Blackpool Council's bid to the Department for Transport's Local Pinch Point Fund for resources to repair Yeadon Way has been successful. The fund will make £2.5m of grant available towards the total project cost of £3.6m. This will enable the Yeadon Way structure to be repaired to provide a 25-year lifespan and for heavier vehicles to be accommodated.

Any future development on the former Central Station car park site depends upon this road's condition being guaranteed.

The scheme has to be completed by 31st March 2015 to meet Department for Transport deadlines for spending the grant funding. Work will take place between January 2014 and March 2015, with steps taken to avoid disrupting peak tourism periods where possible.

STANLEY PARK ADVENTURE COURSE

Blackpool Council is considering developing a high ropes adventure course adjacent to Blackpool Sports Centre. The course, which will be created using a combination of trees and artificial columns connected by steel ropes, would be open to use for adults and for children aged five upwards.

If agreed, it will also incorporate other activities including an underground tunnel maze that provides an introduction to caving; orienteering; mountain bike hire and corporate team building activities.

MARTON MERE INVESTMENT

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

Various partners including Blackpool Council, Bourne Leisure, and the Nature Watch group, are teaming up to develop a new visitor centre; build new and renovate existing bird hides; and carry out a range of environmental improvements at Marton Mere Local Nature Reserve.

Marton Mere is the only designated Local Nature Reserve and Site of Special Scientific Interest in Blackpool and is nationally recognised for its birdlife.

SPORTS STARS JOIN HEALTH CAMPAIGN

A range of high-profile local sports stars have joined forces to improve health and wellbeing across Blackpool.

Former England captain Jimmy Armfield, paralympian Shelly Woods, boxer Brian Rose and Lancashire cricketer Stephen Croft are all featured in the new Altogether Now – A Legacy For Blackpool film which seeks to target various health issues that blight the town's population.

The campaign is partnered by the NHS in Blackpool, Blackpool Council and Blackpool Football Club.

The new film featuring the health ambassadors is shown on the big screen at Bloomfield Road before and during each home game.

TANGERINE CONFECTIONERY

The Blackpool-based sweet manufacturer, Tangerine Confectionery, has appointed a new chief executive. He is Benoit Testard, who joined the private-equity backed business as a non-executive director in October. He will take up his new role in early March.

YOU SWITCH

The number of businesses taking up the Make It Cheaper energy switching scheme (promoted at one of the BBLG meetings last year) is higher in Blackpool than anywhere else in the country, with 10 SMEs in the town taking the opportunity to switch suppliers in order to save money.

The scheme is now open all year round. Any SME interested in taking part should contact Janine.bradley@blackpool.gov.uk

FRACKING – COMMUNITY BENEFITS

Cuadrilla Resources has announced an agreement with the Community Foundation for Lancashire under which the foundation will run a pilot scheme managing community benefit funds at upcoming Cuadrilla shale gas exploration sites in Lancashire.

The pilot will be run independently by the Community Foundation, which is part of the network of UK Community Foundations.

A community benefit of £100,000 will be paid by Cuadrilla for each exploration wellhead where hydraulic fracturing takes place. This payment will be made into the community fund as drilling operations commence on each well.

The Community Foundation will be responsible for coordinating a consultation into how local residents and community groups would like to see that funding distributed for public benefit and will administer the scheme to ensure a transparent process that delivers benefit to the community.

- The Government is considering increasing the percentage return for local communities once the extraction of shale gas is underway. The initial proposal was for 1% of revenue to be reallocated to local communities, but after pressure from backbench Tories, the Government is reviewing the benefits on offer.

HAROLD LARWOOD PARK

A Blackpool park where a sweet shop owned by the legendary Ashes cricketer, Harold Larwood once stood has been named in his honour. The park on Victory Road, is now officially called Harold Larwood Park in memory of the cricketer who terrorised Australian batsmen during the 1932-33 Ashes series.

Section 5: Requests for Private Sector Support

BLOC ROC SEEKING A VENUE

The organisers of a grassroots youth project which launched in Blackpool towards the end of last year are searching for a venue in order to continue their innovative work.

BLOC ROC was launched at the Winter Gardens with an indoor festival featuring live entertainment, workshops and interactive sessions, attracting over 3,000 young people.

It aims to provide a creative platform to engage, educate and empower young people in the town using music, art, dance, fashion and urban sports.

The project is supported by Blackpool Council and Lancashire police, and is particularly aimed at those teenagers who have little or no exposure to the creative arts and very limited job opportunities.

The team are planning further events in 2014 but urgently need an affordable venue, as the Winter Gardens space will be occupied by the new Illuminasia attraction over the next three years.

Any business or organisation that can help should contact Steve Lawrence on 07784 832594 or email: blocrocing@gmail.com

GIVE A LITTLE

Thanks again to those businesses that contributed to the 2013 Give A Little Christmas campaign. The generous donations, which included toys, clothes, games and tickets for attractions/experiences, resulted in more than 1,200 children and young people and their families enjoying Christmas.

Section 6: Awards Events

BIBAs OPEN FOR BUSINESS

Entries for the annual Be Inspired Business Awards (BIBAs) have now opened. There are 18 different award categories and applications must be submitted by Friday 11 April. The North and Western Lancashire Chamber of Commerce has confirmed that the BIBA finals will return to the Tower Ballroom on the evening of September 12. Details of the awards and the various categories can be found at www.thebibas.co.uk

EVAs

The Enterprise Vision Awards (the EVAs), which are organised by Pink Link ladies' network group and which are the region's premier female business awards, are taking place at the Empress Ballroom on Friday 26 September. Anyone wishing to get involved in the awards should contact coral@pinklinkladies.co.uk

Meanwhile, Pink Link raised almost £1400 in its Christmas raffle, with donations going to various charities including Brian House, Blackpool Victoria Hospital and the Blackpool Food Bank.

CIVIC TRUST AWARDS

The 55th annual Civic Trust Awards Ceremony will be held at The Winter Gardens in Blackpool on Friday 7 March.



The prestigious event will see hundreds of leading international architects and built environment professionals gather in Blackpool for a gala dinner and awards presentation.

The awards, established in 1959, celebrate the best in architecture, urban design, planning, landscape, public realm and public art projects that are sustainable, accessible to all users and make a difference to local communities.

The event will be preceded by a series of guided walking tours for attendees, providing an opportunity for people to visit Blackpool Tower and the Comedy Carpet.

Section 7: And finally...

Basil Newby, founder of the Funny Girls empire in Blackpool, was appointed MBE in the Queen's New Year Honours List. Blackpool-born Basil, who owns various night time venues in the resort, received the honour for services to business and the lesbian, gay, bisexual transgender community.

He opened his first gay club, Flamingo, in Blackpool in 1979, followed by the launch of the cabaret showbar, Funny Girls in 1994.

Philip Welsh
Head of Partnerships & Business Development