



BLACKPOOL BUSINESS LEADERSHIP GROUP

Business Partnerships Report – March 28, 2014

Section 1: Town Centre Economy

INTRODUCING TALBOT GATEWAY...



Above: The Talbot Gateway regeneration scheme with the refurbished Talbot Road car park (left), the Council offices (left of centre) and Sainsbury's (right of centre).

Below left: Sainsbury's frontage. Below right: Bickerstaffe House Council offices



TALBOT GATEWAY (continued)

The £220m Talbot Gateway regeneration scheme is nearing completion. Bickerstaffe House, the new Blackpool Council office building has been handed over by the contractors and staff will begin relocating in June.

The fit-out of the ground floor gymnasium is also underway and sale of memberships will commence over the next few weeks. Contractual negotiations for three of the retail units – one for a world buffet restaurant, and others for a fast food chain and national brand coffee shop - are at an advanced stage.

Meanwhile, the completion of the new Sainsbury's store has been delayed and is now expected to open in late June as opposed to late May as originally scheduled. Sainsbury's petrol station (which is on the opposite side of the road adjacent to North Station) is ahead of schedule and likely to begin trading in April.

The newly-refurbished Talbot Road car park has not been as well used as hoped since it opened towards the end of last year and a review of charges has been undertaken and additional signage put in place.

As part of this review, free parking will be offered on the multi-storey car park over three weekends – March 29/30, April 5/6 and April 12/13.

This phase of the Talbot Gateway scheme includes a new public square, as well as further retail units on the ground floor of the Council building and the ground floor of the bus station car park.

TOWN CENTRE CHILLI FESTIVAL

The Blackpool Chilli Fiesta is to return to St John's Square for the second year running. This year's free event, organised by the Blackpool Town Centre BID, will be held from 10.30am-5pm on Saturday 26 April.



Chilli Fest (uk)

It will feature over 25 different stalls selling chilli-based products including cooking sauces, pickles, mild to hot chilli dips, mild to extreme hot sauces, chocolate, jams, mustards, oils and chilli-based cocktails and beers.

The Radio Wave Road Show will be on site all day entertaining the crowds and compering various competitions.

YATES'S SITE

Plans are being worked up for a hotel scheme on the former Yates's Wine Lodge at Talbot Square. The developer has looked at various options for the site since the Yates's building was destroyed, including restaurants and a Tesco Express store. It is understood that the latest plan is being developed in association with a budget hotel operator.

EMRO

Blackpool Council's licensing committee has voted against the introduction of an Early Morning Restriction Order (EMRO) for Blackpool.

During the week-long hearing, members of the committee heard evidence for and against the introduction of a 3am restriction on the sale of alcohol in a section of the town centre.

The committee came to a unanimous decision against introducing the restriction. However, it noted that the evidence presented during the hearing demonstrated a need for positive action to be taken to address problems arising from late-night drinking.

As a result, it recommended the formation of a night time economy working group including representation from public and private sector. This group will present its initial recommendations to the Licensing Committee within three months of its creation.

It also recommended that Blackpool Council's Chief Executive write to the Chief Constable of Lancashire Constabulary requesting him to give urgent consideration to increasing the levels of policing in the night time economy in order to reduce crime and disorder.

MORRISON'S LOCAL

Morrison's is opening a Morrison's Local store on Church Street. The convenience store is in the former Vision Express building. It is scheduled to open at 9am on Thursday 3 April with opening hours of 7am-11pm each day.

MONSOON/ACCESSORIZE

Monsoon and Accessorize are to close their Church Street shops at the end of March. The closures are part of a consolidation by the parent company that will see the nearest outlet in Lancaster.

WINTER GARDENS

The delayed installation of a cinema within the Opera House is now almost complete. It is hoped that it will be ready in time for an Easter launch. It is intended that the initial programme will include a mix of classic and contemporary films, mostly aimed at children and families.

Section 2: Visitor Economy

BATHING WATERS

The Turning Tides Partnership set up to address new bathing waters legislation has strongly refuted media suggestions that Blackpool's beaches will be closed next year.

A Sunday Times article reported that beaches along the Fylde Coast from St Annes to Fleetwood were all at risk of being closed to the public from next year because of sewage contamination.

Blackpool Council and the Turning Tides Partnership say the article has confused new European Union (EU) directives, due to come into force next year, which could see waters along the Fylde Coast lose their designated bathing area status if they do not reach the required standard.

Under the new, stricter EU guidelines for water quality, if a beach scores poorly for five years running, signs can be put up advising people against bathing in the sea.

The quality of the sea water is tested periodically, and last year, all Blackpool's beaches met existing standards for the first time since 2005.

A correction to the Sunday Times article is being sought.

ILLUMINATIONS SWITCH ON



VisitBlackpool has announced that Lancashire-based radio station Rock FM will be its official media partner for the 2014 Illuminations Switch-On event.

As part of the partnership, Rock FM will be utilising the extensive reach of its parent company – the Bauer Media Group – which boasts more than 80 radio stations and magazines across the UK.

The group's radio stations include brands such as Key 103 in Manchester, Radio City in Liverpool, Radio Aire in Leeds and Clyde in Scotland, while its magazine portfolio includes Grazia, Heat and Q.

The partnership with VisitBlackpool will see Rock FM work with promoters to organise the line-up of talent to perform at the **FREE** Switch-On on Friday 29 August. This will then be promoted across the UK including Scotland, Yorkshire and the North East.

Details regarding the acts performing at the Switch-On will be announced over the next few weeks, as will details of a broader Switch-On festival that will span the entire weekend. People can already register for free wristbands by going to www.visitblackpool/switchon

2014 SEASON LAUNCH

The Visit Blackpool season launch will take place on Wednesday 2 April in the newly-refurbished Derham Room at the Winter Gardens.

The event will give businesses within the visitor economy an opportunity to find out everything that is planned for the forthcoming season and there will also be a chance to take a sneak peek at Blackpool's newest attraction, Illuminasia.

Doors open at 10am with refreshments served in the Grand Vestibule. The presentation will take place in the Derham Room at 10.30am. If you wish to attend please email john@visitblackpool.com by close of play on Friday 28 March.

NORTH PIER SET TO RE-OPEN

Blackpool's North Pier is scheduled to re-open on April 5 – more than four months after suffering serious damage in winter storms.

Extensive repairs to the 150-year-old pier, which is a Grade II listed building have cost in the region of £1m.

The pier is staging an Easter panto – The Wizard Of Oz – from April 5 to 13 inclusive.

RESORT PASS

Blackpool's Resort Pass, which clocked up sales of almost £1m in its first full year, has been re-launched for 2014.

The pass was the first of its kind to be launched in the UK in February last year offering visitors access to up to nine of the resort's top attractions at huge discounts.

While the majority of Resort Passes were sold to customers in the UK, with Scots topping sales buying a quarter of all passes sold, overseas sales included Australia, India, Malta, Norway, Germany and the Netherlands.

As well as bringing key attractions together in one pass, the Blackpool Resort Pass is also designed to encourage visitors to stay longer in the resort.

Research by VisitBlackpool revealed that of 349 people surveyed about the Blackpool Resort Pass more than 67% said they stayed in the resort for four nights or more while using it and 99% said they would recommend it to a friend.



There are two versions of the Blackpool Resort Pass:

- The Original Resort Pass - Gives visitors access to SIX attractions – Blackpool Pleasure Beach, Nickelodeon Land, The Blackpool Tower Eye and 4D Experience, The Blackpool Tower Dungeon, SEA LIFE Blackpool and Madame Tussauds. Cost is £52.50 (the same as 2013) representing a saving of more than £35.
- Resort Pass Plus - Offers access to NINE attractions – Includes those in the Original Resort Pass plus Blackpool Zoo, Sandcastle Waterpark and Blackpool Model Village. Cost is £78.50 (£1 more than 2013) representing a saving of more than £50.

Visitors also have the option to purchase bolt-ons including Blackpool Transport tickets along with access to Illuminasia, Blackpool Tower Circus and Viva Showbar.

MAMMA MIA!

The summer season run of the international production of Mamma Mia! at Blackpool's Opera House has been extended from 10 to 12 weeks.

To date, the show, which opens on June 20, has sold more than £1m of tickets in advance.

It will now run until Sunday 14 September.

Thanks to all those businesses and organisations that responded to the presentation staged by the Mamma Mia! team at the January meeting of the BBLG. A number of them are working on partnership initiatives that will help to drive ticket sales and enhance their own businesses.

Note that the discounted offer to the Blackpool Business Leadership Group is now active. You are entitled to a discount on midweek performances (Tuesday to Thursday) with tickets normally priced at £39.50 reduced to £35 and £35 tickets reduced to £30.

The offer is open to you, your employees and family. All you have to do is book via Ticketmaster and insert BBLG in the offer code or call the box office on 0844-8472517 and quote BBLG. Groups of 25-plus can take advantage of hospitality areas for entertaining.

SHOWZAM

More than 30,000 people visited Showzam! Blackpool's half-term festival celebrating Circus, Magic and New Variety.

Showzam! Central, the Winter Gardens-based hub of the celebrations during the 10-day February festival, attracted 21,600 people while audiences at the event's 60-plus ticketed shows and tours attracted in excess of 10,000.

On average, 2,160 people visited Showzam! Central each day; 5,550 people saw B The Underwater Bubble Show in The Blackpool Tower Circus; 1,000 people attended the Carnival Ball; 930 people took part in workshops at Blackpool Pleasure Beach and more than 1,800 people watched The Sooty Show at the Opera House.

SEAFRONT HOTELS

Discussions are underway over the condition of various boarded-up hotels on Blackpool seafront.

Council officers have been in contact with the owners of a number of properties in the South Beach area to determine what can be done in the short term to improve their appearance.

The owners of the Royal Carlton Hotel on Central Promenade have already announced a substantial reinvestment in that hotel in time for the start of the new season.

- Plans to build a new 100-bedroom hotel opposite Central Pier have been rejected by Blackpool Council's planning committee. The development, which also included commercial units on the ground floor, would have entailed the demolition of three existing buildings including Uncle Peter Webster's bar.

AIR SHOW

The world-famous RAF Red Arrows will return to Blackpool's Airshow in 2014. The team will perform at the free event on Sunday 10 August along with the Battle of Britain Memorial Flight, Typhoon and RAF Tucano. The Hurricane and RAF Tucano will also take to the skies above Blackpool for the second day of the Airshow on Monday 11. More aircraft will be added to the display and will be confirmed over coming weeks.

Section 3: Enterprise & Economic Development

BLACKPOOL TOURISM ACADEMY

A consortium of Blackpool businesses has been awarded almost £1m of Government funding to set up the resort's first Tourism Academy.

The bid, which was co-ordinated by Blackpool Council's economic development team, is a partnership between Pleasure Beach; Merlin Entertainments; Sandcastle; Blackpool Transport; Blackpool Zoo; Winter Gardens and Blackpool & The Fylde College.

The money has been granted from the Employer Ownership of Skills fund.

- Full details of the Tourism Academy and associated skills development and training that will be rolled out across the visitor economy will be presented at the March 28 meeting of the BBLG.

BLACKPOOL INVESTMENT FUND

The first two applications to the Blackpool Investment Fund have been approved by Blackpool Council's investment panel.

- TFS Training Ltd has been awarded a grant of £8,943 towards a £26,831 investment into the former Regent Cinema on Church Street.

Subject to planning permission, the ground floor of the building is to be brought back into use as an emporium selling crafts, antiques and bespoke products, creating two new jobs.

The floor will be divided into stalls to be rented out to other businesses with some 50% already let.

The investment will fund essential infrastructure works including electrics, gas heaters, alarms, CCTV and solar panels. It is hoped the upper floors and former cinema seating area can be brought back into use during a later phase of investment.

- Blackpool Grand Theatre Trust has been awarded £25,000 towards the cost of an essential feasibility and design study required to unlock up to £1m further investment (including a potential £700k Arts Council grant).

The wider scheme aims to redesign the upper floors of the theatre and a connecting shop unit now owned by the Grand; upgrade the studio theatre, and create a new multi-purpose space for rehearsals, exhibitions, corporate entertaining and education.

The existing box office will be refreshed and a derelict floor above the theatre shops will be transformed into a new office suite. The study will be completed by July with a decision on the Arts Council grant expected in November 2014.

BLACKPOOLUNLIMITED.COM



The refresh of the BlackpoolUnlimited.com business support website is now complete. The re-design was undertaken by the Blackpool-based agency, Happy Creative, in consultation with the Blackpool Business Leadership Group.

A presentation on the services available through the site will be made at the May meeting of the BBLG.

Section 4: General News

CIVIC TRUST AWARDS

A number of businesses received recognition in the annual Blackpool Civic Trust Awards:

- Michael's Indian Restaurant on Whitegate Drive and which opened last September on the site of the former Shaw's Depository building, won the Best Night Time Economy Award
- The Cherry Tree pub won Best Refurbishment
- The Transforming Blackpool Award was shared by Blackpool Tower and Blackpool Illuminations

The ceremony, which showcases new-build, design and environmental work in the community, was held at Blackpool Football Club.

WEST COAST MAINLINE WORKS

Rail operators have announced a number of weekend closures on the West Coast Mainline over the next 12 months that will seriously disrupt direct services between Preston and London.

Network Rail had originally planned a 16-day continuous closure of part of the line near Watford this August and a nine-day continuous closure in February 2015. This is to allow for work to be carried out to reduce delays.

This has now been revised to a series of weekend closures between May 2014 and April 2015.

On these dates, it is likely that passengers travelling from the London area will have to be bussed to Watford to access the West Coast line, and passengers heading for London will have to get off at Watford and take alternative transport to London.

These are the weekends when work is planned and when rail services will be affected. Note that the 2014 dates include two Bank Holiday weekends – at the start of May and in August.

2014

Saturday 3 May to Monday 5 May
Saturday 9 August to Monday 11 August
Saturday 16 August to Monday 18 August
Saturday 23 August to Tuesday 26 August
Wednesday 24 December to Monday 29 December

2015

Saturday 14 February to Monday 16 February
Saturday 21 February to Monday 23 February
Friday 3 April to Tuesday 7 April

SHALE GAS SUPPLY CHAIN CONFERENCE

The North West Energy Task Force is staging a supply chain conference at the Winter Gardens on April 24.

The free event, which will be attended by Michael Fallon, MP and several of the more active shale gas exploration companies, is being run in association with the Chamber of Commerce and the Blackpool, Fylde and Wyre Economic Development Company.

It is the first in a series of events aimed at identifying supply chain opportunities for local businesses.

If any businesses are interested in attending, they need to register in the first instance by contacting Rob Green (email rob@bfwedc.co.uk) and he will provide further registration details.

CHINA DELEGATION

A joint Council and business delegation is to fly out to China to develop trade and cultural links. The trip to the tourist resort of Sanya in June is a return visit – a Chinese delegation from that area visited Blackpool for two days last year.

The delegation will be led by Blackpool Council Leader, Councillor Simon Blackburn and will include business representatives and members of the Blackpool Chinese Association.

It is hoped that the visit will forge links that will open up tourism opportunities for Blackpool and create new business opportunities for Fylde Coast companies.

Sanya is China's biggest tourist resort.

GROWTH IN ECONOMY

Blackpool has emerged as one of the UK's fastest growing economies since the credit crunch began in a new research study.

The town appears to be one of a number of economically deprived areas that has shown growth because the low wage economies have attracted investment and jobs.

The research was carried out by analysts UHY Hacker Young and is based on GVA (Gross Value Added) – a measure of an area's contribution to the UK economy based according to the value of the goods and services it produces.

Blackpool came second out of 121 regions with a GVA growth of 14.4% following the credit crunch, against a national average growth of 2.3%.

Whilst Blackpool's GVA has grown three times faster than the likes of West London, it is worth noting that the Blackpool figure stands at £13,082 per head, compared to West London's £127,127!

The report also notes that deprived areas such as Blackpool still depend on public sector jobs more than the rest of the country.

It suggests that higher public sector spending in the early stages of the credit crunch may have helped cushion the effect of the 2008 financial crisis in these areas, but could make them vulnerable to further public sector cuts from the Government's austerity programme.

- On the back of the UHY Hacker Young report, the BBC ran a five minute news item on economic growth in Blackpool, focusing on the new Illuminasia investment at the Winter Gardens and on the growth of the Nutrition Group which is currently relocating to new and larger premises.

LOTTERY FUNDING FOR BLACKPOOL

Blackpool is to receive £10m from the Big Lottery Fund to help tackle the problems of people with substance misuse, crime, homelessness and mental health issues.

The resort is one of 12 places to receive multi million pound grants awarded as part of a £112m investment across the country.

In Blackpool, the money will be used to hire a team of dedicated staff designed to proactively seek out and help the most vulnerable and problematic people in society and help transform their lives.

The scheme – entitled "Fulfilling Lives" - will include an out-of-hours service and a central hub to base the project. It will see Addaction (one of the UK's leading drug and alcohol treatment charities) take the role as lead partner with a total of 30 other organisations involved to ensure a co-ordinated effort across the whole of the town.

QUEENS PARK TOWER BLOCKS

Construction work is underway on a £22m housing development at Blackpool's Queens Park estate.

The project will see regeneration specialists Lovell take down the five 1960s tower blocks and replace them with a modern 198-home development.

Designed by Condy Lofthouse Architects, the first phase of works includes the demolition of the first two tower blocks (Charles Court and Ashworth Court) and the creation of 92 new homes by March next year.

The second part of the development will commence after completion of this phase.

SELECTIVE LICENSING

Blackpool Council's Selective Licensing initiative has now moved into the Claremont area.

The scheme, which requires that all privately rented properties in the area have a licence and that landlords show they manage their properties effectively, has already been successfully rolled out in South Beach, helping to reduce anti-social behaviour and drive up housing standards.

It is now being rolled out in Claremont to tackle similar issues.

A new element to the scheme, Additional Licensing, is also being introduced which will help to tackle the issue of HMOs, which is particularly relevant in Claremont.

It means landlords and managing agents with property in the area must now apply for a licence from Blackpool Council's housing enforcement team.

Around 1700 properties fall within the Claremont area, of which two thirds are single properties that would be subject to Selective Licensing. A third are HMOs that would be part of the Additional Licensing scheme.

To apply for a licence visit www.blackpool.gov.uk/Business/Residential-landlords or call 476841.

Section 5: Company News

TANGERINE CONFECTIONERY

Tangerine Confectionery Ltd has announced plans to transfer production and equipment from its factory on Clifton Road, Blackpool, as part of a UK-wide strategic review.

As a result of the proposed transfer to other Tangerine Confectionery sites in the UK, including the site on Vicarage Lane, Blackpool, it is expected that the Clifton Road site may close by the end of March 2015.

Up to 166 staff at the Clifton Road factory have been informed that they will be affected by the proposed changes and a consultation process with employees is underway. The company says that the restructure will safeguard the future of the remaining manufacturing facility in Blackpool.

LAILA'S

Blackpool food manufacturer, Laila's Fine Foods, is to create additional jobs after winning a new contract with Iceland.

The Bispham-based business, which employs around 250 people and already produces and supplies ready meals for the likes of Asda and Morrison's, has secured a contract to supply five new frozen food lines.

In order to meet the increased demand, the company has purchased new production machinery after securing a £58,000 grant through Regenerate Pennine Lancashire. The Iceland deal will result in at least eight new jobs.

Regenerate Pennine Lancashire is an economic development company owned by Lancashire County Council that receives funding from the European Regional Development Fund and Regional Growth Fund.

- Laila's was named as Family Business Of The Year in the annual Red Rose business awards staged at the Winter Gardens in March.

CORONATION ROCK

The Coronation Rock Company is opening a new visitor attraction at its premises on Blackpool Business Park.

The company, which is based on Amy Johnson Way, has developed a 2,500sq ft visitor facility where people will be able to visit the town's largest rock factory, observe products being made and purchase goods from a factory shop.

It is intended that the facility will be open all year round.

INENCO

Energy company Inenco has announced that it is to create up to 100 jobs in St Annes.

The company, which buys gas and electricity on behalf of businesses in the UK, is taking on new staff for its Inenco Direct division.

Inenco Direct is headquartered in Liverpool but the new recruits will be based in St Annes to meet increasing demand.

MERLIN

Merlin Entertainments has posted its first set of annual results since floating on the Stock Exchange, revealing significant increases in revenues, profits and visitor numbers.

The company operates numerous attractions in the UK and abroad, including its cluster of visitor attractions in Blackpool – the Tower, Madame Tussauds and Sea Life.

According to its latest set of results, Merlin generated revenues of £1.2bn for the 52 weeks to 28 December 2013, which represents an 11 per cent year-on-year rise. Pre-tax profits climbed by 33 per cent to £186m over the same period.

Overall visitor numbers at its various attractions rose by 11 per cent to 59.8 million.

BLACKPOOL FC RESULTS

Blackpool Football Club has announced lower revenue, but healthy profits for the year ending May 31, 2013. The club said that the fall in revenue was mainly due to a reduction in “parachute payments” since dropping out of the Premier League, as well as a reduction in gate receipts after being eliminated from the Carling and FA cup tournaments in early rounds.

CUADRILLA RESOURCES

Cuadrilla Resources has revealed the proposed locations for two new shale gas exploration sites on the outskirts of Blackpool.

The company intends to apply for planning permission to drill, hydraulically fracture and test the flow of gas from up to four exploration wells on each of the sites, one at Roseacre Wood, near Elswick, and the other at Preston New Road.

The company said it hoped the work would allow it to understand the full potential of Lancashire's shale gas resources.

A scoping report outlining Cuadrilla's proposed approach to environmental assessments for the new sites will be submitted to Lancashire County Council.

Section 6: Requests for Private Sector Support

PROPERTY SCENE CHARITY BALL

Businesses are invited to take tables at the second annual Property Scene charity ball and auction which is being held at the De Vere Hotel, Heron's Reach, Blackpool on July 25.

Tickets for the event (which is in memory of estate agent Jim Broomhead) are priced at £45 per person, £400 for a table of 10, and include drinks reception, three course meal, complimentary wine on table, auction and raffle followed by entertainment.

For more information or to book tickets, go to www.thepropertysceneblackpool.co.uk/charity-ball

VARIETY BALL

Variety, the children's charity, is staging a fund-raising ball at The Hilton, Blackpool, on Friday 9 May.

Tickets are £35 a head or £320 for a table of 10, which includes drinks reception, four-course dinner and entertainment.

For tickets, contact the Variety chairman, David Jones, on 07813 291216 or contact the regional office on 0161-236-0500.

BLACKPOOL CARERS CENTRE

Businesses are being encouraged to act as collection points for Blackpool Carers.

The charity has a range of fund-raising activities, but struggles to get donations of clothing and bric-a-brac donations for its two shops in the area.

The Imperial has already put a donations box in the hotel and this has been well received. Any donations are collected and taken away by the charity.

As a separate initiative "Wood and Stuff" is a wood turning and re-upholstery arm of the Carers' group. Any unwanted furniture or wood can be transformed by the team at its workshop into new furniture and gifts. Again, collection can be arranged.

If anyone is able to support either of these initiatives, they can contact Fiona on 07792 783423

ILLUMINATIONS BANQUET AND BALL

Businesses are being encouraged to support a banquet and ball that is being staged in support of the Illuminations Fund.

It is being organised by the Blackpool Combined Association and the Friends Of The Illuminations on the evening of Wednesday 23 April at The Imperial Hotel on North Promenade.

Tickets are priced at £25 each and include five-course meal (with choice of menu), free spirit-tasting, wine and water on the table, followed by an evening of entertainment.

The organisers are also seeking support by way of raffle prizes. Any donations will be gratefully received.

For tickets, more information or to donate a prize, contact Jayne Hart, email: jayne@hartsamusements.com or Shirley Hunt, email: Shirley.hunt1@btopenworld.com

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