



BLACKPOOL BUSINESS LEADERSHIP GROUP

NOTES FROM MEETING HELD ON MARCH 22ND, 2013 AT THE TOWER BALLROOM

Name	Organisation
Present:	
Martin Long (chair)	Napthens
Steve Pye	Federation of Small Business
Pauline Waterhouse	Blackpool & The Fylde College
Dan Scott	PHX Training
Tracey Bell	Scream Management
Neil Riley	Applkore
Philip Owen	Barclays
Andy Higgins	Trident Energy Brokers
Jane Littlewood	Rabbit Design/Wyred Up
Lucy Hodge	The Villa Outside
Wendy Harrison	Café Fresch
Robert Wynne	West Coast Rock
Alex McIntyre	The Property Scene
Rob Knighton	Eclipse Developments
Alison Gilmore	Imperial Hotel
Kath Howard	PK Kids Nursery
Neil Foulkes	HSBC
Eileen Ormand	Town Centre BID
Sue Howarth	Virgin Trains
Gary Blackadder	Blackpool Dungeon
Della Belk	Blackpool Zoo
Colin Johnston	Blackpool Grand Theatre
Felicity Greeves, Alan Lloyd	Blackpool Sixth Form
Debbs Lancelott	Hounds Hill
John Child	Sandcastle Waterpark
Iain Hawkins	Merlin Entertainments
Gary Ashton, Ian Bryson	Kilgour Metal Treatments
Richard Greathead	Nutrition Group
Susan Bamber	Village Heron's Reach
Chris Hibbert	Henco
Nick Taylor	The Hilton
Carmen Conquer	Aspired Futures
David Hardy	Champion Accountants
David Chapman	Linksgate Leisure
Tommy Baldwin	Northern Security
Neil Sutch	RBS
Lindsay Campbell	Rowley's at Blackpool FC
Craig Harrop	Northern Rail
Andy Atkinson	Voucher Packs
Gary Sawyer	AI Claims
Pauline Lai	The Mandarin/Rouge
Junior Bent	NatWest
Martin Heywood	Viva!
Paul Mathison, Adrian Tottey	Create Construction
Victoria Reynolds	Ashworth Treasure
Peter Sedgwick	North Pier
Zera Remtulla	Laila's
Wendy Swift	Blackpool Teaching Hospitals
Ilan Goldman	Catalyst
Pearl Mina	In The Pink
Rob Green	Blackpool, Fylde & Wyre Economic Development Co
Kelly Merrick	Marks & Spencer
John Barnett	Stardream
Damien Broughton	Danbro
Fred Willis	First Medical
John Hesketh	One Blackpool
Gary Smith	A4e
Taline and Cheryl Tchobanian	The Beach House
Kate Shane	Blackpool Tower
Amanda Bennett	Marketing Blackpool
Advisers/Observers/Guests	
Neil Jack, Alan Cavill, Philip Welsh, Peter Legg, Polly Hamilton	Blackpool Council
Janine Bradley, Mark Marshall	Blackpool Council
Lorraine Townson	Job Centre Plus
Apologies	
Roger Mellor	Glasdon
Michelle Smith	Blackpool Carers Group
Richard Lefton	Leftons Group
Barry Howard	McDonalds UK
Sean Killingbeck	Giles Insurance
Michael Williams	Cuerden Leisure
Anne Catterson	Common Purpose
Coral Horn	Pink Link
Trevor Roberts	Blackpool Transport
David Cam	Pleasure Beach
Hugh Evans	Chamber of Commerce
Gary Fearon	Johnston Press
Michael Hyman	Leonard Dews
Nathaniel Butters	NB Energy
Shilpa and Praful Patel	Carlton Hotel
Paula Davies	The Wave
Angela Tierney	M&S
Sam Schofield	Cuadrilla
David Houston	Trinity Hospice
Mark Yates	Brooks Collectables
Sue Kendrick	Blackpool Airport
Paul Symes	Business In The Community
Jonathan Cropper	Kingswood Stationers
Ed Christiano	Deeper Blue Design
Maria Noto	Lancaster House Hotel

1. **Welcome and apologies**

Martin Long (chair) welcomed everyone including new members and guests to the meeting.

2. **Minutes of the last meeting/Matters arising** **Conference Survey**

Philip Welsh (Blackpool Council) thanked those businesses that had contributed to the conference survey that was circulated following the last meeting. Survey findings will be presented at a future meeting.

3. **Investment Showcase**

Nine local businesses and organisations took part in an Investing In Blackpool Showcase, each presenting for around five minutes on investment that is being made. These included:

- Merlin Entertainments
- Nutrition Group
- Blackpool Sixth Form
- Blackpool Zoo
- Sandcastle Waterpark
- Henco
- Blackpool & The Fylde College
- Kilgour Metal Treatments
- Grand Theatre

All of these showcase presentations can be viewed on the Blackpool Business Leadership Group website: www.bblg.co.uk

Most of the slides are self explanatory in terms of the investment that is being made in product, infrastructure and people.

Further details on the Merlin presentation, which opened the showcase, revealed new investment in four of the Blackpool-based attractions:

- **Sea Life:** New ocean tank with numerous different species of sharks and an opportunity for visitors to “snorkel with the sharks”
- **Madame Tussauds:** Various new characters including an interactive Bear Grylls tableau and a child-friendly section including Shrek and Spiderman.
- **Blackpool Dungeon:** Makeover for 2013 season with new scripting
- **Blackpool Tower:** New ticketing arrangements, round-the-world circus show and illumination of Tower legs

Martin Long (chairman) thanked the presenters for contributing to the showcase. He said there would be an opportunity for other businesses to take part in a similar showcase at a future BBLG meeting. Any expressions of interest in this to be directed to: philip.welsh@blackpool.gov.uk

4. **Encouraging New Investment**

Alan Cavill (Blackpool Council) gave a presentation on a proposal to establish a new Council-facilitated grant and loan fund to encourage private sector investment in Blackpool.

He said that lack of finance available to business in the current economic climate was often cited as a major constraint on investment and growth.

He said that the intention of the fund, which is yet to be approved by Council, would be to target resources at viable projects that can achieve real economic impact.

Subject to the fund being given the go-ahead, investment proposals would be encouraged for the following priority areas:

- Blackpool Town Centre (using ring-fenced monies from the High St Innovation Fund)
- South Beach District Centre
- Investment in growth businesses
- Start-ups with growth potential

AC said it was proposed that the fund be run on similar lines to the last grant and loan fund operated by the Council. This would entail:

- Applications overseen by senior level Investment Panel
- Interest rates comparable with commercial rates
- Business plans required – full appraisal to be undertaken
- Large loans secured via personal guarantee or company assets
- Minimum fund investment of £5k, no set maximum
- Maximum loan-grant fund intervention of 25% of total investment
- Job creation/safeguarding is a requirement of any grant or loan

Businesses were invited to put forward any suggestions on the merits of such a fund. An update will be provided at the next meeting.

5. Energy Switching for SMEs

Janine Bradley (Blackpool Council) gave a presentation on a proposed energy switching scheme for small to medium enterprises (SMEs).

She said that a domestic scheme had been launched last November with Blackpool Council part of a consortium involving 12 local authorities. A total of 21,000 households had registered for that scheme, 1800 of them locally. As a result, a reverse auction had been carried out and the average saving for domestic consumers had worked out at around £120 per year.

A similar scheme was now being considered for SMEs. She said that the Federation of Small Businesses had recently reported that members' electricity bills had risen by 100% over the past eight years, with gas bills rising by 125%.

However, energy switching can be a more complex process for SMEs because of:

- Many kinds of meters and tariffs
- Complex and time-bound termination procedures
- Unregulated SME market – harder to shop around
- SME switching rate currently at 16%-22%

Ms Bradley said that the “reverse auction” process used in the domestic phase of the programme was also more complex. Instead, an alternative solution was being considered using the services of a specialised SME energy broker who would seek to obtain the best price for participating businesses. A further update on the scheme will be provided at a future meeting.

6. Business Partnerships Report

Philip Welsh (Blackpool Council) drew the group's attention to a number of items within his report:

Appeals for Private Sector Support

He said there were three worthy local causes seeking private sector support – Variety (the children's charity which is holding a celebrity golf day and a fund-raising challenge for local businesses); Aspired Futures (which provides support and counselling for vulnerable children and which is holding a fundraising evening on June 15) and, thirdly, a charity ball being organised on August 30 in memory of local estate agent Jim Broomhead with proceeds going to Cancer Research.

Further details on these initiatives can be obtained from:

David Jones (Variety) on 07813291216

Carmen Conquer (Aspired Futures). Email aspired.futures@yahoo.co.uk

www.thepropertysceneblackpool.co.uk (Jim Broomhead charity ball)

Apprenticeship Awards

In addition to the awards listed in his report, PW said that an Apprenticeships Awards evening had recently been staged by Blackpool & The Fylde College at the Tower Ballroom when a number of BBLG members had received awards. These included: Sandcastle, Blackpool Transport, Merlin and Parkinson Construction, which was named as Employer Of The Year.

7. Any Other Business

i) Pauline Waterhouse Retirement

It was noted that this was the last meeting to be attended by Pauline Waterhouse, Principal and Chief Executive of Blackpool & The Fylde College, prior to her retirement in May.

On behalf of the group, PW thanked Mrs Waterhouse for the tremendous support she had given to the group and the business community over the past few years and also for the role she had played as an ambassador for Blackpool.

ii) Scream Success

Tracey Bell (Scream Management) reported that one of her theatre school students, Daniel Kerr, aged 12, had become youngest ever winner of a Bafta for up-and-coming talent. Daniel won the award at the Bafta In Scotland New Talent Awards for his performance in the film, The Wee Man.

In closing the meeting, the chairman thanked Merlin for hosting the meeting at the Tower Ballroom, Pickled Walnut for providing the catering and again thanked all of the contributors to the investment showcase.

8. Date and time of next meeting

Next meeting scheduled for **8am for 8.30am, Friday 31st May, 2013** at **Viva! Showbar, Church Street, Blackpool**. Parking and breakfast arrangements to be confirmed.