

## NOTES FROM MEETING HELD ON MARCH 30<sup>th</sup> AT THE HILTON, BLACKPOOL

Name	Organisation
<b>Present:</b>	
Howard Lewis (Chair)	The Hilton
John Barnett	The Wave/Stardream
Jane Cole	Virgin Rail
Nicholas Testa	Barcelo Imperial
Claire Smith	Number One Hotels
Philip Owen	Barclays Corporate
Alison Pattinson	Pleasure Beach Resort
David Hardy	Champion Accountants
Peter Watson	G Casino
Chris Hibbert	Henco
Dave Adamson	Accordant
Ann Hartley	Manx2.com
Richard Halstead	Sandcastle Waterpark
David Jones	Thirty Thirty Media
Deborah Parker	Progress Recruitment
Michael Hyman	Leonard Dews
David Chapman	Linksgate Leisure
Jane Littlewood	Wyred Up
Steve Pye	Federation of Small Businesses
Riccy Counce	Toast
Justin Allitt	Allitt's Estate Agency
Neil Sutch	Royal Bank of Scotland
Rob Knighton	Eclipse Developments
Nathan Smith Hilliard	The Village Heron's Reach
Pauline Waterhouse, Mike Phelan	Blackpool & The Fylde College
Wendy Swift	NHS Blackpool
Pauline Lai	The Mandarin/Rouge
Martin Long, Gareth Birch	Napthen's
Mark Yates	Brooks Collectables
Robert Wynne	West Coast
Eileen Ormand	Town Centre BID
Michelle Smith	Blackpool Carers' Association
Angela Tierney	Marks & Spencer
Iain Hawkins	Merlin
Nicola Atanassova	Marketing Blackpool
Rob Green	Blackpool Bay Area Co
Gary Smith, John Westhead	A4E
Ed Christiano	Encore Design
Alex McIntyre	The Property Scene
Richard Lefton	Lefton's Group
<b>Advisers/Observers/Guests</b>	
Neil Jack, Alan Cavill	Blackpool Council
Philip Welsh, Peter Legg, Donna Taylor	Blackpool Council
Robbie Johnston, Suzanne Holroyd	Duke Of Edinburgh Award Scheme
<b>Apologies</b>	
Sue Kendrick	Blackpool Airport
Natalie Wyatt	Marketing Blackpool
Declan Dowd	Carlton Hotel
John Holt	Hounds Hill
Trevor Roberts	Blackpool Transport
Alistair Baines	Cassidy & Ashton
Richard Turpin	Eric Wright
Joe Bullock	Whitbread
Michael Williams	Crown Leisure
Damien & Helen Broughton	Danbro
Coral Horn	Pink Link
David Cam	Pleasure Beach Resort
Paul Crossley	Kenrick & Co
Sue Sankey	HSBC
Tracey Bell	Scream
Andy Higgins	Mailing North West
Warren Spencer	Blackhurst Budd
Nathaniel Butters	NB Energy
Barry Howard	McDonalds UK
Roger Mellor	Glasdon
Lucy Cheeseman	The Lindley Group

### **1. Welcome and apologies**

Howard Lewis (Hilton, Blackpool) welcomed members and guests to the meeting. It was noted that John Holt had tendered his apologies as he had now retired as manager of the Hounds Hill Shopping Centre and moved to Bath. Philip Welsh (Blackpool Council) said he had written to Mr Holt on behalf of the group, thanking him for his involvement over the past few years.

### **2. Minutes of the last meeting/Matters arising** **Lobbying of Tourism Minister**

It was noted that a follow-up letter had been sent to the Tourism Minister, John Penrose, reminding him that the group had still not received a response to its letter, first sent after the Minister's visit to Blackpool in November 2011. Howard Lewis said it was disappointing that a response had not yet been received.

### **3. Wellington Arch Exhibition**

Neil Jack (Chief Executive, Blackpool Council) gave a brief presentation on a forthcoming exhibition to be staged at Wellington Arch in London.

Mr Jack said that the exhibition, which had been facilitated by English Heritage, would be a celebration of the Winter Gardens and Blackpool Tower, and include a range of archive exhibits. It is scheduled to run from July 3 to August 31, coinciding with the staging of both the Olympics and Paralympics in London.

He said that the Wellington Arch was newly refurbished, stood in a prime position opposite Buckingham Palace and attracted over 250,000 visitors a year. English Heritage had already given permission for it to be illuminated throughout the two-month period.

Angela Tierney (Marks & Spencer) pointed out that the whole of that area would be pedestrianised during the Olympics and was therefore likely to see much heavier footfall throughout.

Mr Jack said there was an opportunity for a number of businesses to work with the Council on sponsorship and branding opportunities, including corporate entertaining and private viewings.

Any business interested in becoming an exhibition sponsor or discussing the various corporate/branding opportunities should email Mr Jack directly at [chief.executive@blackpool.gov.uk](mailto:chief.executive@blackpool.gov.uk) or, alternatively, contact [philip.welsh@blackpool.gov.uk](mailto:philip.welsh@blackpool.gov.uk)

### **4. Duke Of Edinburgh Award Scheme**

Robbie Johnston (Duke Of Edinburgh Award Scheme) and Suzanne Holroyd (Blackpool Council) gave a presentation on plans to grow this long-established awards achievement scheme in Blackpool.

Ms Holroyd said that there was no shortage of young people in the 14-25 age range in Blackpool wanting to become involved in the scheme, but they were sometimes limited by not having the appropriate kit for expeditions. As a result, some young people faced being turned away. However, she said that the scheme was not just looking for financial contributions, but also for volunteers to support it.

Mr Johnston said the North West region was aiming to reach more young people and provide better support to these volunteers to ensure more young people completed the scheme. He said the plan was to double the number of young people reached to 300,000 a year and increase the number of disadvantaged young people helped to 100,000 a year.

He said the intention was to launch this growth strategy in Blackpool and local businesses are encouraged to:

- Work with the D of E scheme to support their own staff
- Help the scheme to engage local young people

Mr Johnston said the benefits of businesses working with the D of E scheme included:

- Engaging and retaining skilled young staff
- Motivating young employees
- Enhancing teamwork and developing better leaders
- Creating new networks within the company
- Bringing corporate social responsibility to life
- Involving all levels of business
- Business to business networking opportunities
- Extremely cost effective

Any business interested in contributing to the scheme in some way either through volunteer/financial contributions or by putting their own employees forward as participants should contact [robbie.johnston@dofe.org](mailto:robbie.johnston@dofe.org) or [suzanne.holroyd@blackpool.gov.uk](mailto:suzanne.holroyd@blackpool.gov.uk)

## **5. Current Funding Bids**

### **Portas Pilots**

Rob Green (Blackpool Bay Area Company) gave a brief update on the Portas Pilots competitive bidding fund. He said a decision had been taken earlier that week not to progress a bid on behalf of Blackpool Town Centre in this first round due to the tight timescale.

However, it was noted that Blackpool had just been named as the recipient of £100,000 from the new High Street Innovation Fund, set up by the Government in response to the Portas Review and as an aid to tackling empty shops.

It was also noted that a second round of the Portas Pilots competitive bidding fund was being launched at the beginning of April.

Philip Welsh said that the Government emphasis was increasingly being placed on the establishment of “town teams” to stimulate growth in town centres. He said that these teams could build on an existing BID company, but also needed to involve commercial landlords and property owners. He said it was intended that this should be progressed in Blackpool as quickly as possible.

### **Coastal Communities Fund**

Rob Green reported that a number of meetings had been held over a possible bid to the Coastal Communities Fund. He said that there were a number of potential bids being developed across Blackpool & the Fylde Coast, but the one that had gained the most partnership support was a package bid in the South Beach area of Blackpool.

He said the broad thrust of this bid would entail the strengthening of links between various sectors in Blackpool to promote economic development, jobs creation, skills and pathways to work, and to develop a number of specific pilot projects in the South Beach area.

He said that further work needed to be done on this prior to the April 27<sup>th</sup> deadline.

Pauline Waterhouse (Blackpool & The Fylde College) said that the college was also involved in a possible bid to the Coastal Communities Fund, based on servicing wind farms in the Irish Sea from the port of Fleetwood.

She said that this had the potential to support “high end” jobs in the sustainable energy sector and could provide spin-off benefits for accommodation as some of the workers would be coming into the area from elsewhere and staying on the Fylde Coast during the week.

### **Employer Ownership of Skills**

Peter Legg (Blackpool Council) reported on a skills initiative that was being developed within Blackpool’s visitor economy.

He said there was an opportunity to create a consortium of private sector businesses to bid for a minimum of £1m of funding to develop skills and training. In this particular case, there was nothing to stop larger businesses bidding and the scheme gave groups of employers the chance to take influence and take ownership of the skills agenda.

Businesses that had already agreed in principle to the bid included Pleasure Beach Resort, Sandcastle Waterpark, Blackpool Airport, as well as Blackpool & The Fylde College. However, it was important that other larger businesses in the visitor economy were also part of a consortium.

Philip Welsh said that the scheme enabled businesses to fund and deliver a range of generic training courses that were applicable across the whole of the visitor economy. He said he would be contacting some of the businesses that had not yet committed as initial expressions of interest needed to be submitted by mid-April.

Pauline Waterhouse stressed the importance of tapping into this particular funding stream as the money was being taken away from other parts of the education sector.

### **Regional Growth Fund**

It was noted that the Lancashire Enterprise Partnership (LEP) was offering to work with local businesses that are considering making a bid to the next round of the Regional Growth Fund.

£1bn is available nationally for bids for individual projects or combined programmes of projects. These can either be private sector-led investments or private/public partnerships, but all bids are required to deliver economic growth and private sector employment. The minimum bid threshold is £1m.

If any potential bidders require support and/or advice with developing a submission, they should share their draft proposals with Andy Walker, Head of Business Growth, at Lancashire County Council. Potential bidders should look to contact him by April 30 at [andy.walker@lancashire.gov.uk](mailto:andy.walker@lancashire.gov.uk)

### **6. What Does Business Need (round the table discussion)**

A round-the-table discussion followed on barriers to business growth and the sort of support that might assist.

Issues raised included:

- The possibility of reducing business rates to encourage business start-ups, including within the town centre
- Supporting existing businesses, rather than directing all resource towards new businesses
- Finding ways to improve skill levels within retail, particularly among independents where there is a reluctance to free up staff for training
- Development of a smart phone “app” that embraces tourism, leisure and retail in Blackpool
- Overcoming the problem of businesses being able to access finance (**Note:** Peter Legg reported that there was an opportunity to bring a free consultancy service to Blackpool and Fylde to discuss this with interested businesses)
- Creating an environment locally where businesses can operate without local authority interference

Howard Lewis said it was hoped that these issues could be addressed through Blackpool’s Economic Action Plan, which is currently being developed. Any businesses with further suggestions (including those businesses that could not attend the meeting) to pass on details to [philip.welsh@blackpool.gov.uk](mailto:philip.welsh@blackpool.gov.uk)

## **7. Business Partnerships Report Better Bus Areas Fund**

Philip Welsh reported that a joint bid by Blackpool Council and Blackpool Transport Services had secured more than £1m from the Government's new Better Bus Areas Fund. He said this funding would enhance reliability of services and provide capital funding for a bus lane on Central Drive. He thanked those businesses and representative business organisations that had formally supported the bid.

### **Prom Closures/Roadworks**

Philip Welsh reported that a number of temporary prom closures were planned in front of the Tower Festival Headlands in coming months to allow large-scale events to go ahead. The first of these would be for the Elton John concert on June 16<sup>th</sup>. He said that as soon as he had further details of the closures he would circulate them by e-mail to the group.

He also alerted the group to a number of road improvement schemes in the town centre that were planned ahead of work starting on the Central Business District development. He said he would circulate details of these immediately after the meeting.

### **Tramway Opening**

Philip Welsh reminded the group that the new tramway was due to be officially opened on April 3<sup>rd</sup> and opened up for public usage from April 4<sup>th</sup>. He said he would try to arrange a Business Leadership Group viewing of the tramway prior to the next meeting.

## **8. Any Other Business NSPCC Glitter Ball**

Claire Smith (Number One Hotels) reported that the NSPCC was planning a week of activities in Blackpool in May to raise funds for a service centre in the town. She said that the week of activities included the annual Beaverbrooks 10k fun run on Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> May and also a "Glitter Ball" in the Tower Ballroom on the evening of Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> May. She said that tables were available for £550. For booking details, contact Claire at: [info@numberoneblackpool.com](mailto:info@numberoneblackpool.com)

## **9. Date and time of next meeting**

Next meeting scheduled for **8am for 8.30am, Friday 25<sup>th</sup> May, 2012** at **The Village, Heron's Reach**