



BLACKPOOL BUSINESS LEADERSHIP GROUP

NOTES FROM MEETING HELD ON SEPTEMBER 28, 2012 AT THE TOWER BALLROOM

Name	Organisation
Present:	
John Barnett (interim chair)	The Wave
Colin Johnston	Grand Theatre
Philip Owen	Barclays
Iain Hawkins	Merlin
Les Ball	Town Centre BID
David Hardy	Champion Accountants
Rob Green	Blackpool Bay Area Co
David Cam	Blackpool Pleasure Beach
Pauline Waterhouse	Blackpool & The Fylde College
Jane Littlewood	Wyred Up/Rabbit Design
Claire Smith	Number One Hotels
Rob Knighton	Eclipse Developments
Mark Williams/Susan Bamber	Village Hotels
Gill Barker	Toast
Martin Long, Gareth Birch	Naphtens
Chris Hibbert	Henco
David Jones	Thirty30Media
Nick Testa	Imperial Hotel
Nick Holder	A4E
Wendy Swift	Blackpool Teaching Hospitals
David Chapman	Linksgate Leisure
Damian & Helen Broughton	Danbro
Trevor Roberts	Blackpool Transport Services
Richard Lefton	Lefton Group
Barry Howard	McDonalds
Alistair Baines	Cassidy Ashton
Ian MacMillan	Chamber of Commerce
Justin Allitt	Allitt Estate Agency
John Child	Sandcastle Waterpark
Michael Williams	Cuerden Leisure
Kate Shane	Blackpool Tower
Steve Pye	Federation of Small Business
Diane Blakemore, Amanda Bennett	Marketing Blackpool
Steve Whitehouse	FTS
Wayne Smith	Northern Rail
Alex McIntyre	Property Scene
Martin Heywood	Viva!
Declan Dowd	Carlton Hotel
Andy Atkinson	Voucher Packs
Paula Davies	The Wave
Michael Hyman	Leonard Dews
Mark Yates	Brooks Collectables
Nathaniel Butters	NB Energy
Nick Leach, Junior Bent	Natwest
Advisers/Observers/Guests	
Neil Jack, Alan Cavill	Blackpool Council
Philip Welsh, Peter Legg	Blackpool Council
Robin Ross	Roadshow, Media & Events
Mark Miller, Sam Schofield	Cuadrilla
Trevor Rayner, Trish Rimmer, Donna Parkinson	Blackpool Council (Procurement)
Carmen Conquer	Aspired (charity)
Apologies	
Howard Lewis	The Hilton
Jane Cole	Virgin Trains
Helen Raghu	Community Foundation for Lancashire
Ann Hartley	Manx2.com
Deborah Parker	Progress Recruitment
Anne Catterson	Common Purpose
Neil Sutch	RBS
Roger Mellor	Glasdon
Darren Webster	Blackpool Zoo
Angela Tierney	Marks & Spencer
Maria Noto	Olivers
Debbs Lancelott	Hounds Hill
Robert Wynne	West Coast
Paul Crossley	Kenrick
Gary Fearon	Johnston Press
Sue Kendrick	Blackpool Airport
Coral Horn	Pink Link
Doug Garrett	Close Link
Matt Wormer	First Group

1. **Welcome and apologies**

John Barnett (The Wave) welcomed everyone including new members and guests to the meeting. He thanked Kate Shane and Iain Hawkins (Merlin) for allowing the group to use the magnificent setting of the Tower Ballroom for the meeting.

It was noted that John Barnett was chairing the meeting following the resignation of Howard Lewis, who is to take up a new post with the Hilton Group in London. The group agreed that a letter should be sent to Howard on behalf of the BBLG, thanking him for his immense contribution in chairing and developing the group over the past three and a half years. Philip Welsh to draft a letter.

It was agreed that the future chairmanship of the group would be discussed at the end of the meeting.

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

Minutes of last meeting confirmed, no matters arising

3. **Shale Gas Production on the Fylde Coast**

Mark Miller (Cuadrilla) gave a presentation on the shale gas programme in Lancashire. He said that the exploration had revealed this to be the largest single gas accumulation in Western Europe.

His presentation included a detailed update on the work that was being carried out to satisfy safety regulations following the seismic tremors in the area last year which resulted in hydraulic fracturing (fracking) work being suspended while a report was commissioned to discover if there was a link between seismicity and fracturing.

Mr Miller also set out the potential economic benefits of the programme, both locally and nationally.

He gave an assurance that nothing within the fracking process would have any negative impact on Blackpool's bathing waters.

It was agreed that a copy of Mr Miller's presentation would be made available. This to be posted on the www.bblg.co.uk website.

Michael Hyman (Leonard Dews) raised issues about the regulations governing horizontal fracking. Mr Miller said that Cuadrilla was committed to working within the regulations, illustrated by the fact that operations were currently suspended until the concerns over seismic activity had been satisfactorily addressed.

Justin Allitt (Allitt's Estate Agency) reported that some purchasers and prospective purchasers were pulling out of house sales because of concerns over fracking. Mr Miller said that in America, house prices had risen in fracking areas because the industry had created strong economies.

Iain Hawkins (Merlin) said that Blackpool's biggest issue was bathing waters. He asked whether Cuadrilla would be willing to come on board and help Blackpool achieve Blue Flag status. Mr Miller said his company would be willing to commit to being part of that effort.

4. **Procurement Opportunities for Local Business**

Trevor Rayner (Blackpool Council) gave a brief presentation on ways in which local businesses can access Council procurement processes. He said that there had been recent media coverage suggesting that the Council should "shop local" wherever possible.

Mr Rayner said Blackpool Council's external spend was £87m in 2011/12 with 39% of that spend remaining in Blackpool and a further 10% in Fylde & Wyre. He said Council "in-borough spend" typically varies between 10% and 56% across the North West authorities.

He said a number of steps had already been taken to improve the situation:

- Contract values below £85k require three quotations, two of which should be local suppliers where appropriate
- Training in the use of The Chest (e-Tendering Portal) and increasing suppliers' visibility of Council tenders

Also where appropriate:

- Use of trials for local suppliers
- Mail-shots for up-coming contracts
- Soft market testing
- Supplier days

Future plans include:

- Tenders and quotations to be advertised on Council website with improved guidance notes
- Increase use of trials
- Seek to increase number of local suppliers registered on The Chest
- Greater use of supplier days
- Simplification of documentation

Mr Rayner asked businesses to consider two aspects:

1. What are the barriers to doing business with Blackpool Council?
2. What else can the Council do to assist?

Businesses are encouraged to send their suggestions to: procurement@blackpool.gov.uk or telephone 01253) 478989 or 478977

5. **Creative Blackpool**

Robin Ross gave a presentation on a number of art-led initiatives in which he had been involved.

This had resulted in various initiatives including:

- The Sand, Sea & Spray urban art festival staged over three days in June this year, which resulted in six sites around the resort being transformed into huge art galleries by urban artists from all over the world.
- Opening of "Pop Up shops" to exhibit artwork within the town centre
- The conversion of the Old Rock Factory on Deansgate into a screen printing centre and with a space for artists to exhibit

Robin said that Blackpool had established itself as a leading centre for urban art and there was an opportunity for local business to help develop this.

He urged members of the BBLG to consider using spaces in offices, boardrooms, foyers and corridors as pop-up galleries to display art by local artists.

Robin can be contacted by email at: robin@robinross.co.uk or telephone 07715 047777

6. Bathing Waters

A summary report on the recent Bathing Waters Summit held at The Winter Gardens was tabled at the meeting.

David Cam (Pleasure Beach Resort) asked whether it would be feasible to work with United Utilities, the Environment Agency and our Euro-MPs to attempt to get a temporary relaxation of the forthcoming Bathing Waters directive.

Neil Jack (chief executive, Blackpool Council) said that it was important to focus attention on resolving the bathing waters problem rather than trying to change European legislation.

Michael Hyman (Leonard Dews) asked whether there was a solution to resolving the bathing waters problem by 2015.

Neil Jack said it was not an impossible task and the people who were now on the steering group (United Utilities, the Environment Agency and the National Farmers' Union) were the right people. Organisations needed to work together across Lancashire to explore what can be done.

Claire Smith (Number One Hotels) said that the bathing waters at Blackpool are cleaner now than they have ever been and it was important to manage the media perception of the situation.

7. Business Partnerships Report

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

Employee Ownership of Skills Fund

It was noted that the bid to the Employer Ownership of Skills fund had not been successful. However, the feedback that had been received had suggested that the bid had got to the final stages of evaluation and with some revision might well be successful if re-submitted into the next bidding round. Philip Welsh said that Pleasure Beach, which led the bid on behalf of a consortium of visitor economy businesses, had confirmed its interest in re-submitting. Agreed that a separate meeting would be held with interested parties to consider a revised bid.

Learning Disability Survey

Philip Welsh reminded businesses that there was one last opportunity to participate in the learning disability survey. He said that the results of the survey would be fed back to the BBLG at a future meeting.

Central Business District Update

It was noted that construction work on the Central Business District site had now commenced and that there were some initial dates in place for permanent and temporary closures of nearby car parks. Philip Welsh said that a dedicated website giving regular updates on the project would be established in the near future.

Richard Lefton (Lefton's Group) asked whether the signage strategy advising motorists of diversions and potential disruption would be more widespread than was the case with the Promenade roadworks. Philip Welsh said he would seek further information and report back.

www.bblg.co.uk

Philip Welsh advised businesses that the new BBLG dedicated website was now live. He asked businesses to check for accuracy their own directory listing on the site and send any amendments back to him at philip.welsh@blackpool.gov.uk. It was noted that meeting reports and notes would be posted on the site.

8. Any Other Business

i) Appointment of Chair:

David Chapman (Linksgate Leisure) nominated Martin Long (Naphthens) as the next chairman of the BBLG. His nomination was supported by a show of hands from a majority of businesses in attendance.

Mr Long formally accepted the nomination and thanked the group for their support and said he would like to propose that David Cam (Pleasure Beach) be appointed as his vice-chairman. This was also accepted.

ii) Welcome to the Fylde

Diane Blakemore (Marketing Blackpool) presented details of a new Welcome to the Fylde Coast customer service and product knowledge programme.

She said the programme was free to businesses and the day-long course would enable delegates to:

- Identify the range of facilities and services available to visitors
- Appreciate the heritage of the Fylde Coast
- Identify the major features of the geography of the Fylde Coast, including the main transport routes to and within the area
- Locate key towns and villages in the area and describe their main characteristics
- Identify key visitor attractions, sport and active leisure facilities, parks and open spaces, business tourism venues, shopping facilities, arts and entertainment facilities
- Identify major annual events in the area
- Identify the range of hospitality establishments and the role of quality assurance schemes
- Appreciate major development plans for the Fylde Coast
- Develop the skills to use product and destination knowledge of the Fylde Coast to enhance the visitor experience

The courses are available free to anyone in Blackpool, Fylde or Wyre who feels they may benefit from the knowledge. Each course will last from 10am to approximately 4pm. Open course dates can be found at www.visitblackpool.com/marketingblackpool/welcometofylde

In house courses can be delivered subject to a minimum of 10 delegates and a suitable room.

Further details from: diane@marketingblackpool.com, telephone 478223

iii) 999: Channel 4 Series

A discussion followed on the current Channel 4 series, "999: What's Your Emergency". Claire Smith (Number One Hotels) said that the series was having a very damaging impact on Blackpool and urged businesses to write to Channel 4, the programme-makers and local MPS, to express concerns.

She said that the Council had not agreed to take part in the programme and had tried to dissuade the police from doing so. She said that by showing Blackpool in an unfavourable light over a 10-week series, it was undoing all of the good work that had been carried out over the past five years to change visitor perceptions of the resort.

John Barnett (The Wave) said that the programme did show the tremendous work that was being undertaken in the resort by emergency services, the local authority and health services, but agreed that it did not show the town of Blackpool in a positive light.

Other businesses also expressed concern that many of the social issues that were being highlighted in the programme were not unique to Blackpool, but were the sort of issues being faced by towns and cities across the UK.

It was agreed that a letter would be drafted expressing the group's concerns over the way in which Blackpool was being portrayed. This to be sent to Channel 4 and the makers of the programme, and copied in to local MPs.

iv) NSPCC

Claire Smith (Number One Hotels) reported that the Blackpool NSPCC service centre had been officially launched the previous evening. She said that the NSPCC was seeking to raise £2.5m to run its services for vulnerable children and families across Blackpool. The next major fund-raising event was the Glitter Ball, to be staged at The Tower Ballroom on Saturday 24th November. Ticket details from Claire, email: info@numberoneblackpool.com

v) Wave Children's Appeal

Paula Davies (The Wave) reported that The Wave had launched its Kids' Appeal to help thousands of families in Blackpool living below the poverty line. She said the appeal was for non-perishable food items that would then be sorted into emergency food parcels and distributed. Further details from paula.davies@thewavefm.co.uk

9. Date and time of next meeting

Next meeting scheduled for **8am for 8.30am, Friday 30th November, 2012** at **Viva! Showbar**. Parking and breakfast arrangements to be confirmed.