



BLACKPOOL BUSINESS LEADERSHIP GROUP

Business Partnerships Report – September 25, 2015

Section 1: Visitor Economy

HOTEL DEVELOPMENTS

Sands Venue



The owner of Sands Venue on Blackpool's famous Golden Mile has revealed plans to develop part of the building into a five-star destination hotel.

Businessman Peter Swann says that the multi-million pounds investment is a vote of confidence in Blackpool as a mainstream tourism destination.

The proposed 96-bedroom hotel on the Promenade has been created by the architecture and design team at the Frank Whittle Partnership (FWP). The hotel would feature luxury penthouse suites providing views out over the Prom and the Irish Sea. There would also be new retail units and public realm space.

Sands Venue sits on the site of the former Palatine Hotel building which stood impressively on the promenade until the 1970s. A planning application has been submitted to Blackpool Council, which is set to consider the scheme later in the year.

Hamptons By Hilton



Blackpool-based Create Developments has been granted planning permission to build a new hotel on the site of the now disused Palm Beach and Bourne Hotels at South Beach.

The £8.5m hotel, designed by Tim Groom Architects, Manchester, boasts 130 contemporary bedrooms, a business hub, gym, bar and restaurant.

Approximately 40 jobs will be created when the new hotel opens its doors in spring 2017.

Premier Inn, Talbot Square

Leisure group, Whitbread, has revised its plans to develop a 150-bedroom Premier Inn on the site of the former Yates's Wine Bar in Talbot Square.

The original plan was rejected by Blackpool's planning committee, but the company has now submitted a new plan which includes a Brewer's Fayre restaurant on the ground floor of the development.

The £10m scheme is expected to create 65 year-round jobs.



HOTEL SALE



A 126-bedroom hotel on the Blackpool seafront has changed hands.

The Hotel Sheraton, which had an asking price of £2.3m, is located on the Queens Promenade and offers extensive function facilities, two bars, a restaurant and an indoor heated swimming pool.

The hotel, which has been owned and operated by the McPhee family for 50 years, was acquired by hoteliers Nigel Seddon and his family from the nearby Elgin Hotel for an undisclosed sum.

CATS

The summer-long run of CATS ended on September 5, having reached more than 60,000 people. A total of 62,500 tickets were sold for the eight-week run, more than two thirds of them visitors from outside Blackpool and a third overnight staying visitors.

The economic benefit of the production, which will return to the West End of London later this year, is estimated to be worth almost £4m to Blackpool.

RETURN OF STRICTLY

The BBC has announced that Strictly Come Dancing will return to Blackpool Tower Ballroom for a live show during the new series.

The Blackpool show on Saturday 21 November will be halfway through the series, which this year has a celebrity line-up including Ainsley Harriott, Anita Rani, Anthony Ogogo, Carol Kirkwood, Daniel O'Donnell, Georgia May Foote, Helen George, Iwan Thomas, Jamelia, Jay McGuinness, Jeremy Vine, Katie Derham, Kellie Bright, Kirsty Gallacher and Peter Andre.

BLACKPOOL TOURISM VALUE SOARS

Marketing Lancashire has revealed that the county's visitor economy generated an additional £136m for the county last year.

According to the figures generated by the Steam Report, Blackpool accounted for the most visitors to the county at 16.8m, generating £1.33bn in economic impact.

It was acknowledged that Blackpool's success in 2014 was catalysed by the "Blackpool's Back" re-branding project which seeks to change negative perceptions of the resort.

WINTER COACH PARKING

Coach operators visiting Blackpool this winter will benefit from free parking. Coaches will be able to park for free from November 9 up to the start of Easter in the following car parks:

- Gynn Square, FY1 2JR
- Banks Street, FY1 2DT
- Seaside Way, FY1 6JJ

This exclusive offer for coach operators is designed to encourage more people to visit Blackpool during the winter months.

2015 EVENTS PROGRAMME

Blackpool's summer and autumn events programme has proved hugely successful with the first day of the Blackpool Air Show and the first World Fireworks event generating record crowds.

The free events are proving so popular that the volume of people trying to get into the resort is testing infrastructure including car parking and the roads network. Discussions are underway as to how these problems can be addressed for next year. The events to date include:

Blackpool Air Show



Staged over two days in August, the Blackpool Air Show featured displays by the Red Arrows, the Red Devils parachute team, a Spitfire from the Battle of Britain Memorial Flight and a farewell appearance by the Vulcan, which is being retired from shows this year.

The show was part-sponsored by TransPennine Express.

Ride The Lights

This year's Ride The Lights event was staged on the Tuesday prior to Illuminations switch-on night, with thousands of cyclists of all ages taking the unique opportunity to ride on a traffic-free Promenade beneath the Lights.

Participants were from across the region and the event attracted significant TV and newspaper coverage.



World Fireworks



The first of this year's four international fireworks events took place on September 11, attracting record crowds. Tens of thousands of residents and visitors packed on to the promenade between Central and North Pier to watch China open the competition. The French show took place the following Friday, with Canada due to stage its show on September 25. Fireworks season will close with a demonstration by UK manufacturers Titanium taking place on the final Friday, October 2.

VOTE FOR BLACKPOOL....

Fans of Blackpool are being urged to back the resort's campaign to be officially recognised as Britain's best beach holiday resort.

The resort is up against the likes of Eastbourne, Brighton, Rhossili, Tenby and others to be named as the best beach holiday in the #GoBritain awards organized by National Express.

A public vote is now open and VisitBlackpool is urging local residents and the many millions of visitors who come to the resort each year to back the campaign to ensure Blackpool is recognised as number one!

To cast your vote for Blackpool and stand the chance of winning a holiday prize, visit <https://nationalexpress.pgtb.me/0dn8CQ>.

...IT'S BETTER THAN THE MALDIVES!

Britons would rather visit a Blackpool beach than the golden shores of the Maldives, according to a recent survey.

Despite beaches abroad offering warm turquoise seas and palm trees, Blackpool is the best-loved by UK holidaymakers.

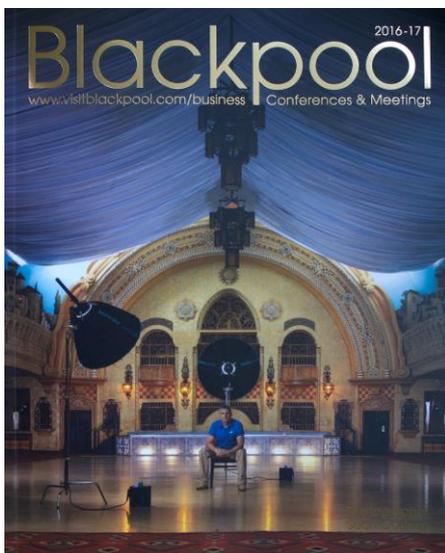
The resort took the top spot in the survey of 2,000 people, by Post Office Travel Services, who were asked about their favourite beaches.

Following Blackpool in the ranking was Benidorm in second place, with Majorca and Brighton close behind.

UK COACH RALLY

The annual UK Coach Rally is to be staged in Blackpool from April 22-24 next year. The rally, which has previously been staged at Alton Towers Resort, will use the promenade area between Central and North Pier areas as an exhibition area for up to 50 coaches, as well as utilising the Lower Walk for driving events and the Tower Ballroom for the annual dinner.

CONFERENCE GUIDE



A new Conference & Meetings Guide has been produced by VisitBlackpool to stimulate business tourism in the resort.

The guide features some stunning architectural images by local photographer Sean Conboy, including internal shots of some of the resort's most iconic venues.

Note: Mandy Tythe-McCallum, Tourism Manager for VisitBlackpool, will give a brief presentation at the BBLG meeting on September 25 as well as introducing a new business tourism ambassador scheme.

IFEST SWITCH-ON WEEKEND



Hollywood film director Tim Burton pulled the switch in front of an 18,000-strong crowd to officially launch Blackpool's 2015 Illuminations season.

Burton was the star guest at the Friday night switch-on event which also included a packed line-up of music stars including The Vamps, Professor Green, Toploader, Lawson, and Blackpool's own Little Boots.

The Friday night event on the Tower Festival Headland was followed by a three-hour live broadcast by CBBC on the Saturday morning, a vintage 80s pop concert on the Saturday night, and a live comedy festival on the Sunday night.

The four events attracted around 28,000 people and generated a record amount of media coverage.

On the day that Tim Burton was announced as the switch-on celebrity, the news was carried across the world including Australia, India, the United States and South America. Virtually every national news organisation in the UK carried the story.

In the week leading up to switch on, the resort benefited from extensive TV coverage on Good Morning Britain, ITN News, Granada, BBC Look North, Radio 1 and Radio 2, as well as several commercial radio stations.

The CBBC outside broadcast on the Saturday morning of switch on weekend gave Blackpool three hours of live coverage on prime-time children's TV. This was enhanced by an extended feature on the following week's Blue Peter show.

The format for the 2016 switch-on weekend will be reviewed over the next few weeks.

Grundy



A series of spectacular new commissions from around the world have been brought together for Sensory Systems, the Grundy's contribution to the 2015 LightPool programme. Five international artists have created installations exploring how light can affect people's sensory experiences. The gallery on Queen Street has extended its opening hours on Friday and Saturdays during Illuminations season.

Town Centre Festoons

New LED festoons have been created throughout the town centre in order to make better linkages with the Promenade to encourage visitors to visit bars, restaurants and retail outlets. The festoons are on Church Street, Clifton Street, Abingdon Street, Victoria Street, Bank Hey Street and St John's Square.

Brilliance On Birley Street

The famous Brilliance arches on Birley Street will play host to a month of outdoor performance and live music throughout October as part of the LightPool programme.

The programme includes ballet on bikes; wired aerial theatre; circus performance and live DJ sets. Full details and show times can be found on the www.visitblackpool.com website.



Ambassadors

The new team of LightPool resort ambassadors is now operational. One of their main duties is to signpost people to the new LightPool features on the Promenade and in the town centre.

BLACKPOOL'S BACK

The Blackpool's Back destination marketing campaign is now coming to an end for 2015. The campaign, which included TV advertising in Scotland and the north of England, as well as significant digital and PR activity, has run throughout the summer holidays.

The campaign has generated significant media coverage with travel writers from national and regional newspapers, magazines and online services

The success of the 2015 campaign will be reviewed at the end of the season and discussions held over the potential for a new campaign in 2016. It is likely that additional commercial partner support will be sought for any new activity next year.

Section 2: Town Centre Economy

BID BALLOT SUCCESS

The Blackpool Town Centre BID has won a third term after an overwhelming “yes” vote in the ballot held during the summer.

Around 350 of the 637 businesses voted in the ballot, with 304 or 88% voting in favour of the BID getting a new five-year term of office.

The BID area was extended as part of this campaign to include businesses on the promenade between Central and North Piers.

Businesses pay a levy amounting to 1% of their rateable value to pay for BID activities which include events, warden services and security.

CCTV

Plans are progressing for the reinstatement of CCTV monitoring in Blackpool town centre this autumn.

More than 30 people have put their names forward as volunteers with police using their volunteer co-ordinating team to recruit, train and vet staff suitability.

In the early stages, the monitoring will be restricted to peak hours and key locations. Subject to financing and sufficient numbers of volunteers, it will then be gradually expanded.

The monitoring service was ceased due to budget cuts in 2013, but Blackpool Council, the Town Centre BID and Lancashire Police have now pooled resources to restore it.

NEW RESTAURANTS

THE SEA

A new fish restaurant has opened for business adjacent to the Winter Gardens. The Sea has opened in the former Ponden Mill building on Church Street.

MR BASRAI

Fit out work on a new restaurant on the ground floor of Talbot Road multi-storey car park is continuing. Mr Basrai’s World Cuisine will have capacity for 300 covers, serving a variety of foods from around the world. It represents a £1m investment by the Basrai group which already operates similar restaurants in Ayr and Edinburgh.

PREZZO

Work is well advanced on a new Italian restaurant at the site of the former Liberal Club on Victoria Street. The building, which most recently housed the fashion shop Republic, will become home to Prezzo – a national restaurant chain that has around 200 branches around the UK. The 80-cover restaurant is expected to open in mid-November, employing 15 staff.

LAS IGUANAS

Work is also underway on the conversion of the former Burger King at the junction of Church Street and the Promenade into a Las Iguanas restaurant. The national chain is currently recruiting staff prior to opening before the end of this year.

Section 3: Enterprise & Economic Development

FRACKING LEGISLATION

Shale gas planning applications will be fast-tracked under a new Government decision to override the influence of local councils with greater ministerial powers.

The measure, announced last month, will give councils an ultimatum of 16 weeks to determine oil and gas applications.

If authorities fail to deliver within the assigned statutory timeframe, Communities Secretary Greg Clark will reserves the right to take over all future decision-making in that area.

Under the new measures, Mr Clark will be able to call in on a case-by-case basis any application for shale explorations.

BID FOR NEW ENTERPRISE ZONE

A bid is being made for the establishment of a new Enterprise Zone (EZ) in Wyre.

The NPL Group, which is backed by the Lancashire Enterprise Partnership, is seeking Government approval of the proposed EZ at Hillhouse International Business Park in Thornton Clevellys.

The A new Lancashire Enterprise Zone (LEZ) could attract £200m in private sector investment and create 1,500 jobs, according to plans submitted to the government. The NPL-owned site is currently home to more than 45 businesses, including the global headquarters of listed polymer manufacturer Victrex. NPL says that EZ status could generate £200m in private sector investment and create 1,500 jobs.

The plans have been endorsed by Wyre Borough Council and the Blackpool and Fylde Coast Economic Development Company (EDC).

Section 4: General News

RAIL SERVICES

Blackpool To London

Alliance Rail Holdings has been given the go-ahead to introduce direct Blackpool North to London rail services from 2018.

The Office of Rail Regulation (ORR) enables Alliance's operating company, Great North Western Railway, to introduce six return services each, day including weekends.

The company plans to invest in new tilting trains, and create around 120 new jobs to operate the services.

Electrification

Meanwhile, the electrification of the Blackpool to Preston rail line is facing the possibility of further delay after the main contractor pulled out. Balfour Beatty is leaving the scheme after a review found the work was unlikely to be delivered on time and on budget.

Network Rail says a new contractor will be "appointed shortly".

The electrification of the Preston to Blackpool line was originally scheduled to be completed by May 2016.

EUROFIGHTER

The Eurofighter Consortium has announced that Kuwait has agreed to buy 28 Eurofighter Typhoon fighter planes in a £6bn deal that should provide a significant boost to BAE Systems plants in Lancashire.

The company's Sablesbury site, near Preston, will support the contract by supplying the front fuselage, the vertical tail and some of the detailed manufacturing work for all 28 planes.

PROJECT SEARCH

Blackpool's job scheme for youngsters with learning disabilities is back for a second year.

The successful Project Search programme, which is run by Blackpool Council, learning disability charity, The Royal Mencap Society, Blackpool and the Fylde College and the town's three special schools - Park, Woodlands and Highfurlong - has taken on 10 new students this September with the aim of getting them all in to work come June.

Each of the students will spend two months in a classroom at Blackpool Council's offices on Bickerstaffe Square, where they will learn personal and jobs skills before embarking on work placements to find a suitable job for them.

Last year, seven out of the 10 students with Project Search managed to secure full time work. In Blackpool, 1.8% of the population have learning disabilities and less than 7% of them are in employment.

To find out if your business could benefit from having a Project Search student in the workplace, or to find out more about how Blackpool has embarked on Project Search, go to www.blackpool.gov.uk/projectsearch

WATER COMPENSATION

United Utilities has begun compensating domestic customers for the disruption to water supplies during the summer.

Payments of between £50 and £60 are being made depending on how long customers had to do without drinking water supplies.

Compensation for businesses is being dealt with in a different way. Businesses should submit evidence and details of any claim in writing to Darren Hill, Head of Claims and Debt Recovery, United Utilities Water Limited, Grasmere House First Floor, Lingley Mere Business Park, Great Sankey, Warrington, WA5 3LP. Claims will be considered on a liability basis.

CONGRATULATIONS!

Accountancy firm Danbro emerged as winners of the major prize at this year's BIBA business awards staged at the Tower Ballroom on September 11. The company, which has new headquarters adjacent to Lytham Green, was named as Business Of The Year.

The Most Inspiring Business was Blackpool-based Jobs, Friends & Houses. This is a unique community interest company working with people in recovery from addiction, offending, homelessness, mental health problems, or family breakdown.

The majority of the team work for the property development arm, renovating properties or maintaining private properties while gaining accredited apprenticeships in trades (electrical engineering, plumbing, plastering, tiling and joinery).

The flagship development on Springfield Road, Blackpool, where a once-dilapidated property has been turned into three luxury apartments, will open in October. They also run a letting agency, JFH Lettings, renting out properties.

Note: It has been confirmed that the BIBAs awards ceremony will return to Blackpool in 2016.

CREATE WINS STUDENT CONTRACT

Blackpool building and development firm, Create Construction, has been awarded a £3.85m contract to refurbish 565 student bedrooms.

Create will be carrying out the work at Liberty Living's Prospect Point site, which is in the heart of Liverpool city centre.

The 10-week project includes the provision of new electrical appliances and lighting, new decoration, floor finishes, ceiling finishes and the installation of new contemporary kitchens.

Create, which has seen growth from a turnover of £12m in 2011 to a projected £30m for 2015, is also behind the plans for a 131-bedroom hotel at South Beach on the site of the now disused Palm Beach and Bourne Hotels.

Create Construction works primarily in the student accommodation, education and hotel sectors, and clients include, Lancaster University and Royal Northern College of Music.

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY

Blackpool-based full service agency Happy Creative is celebrating a decade in business.

Founded by Karen Lambert in 2005, Happy Creative has worked with a number of global brands with £100m-plus turnovers and have had their work translated into a number of languages including Hungarian, Polish, South African plus many more!

Some of Happy's clients over the past decade have included Blackpool Council, British Red Cross, Cambridge University, Colossal Group, Ribby Hall Village and Whitworths Pharmacies.

The company is based on Metropolitan Business Park.

CELEBRATING 20 YEARS

Blackpool company Nixon Williams is marking a special milestone this year with two decades of trading under its belt.

The firm, based on Amy Johnson Way, specialises in accountancy services for contractors and employs over 60 full-time accountants and look after the businesses of over 4000 clients.

Alan Williams and Andrew Nixon set up the business in 1995 after they noticed a gap in the contractor market. Since then the company has grown at a rapid rate.

To mark the 20-year anniversary the firm has commissioned its first ever survey into the lifestyles of 1000 of their contractors.

NEW BOOTH'S STORE



Supermarket chain Booths has opened its latest store in St Annes, creating 90 jobs. The store is set out over 36,000sq ft and includes a butcher's, fishmonger, deli counter and café. The opening is part of a restructure of the group's portfolio of stores, which resulted in the Highfield Road store in Blackpool closing its doors.

Section 5: Requests for Private Sector Support

RIBBY HALL STAFF INCENTIVE SCHEME

Ribby Hall Village at Wrea Green is inviting businesses to participate in its staff incentive scheme. The company, which employs 450 people, is currently reviewing its staff benefits package with a view to re-launching it in November this year.

It is particularly keen to be able to offer our employees the opportunity to enjoy fun days out with family and friends through preferential rates or discounted entrance to attractions and experiences in the local area. Any business interested in discussing the scheme, contact sarah.houseman@ribbyhall.co.uk

Philip Welsh
Head of Visitor Economy