



BLACKPOOL BUSINESS LEADERSHIP GROUP

Business Partnerships Report – September 27, 2019

Section 1: General News

BEST IN THE LAND – AGAIN!

Blackpool's Stanley Park has been voted UK Park Of The Year for the second year running.

The park won the prestigious accolade after securing an unprecedented 36,832 votes from the public.



The Grade II listed park, which is renowned for its bandstand, boating lake, art deco cafe and Italian gardens, beat off competition from more than 360 parks across the UK in the competition organised by the charity, Fields In Trust.

Among the messages received was one from the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge who tweeted their congratulations.

Note: Many thanks to all those members of the BBLG who voted!

TOWN DEAL

The Government has announced that Blackpool is one of 100 places to be invited to draw up plans to improve economic growth via a Town Deal.

Through the Blackpool Pride Of Place Partnership, the Council has been lobbying the Government for the development of such a deal to help deliver lasting and sustainable regeneration. The Council's ambitions were set out in the Blackpool Town Prospectus which was published towards the end of last year.

A Town Deal could be worth up to £25m of capital funding for the resort. The announcement was made by the Prime Minister, Boris Johnson, when he pledged more than £3.5bn to rejuvenate deprived towns.

ROYAL VISIT

The Countess of Wessex is to visit The Grand Theatre and The Blackpool Tower on Tuesday 1 October to mark the 125th anniversary of both venues. She will also visit N-Vision, the Blackpool, Fylde & Wyre Society For The Blind, based at Squires Gate.

OLYMPIC MEDAL COMES HOME

The first Olympic gold medal won by a British female swimmer from Blackpool at the 1924 Paris Olympics has been successfully secured by Blackpool Council at auction.

Significant parts of the personal archives and medal collection of the renowned Blackpool swimmer and Olympian athlete Lucy Morton will now find a home with Blackpool's Museum and Heritage Service.



After setting world records for the 150-yard backstroke and 200-yard breaststroke, Lucy went on to achieve Olympic glory in Paris.

The acquisition ensures that her collection remains in the public domain and will be brought back to Blackpool where Lucy lived for over 70 years.

The collection was at risk of being dispersed, but Blackpool Council was able to secure 18 lots including Lucy's Olympic Diploma, her 1924 gold medal which she won in the 200-yard breaststroke event, and various other items including photographs, swimming certificates, books, letters, programmes and newspaper articles.

The total hammer price for all lots including the gold medal was £12,255. The funding has come from Blackpool Council and a grant from the Blackpool Civic Trust.

The archive will now be housed at the History Centre at Blackpool Central Library which preserves and gives access to Blackpool's heritage collections. The Blackpool Museum Project, which is developing Blackpool's first museum, will also feature Lucy's story.

When Lucy retired from competitive swimming, she taught local children to swim in Blackpool. A commemorative Blue Plaque in her honour was unveiled by Blackpool Civic Trust in 2012 on the front of Blackpool Town Hall.

STANLEY PARK GOLF CLUB

A £45m plan is being developed to build up to 250 holiday lodges and the UK's first Adrenalin World attraction on part of the municipal golf course at Stanley Park.

Under the plans, the east side of the existing course would be split into two developments – the family lodges and associated facilities, as well as a flagship Adrenalin World attraction, managed and operated by ex-tennis star and leisure entrepreneur, David Lloyd. That would include zip-wires, go-karting, themed mini-golf, climbing walls and virtual reality rooms.

The west side would be developed into a nine-hole course, with state-of-the-art practice facilities, with particular emphasis being placed on six of the holes to create a unique "Golf Sixes" venue aimed at increasing participation.

Holmes Investment Properties has been named as the preferred bidder to develop the site. The new development is expected to create up to 150 jobs.

NEW TRAINS UNVEILED

Northern Rail has unveiled its new electric trains that will eventually serve routes between Blackpool, York, Liverpool and Hazel Grove.

Northern, who have sponsored part of Blackpool Illuminations this year, invited the Illuminations' creative designer, Laurence Llewelyn Bowen to North Station to welcome the arrival of the first of the Class 331 trains, part of a £500m investment in more than 100 new trains.



The Blackpool to Liverpool direct service became the first route to benefit from the new trains, which offer air conditioning, free wi-fi, charging points at every seat and on-board information screens. Services to York and Hazel Grove will follow.

At the same time, Northern's Pacer's area being retired and units have been removed from some services operating from Blackpool South. The majority of Pacers across the north will no longer be in service by the end of the year.

Each year, nearly 1.5 million people every year travel by train to and from Blackpool.

WEST COAST LINE

A new partnership has been appointed to operate the West Coast Main Line, replacing Virgin Trains.

First Trenitalia, a joint venture between FirstGroup and Trenitalia UK, will take over the route from December 8 this year. The operators are promising to provide new trains, more seat availability, simplified fares and more frequent services.

Initial enquiries suggest that Blackpool's direct services to London will be unaffected by the change in operator.

NEW GYM KIT

Blackpool Council has invested £200,000 in new gym equipment and improved facilities at Blackpool Sports Centre at Stanley Park.

The work includes modernisation of the male and female changing areas and installation of new fitness equipment that will make the centre the first in the North West to offer a state-of-the-art eGym system. The system incorporates an easy to use strength circuit aimed at delivering health benefits through two 30-minute workouts per week.

SEA CHANGE CONFERENCE

Blackpool welcomed 60 speakers from 13 different countries to an international conference on climate change and heritage at the Winter Gardens.

The Sea Change conference forms part of the work that Blackpool Council is jointly undertaking with the World Monuments Fund to look at how to cope with the climate change challenges faced by the three piers and how the Council can work with owners, statutory agencies and Central Government to secure a more sustainable future for them.

Section 2: Visitor Economy

LUCY, STAR OF THE SHOW



Award-winning actress Lucy Fallon made a short trip from the cobbles of Coronation Street to her home town of Blackpool to switch on the 2019 Illuminations.

Lucy pulled the switch in front of thousands of people on the Tower Festival Headland, triggering a burst of fireworks at the top of The Blackpool Tower to herald the start of 66 nights of Illuminations.

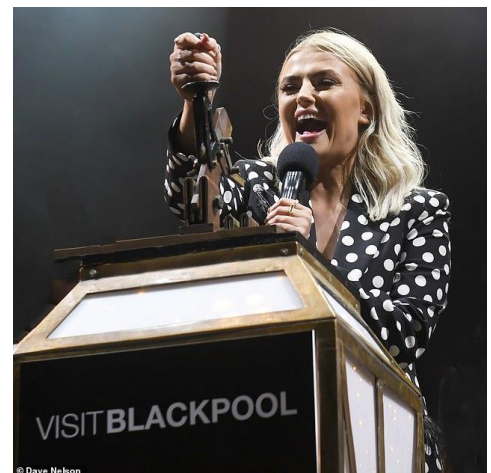
At 23, Lucy became the youngest ever Switch-On star.

The Switch-On was part of a four-hour concert, delivered in association with MTV and featuring performances from Busted, Diversity, Becky Hill, Nina Nesbitt, Sigma and R3Wire & Varski.

There were also special guest appearances by the Flakefleet Children's Choir, who captured the public imagination with their joyous performances on Britain's Got Talent, and by Sooty, the UK's most enduring children's TV character who was "discovered" on Blackpool's North Pier more than 70 years ago.

Coverage of the Switch-On event spanned more than 150 media titles across the UK including extensive coverage in several national newspapers and magazines, and on ITV news channels.

The extraordinary drone photograph of the fireworks going off at the top of The Tower at the Switch-On moment was taken by Gregg Wolstenholme.



AIR SHOW

Blackpool's annual two-day Air Show was badly affected by extreme weather conditions, with the first day cancelled and the second day suffering from the loss of the Breitling Jet Team, who were due to headline the show.

One of the French-based team reported serious technical problems as they headed across the English Channel on their way to Blackpool and they were forced to turn back.



The Blades Aerobatic Team, which includes a number of former Red Arrows pilots, including the first and only female Red Arrows pilot, stepped in to provide the show finale.

They also produced some stunning images of their aerobatic stunts over the Irish Sea.

LANCASHIRE TOURISM AWARDS

Blackpool is to host the 2019 Lancashire Tourism Awards later this year. The event, which will bring in more than 400 attendees, will be staged by Marketing Lancashire at the Pleasure Beach Arena on Thursday 7 November. VisitBlackpool will be the host sponsor. Tickets for the event will be available at Lancashiretourismawards.com

Blackpool has hosted most of the county's major business award events this year, with the BIBAs once again staged at the Tower Ballroom earlier this month, with around 1,000 attendees from businesses across the region.

NEW TOWER HEART

The Blackpool Tower has got a brand new illuminated heart in its 125th birthday year. The giant heart on the front of the structure was rebuilt and re-fitted with new-style light nodes in time for the 2019 Illuminations Switch-On.

It is part of a gradual replacement of the lighting on the Tower legs aimed at reducing the number of faults caused by exposure to extreme weather conditions and salt air. For the current Illuminations season, the west face of the Tower "stick" will be illuminated along with the Tower top and the heart.

The replacement of lighting on all faces of The Tower will follow from next year subject to successful testing of the new nodes on the heart over the coming months.

WORLD FIREWORKS

The annual World Fireworks championships are underway, with free displays being staged over four successive Fridays in September.

The first display of pyrotechnics was staged by Estonia, followed by current title-holders Canada and then Ukraine. The fourth, a showcase by Titanium Fireworks, will be held on the evening of Friday 27 September.



Throughout the competition, Titanium has been inviting people to post pictures, with the winners invited on to North Pier for a prime viewing spot. The first winner was Caroline James with a photo (shown above) taken during the Estonian display.

STRICTLY TAMARINS

A set of twins at Blackpool Zoo have been named in honour of Strictly Come Dancing Stars Aljaz and Janette.

The Emperor Tamarins were given the names after being born while the dancing duo were filming at the attraction for Channel 5's Big Week At the Zoo.

The documentary series was highlighting the work that the zoo undertakes with endangered Asian elephants.



RAINBOW LANDINGS



Blackpool Zoo has opened Rainbow Landings, a new walk-through aviary that is home to more than 30 Rainbow Lorikeets.

Visitors can purchase nectar to hand feed the small parrots that are native to Australia.

Rainbow Landings is open at selected times during the year.

BLACKPOOL CENTRAL

Negotiations with the developers of the £300m Blackpool Central leisure scheme have reached the next stage.



Heads of terms have been agreed for the lease of the land which means that work on the submission of a planning application can now get underway.

It is envisaged that the development, the biggest single investment in the resort's history, will bring world-class visitor attractions to the landmark Central Station site on the famous Golden Mile along with new hotels, restaurants, food market, event square, residential apartments and multi-storey parking.

The masterplan for the long-awaited redevelopment is inspired by *Chariots Of The Gods*, a global publishing phenomenon written by Swiss author Erich Von Däniken that explores alien encounters and unsolved mysteries of ancient civilisations.

RETURN OF UDO

The UDO Street Dance Championships returned to the Winter Gardens over the August Bank Holiday weekend, bringing thousands of young dancers and their families into the resort. The event was staged over four days.

NEW FESTIVALS

Two new festivals took place at the Winter Gardens during September.

The inaugural British Country Music Festival took place over three days, with headline performances by leading British artists including Ward Thomas, Catherine McGrath and Sarah Darling. The second event is already planned for September 4-6, 2020.

The following week saw the inaugural FAM festival, a celebration of Food, Art and Music, which included three days of activities including food demos by leading chefs, Aldo Zilli and Jean-Christophe Novelli, art and craft workshops, the rock show One Night Of Queen, and a festival finale featuring 500 local choir singers performing with West End star, Ben Forster.

FIFTH FLOOR

Merlin Entertainments has opened its latest attraction within The Blackpool Tower.

The Fifth Floor incorporates a family bar, circus-themed arcade and a virtual reality rollercoaster.

There will also be free live entertainment every weekend.



TOURISM SOCIETY

The Tourism Society staged its annual tourism symposium at the Winter Gardens. More than 100 delegates gathered in the resort for the conference, which explored climate change, product innovation and destination management. The keynote speaker was the BBC's Adrian Mills.

The delegates took part in a number of study tours including the Blackpool Tower and Pleasure Beach.

LIGHTPOOL RETURNS

Blackpool's award-winning Lightpool Festival is returning this October half-term with two weeks of free entertainment.

The festival, which will take place between October 11 and 26, will provide a mix of live performance and light-based art installations including a replica planet Earth in The Tower Ballroom, the world premiere of a large-scale Sun in the Winter Gardens and a display of giant illuminated seesaws in St John's Square.

The programme also includes the return of the Carnival of the Lights; an illuminated children's football tournament; fire and light-based shows; 3D projections on the front of The Tower building; and a town centre art trail.

For full details, go to visitblackpool.com/lightpoolfestival



BIG BLUE AWARD

The Big Blue Hotel at Blackpool Pleasure Beach has been awarded TripAdvisor's Certificate of Excellence for the fifth year in a row. This follows on from the hotel being named the second best family hotel in the UK by the site's Traveller's Choice awards earlier this year.

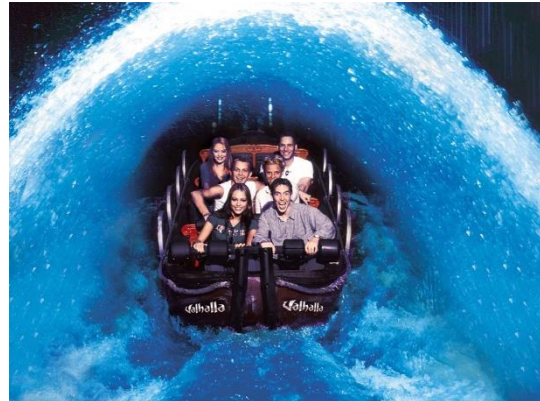
The TripAdvisor Certificate of Excellence honours select accommodations, attractions and restaurants that consistently demonstrate a commitment to hospitality excellence.

VALHALLA

The iconic Valhalla attraction at Blackpool Pleasure Beach has been named best water ride in the world for the fifth successive year.

Representatives from amusement and water parks around the world gathered at Silverwood Amusement Park in Idaho, USA, for the annual Golden Tickets Awards ceremony, which recognises the very best in the amusement industry.

The £15m ride was opened in 2000 and has been thrilling visitors to the park ever since with its mix of amazing special effects, including fire and snow.



THEATRE OF LIGHT

An exciting new partnership with an international entertainment company has brought a Vegas-style light show to Blackpool Promenade.

Working in association with designer Laurence Llewelyn-Bowen, 4Wall Entertainment has transformed the Theatre D'Amour show within the Blackpool Illuminations into a showcase for cutting-edge lighting and video technology.

The 4Wall Theatre Of Light, which features a series of animated "flying screens", is being staged in a specially-made unit on the promenade close to South Pier. It will be in operation until November 3 with four shows per evening every 15 minutes on the hour.

LIVE FROM BLACKPOOL

Radio 2's All Star Party is heading to Blackpool for a live broadcast on Saturday 28 September.

Trevor Nelson, Craig Charles and Ana Matronic will broadcast their shows live from the Empress Ballroom in the Winter Gardens, presenting a spectacular night of soul, R&B and dance music.



The shows will feature live performances from Beverley Knight, The Brand New Heavies, The Shapeshifters and The Fantasy Funk Band featuring guest vocalists Heather Small and Roachford.

Doors will open at 7pm before the live music broadcast begins at 8pm. Full details are available at bbc.co.uk/radio2

VAMPIRE BEACH

Blackpool Pleasure Beach is to stage more than two weeks of Halloween activities next month as the theme park takes on a new identity as Vampire Pleasure Beach!

Between October 12 and 31, the park will host various events including after-dark “freak nights”, drive-in cinema with Halloween-themed movies, and children’s activities in Nickelodeon Land. On Saturday 26 October, there will be costume characters, live music, late-night riding and fireworks.

COMING SOON

All You Need Is Love

VIVA Blackpool has launched a new Beatles musical for the autumn season. All You Need Is Love – The Discovery of Beatlemania, celebrates the lives and careers of John, Paul, George and Ringo. The show is running throughout September and October.

SLIMEFEST

Nickelodeon’s SLIMEFEST returns to the Pleasure Beach Arena for six shows from October 19-21. The shows, which sold out within weeks of going on sale, are a joint venture with VisitBlackpool. This year’s line-up includes music and TV talent from the UK and America.

Buddy – The Buddy Holly Story

The iconic musical returns to Blackpool Grand Theatre from October 22-26 as part of a 30th anniversary UK tour.

Kinky Boots

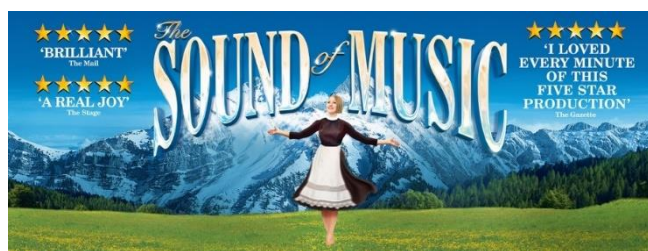
Feel-good musical with music by Grammy-award winning singer, Cyndi Lauper, will run at Blackpool Opera House from October 1-12.

Calendar Girls – The Musical

Award-winning musical written by Gary Barlow and Tim Firth, comes to the Opera House from October 15-19.

NEW SHOWS LINED UP FOR 2020

A number of shows have already been announced for the 2020 season.



The latest is The Sound Of Music, which will be staged at the Opera House, over the February half-term from February 18-22. Other shows already confirmed include:

We Will Rock You, January 6-11, Opera House
Curtains, A Musical Whodunnit, March 3-7, Opera House
Billionaire Boy, March 11-15, Opera House
Royal Shakespeare Company, March 25-April 4, Grand Theatre
Some Mothers Do ‘Ave ‘Em, April 21-25, Grand Theatre

Section 3: Town Centre Economy

IN ALL ITS GLORY

The historic Spanish Hall in the Winter Gardens has been restored to its former glory in a £1.9m makeover.

The renovation of the Grade II listed hall, which is famed for its three-dimensional frieze depicting Andalusian hills and villages, has taken more than a year to complete.



The work, undertaken by Conlon Construction, included significant repair works to the roof and interior, reinstatement of the original chandeliers, and replacement of the clusters of clouds that were removed in the early 1990s.

It is the first time in more than a decade that the hall has been on full display as rainwater damage meant that a canopy had been put in place to prevent further damage.

Designed by Andrew Mazzei, the hall originally opened to the public as a fine dining and afternoon tea venue. It is now used as a conference and event space for up to 700 people. The restoration work was part funded by a £500,000 grant from Historic England, with the remainder coming from Blackpool Council.

GRAND MARCH

Friends and supporters of Blackpool's Grand Theatre re-created the famous protest march that helped save the historic building in the 1970s.

The march saw 70 people parade through the town as part of a series of activities to celebrate National Heritage Open Days, which are running throughout this month under a theme of "people power".

To celebrate its 125th birthday this year, the theatre's aim is to secure the building for the next generation, starting with a campaign to raise £125,000 to repair the storm damage to the "pineapple" dome atop the building.

SCARLETT TO SWITCH ON CHRISTMAS LIGHTS

TV star Scarlett Moffatt is to switch on this year's town centre Christmas lights.

The Town Centre (BID) has announced that Scarlett, who started her TV career on Gogglebox and went on to win I'm A Celebrity Get Me Out Of Here, will make a special guest appearance at the event in St John's Square on Saturday 30 November. Live entertainment will take place from 3pm before Scarlett pulls the switch at around 4.30pm.



GOOD NEWS PART 1

Blackpool has now been shortlisted for the next phase of the Government's Future High Street Fund.

Having been informed that the initial expression of interest had been unsuccessful because of the sheer volume of applications received, the Government advised that more towns, including Blackpool, had now been added to the assessment phase.

Within its bid, the Council bid set out some of the issues facing the town centre including comparatively high levels of vacant units; a prevalence of low-value discount stores; a lack of higher quality independent restaurants and national chains; and a poor-quality physical environment that deters new investment in some areas.

It also set out a series of potential interventions that might address these issues including the fast-tracking of a development scheme that would increase footfall and strengthen the town centre night time economy.

Discussions will now take with place with the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government to develop the business cases. Further consultation with town centre partners will also be undertaken.

AND GOOD NEWS PART 2

Blackpool Council has secured a £600,000 grant from the Heritage Action Zone fund, set up to improve historic high streets.

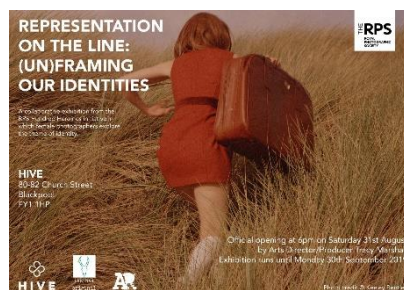
The money will be used to improve the street frontages of the Winter Gardens and Grand Theatre on to Church Street as well as a programme of activities to bring culture out of both buildings on to the street and encourage more people into the venues to experience two of the town's finest listed buildings.

Community groups including the Winter Gardens Trust, Civic Trust and Friends of the Grand will all play key roles in the governance of the project and match funding will come from both Blackpool Council and The Grand Theatre.

HIVE EXHIBITION

The Hive coffee shop and bake-house on Church Street has staged a prestigious photographic exhibition.

The exhibition, entitled *Representation On The Line: (Un)Framing Our Identities*, is a collaborative exhibition from the Royal Photographic Society's Hundred Heroines initiative.



Set over three floors above The Hive, the exhibition features more than 1,000 images and showcases the work of 80 international photographers, including several from Blackpool and the Fylde Coast. It will now run until October 6.

TOWN CENTRE VACANCIES

The latest survey of town centre vacancies carried out in August shows a net decrease of four vacant units in the town centre compared to May 2019, bringing the overall total down to 141 and reducing the vacancy rate from 22.8% to 22.1%.

The main reason for this improving trend is due to the principal retail core, which has experienced a net reduction over the three-month period.

Newly-vacant units include: Café Fresch (Victoria Street); Coral (Church Street); Toyland (Birley Street); The Whippet Inn (Queen Street) and Blackpool Chiropractic Clinic (King Street).

Since May, a number of businesses have occupied previously vacant units. These include: Simply Iconic (Houndshell); Toyland, Savers, No CBN, Zig Zag Gallery (Church Street); Bomb Cosmetics (Bank Hey Street); A₂Z (Abingdon Street); Rheamzy's Snacks & Shakes, TNN, New to You (Topping Street) and Mount View Estates (Cookson Street).

August 2019: Vacant Units

Area	Total Units ¹	Total Vacant Units	Vacancy Rate
Principal Retail Core (Local Plan boundary based around Houndshell, Victoria Street, Bank Hey Street, Church Street, Corporation Street and Adelaide Street West)	161	19	11.8%
Core Retail Area (as above but also including Topping Street, Queen Street, Clifton Street, Birley Street, Market Street, Talbot Road, Abingdon Street and Cedar Square)	462	91	19.7%
Town Centre Boundary – this relates to the Core Strategy found in the Local Plan but it excludes the Central Station site and Coral Island (as above but also including the Promenade, Springfield Road, Dickson Road, King Street, Cookson Street, Counce Street and the new Talbot Gateway area)	638	141	22.1%
Periphery Town Centre Area (the Town Centre Boundary area excluding the units contained within the Core Retail Area)	176	50	28.4%

ARCADIA CLOSURES

The Arcadia Group has announced that it will be closing three neighbouring shop units on Victoria Street in January 2020. Top Shop, Top Man and Miss Selfridge will all shut down when the current lease on the building expires. The closures are part of a UK-wide restructuring of the retail empire operated by Sir Philip Green.

ST JOHN'S FOUNTAINS

The fountains in St John's Square are undergoing extensive repair work in order to bring them back to full working order. A specialist contractor has been appointed to undertake the project, which will cost around £50k to complete.

Section 4: Enterprise & Economic Development

TRANSATLANTIC CABLE LINK

Work is continuing to support the installation of the new transatlantic optic fibre telecommunications cable at the Blackpool Airport Enterprise Zone.

Fylde Council has granted planning consent for the base station at the Airport and construction is now complete. The new Aquacomms cable, part of the North Atlantic Loop, is due to come ashore in October.

The presence of the fibre optic will provide superfast communication links with timings of less than 64 milliseconds to transmit data from Blackpool Airport to New York, some 11 milliseconds faster than the best current connections to London and thus providing a competitive advantage for business.

The new connection will open up the possibility of securing investment in the provision of data centre facilities at the Enterprise Zone and from data-driven industries.

A study to confirm the potential for data centre and related development has been commissioned from specialist consultants. Their report and recommendations are due in late September.

LANCASHIRE BUSINESS DAY

Lancashire Business View magazine is holding a third Lancashire Business Day. It will be held from 7pm on Wednesday 27 November at the new £12m Crow Wood Hotel, Burnley.

Guest speaker will be the hotel's CEO and founder, Andrew Brown, and there will be a chance for attendees to network as well as hear the views of a business leaders' panel who will discuss the challenges and opportunities for businesses in the county.

[For more information on the event, please click here.](#)

Section 5: Requests for Private Sector Support

FUNDRAISING BALL

The Electric Sunshine Project, a not-for-profit organisation set up to provide high-quality, participatory arts experiences for those living in Blackpool, is holding an All Souls Fundraising Ball in the Spanish Hall at the Winter Gardens on Thursday 31 October from 6.30pm-midnight.

Guests are invited to dress up on a “day of the dead” theme, with prizes for the best outfits. Tickets costs £40 per person or £375 for a table of 10.

BBLG members are invited to use the Coupon Code “BBLG” at check-out to get a table of 10 people for a discounted price of £300.

All tickets can be booked here: www.electricsunshineproject.co.uk/events-and-shop/

RESILIENCE REVOLUTION EVENT

HeadStart Blackpool has organised a special event aimed at bringing together young people and employers.

Businesses are invited to attend The Resilience Revolution’s “Same Pay for the Same Day” event between 5.30pm and 7.30pm on Monday 11 November at the University Centre Theatre on Park Road.

The date has been chosen to coincide with the start of Living Wage Foundation Week.

The meeting will reveal the findings of a research project focusing on young people and employment opportunities across Blackpool.

If you are interested, please sign up using the Eventbrite page:

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/same-pay-for-the-same-day-making-blackpool-work-for-young-people-tickets-71509664331?aff=ebdssbdestsearch>

AND FINALLY....

Thanks to F Parkinson who donated a defibrillator at Carleton Crematorium as part of its aim to leave a legacy at each of its project sites.

In addition, five of the Blackpool-based construction company’s employees took part in a volunteering day to clean and tidy the crematorium’s columbarium and surrounding areas.



Philip Welsh
Head of Tourism & Communications