

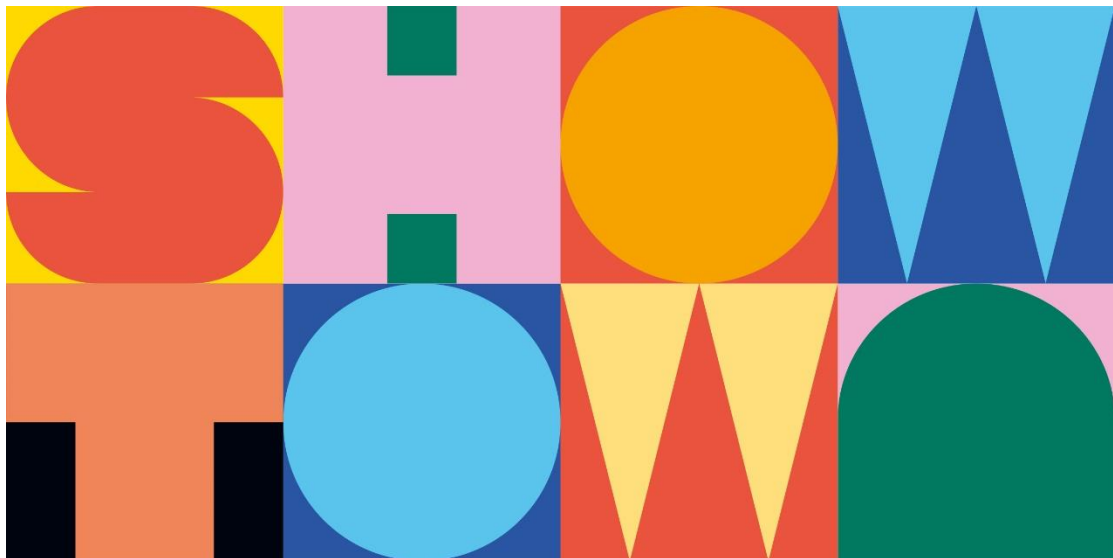


BLACKPOOL BUSINESS LEADERSHIP GROUP

Business Partnerships Report – January 31, 2020

Section 1: Visitor Economy

WELCOME TO SHOWTOWN!



Details of Blackpool's first museum have been officially unveiled. The £13m development on Central Promenade will be known as **Showtown** when it opens its doors in 2021.

Situated on the first floor of Blackpool's first five-star hotel, the Sands Venue Resort Hotel, the museum will celebrate Blackpool's story as the UK's most popular seaside destination, along with its pivotal role in the development of British popular culture.

Open year-round, the museum will be fun, accessible and fully-immersive, filled with objects, film, music and performance – mixing the best experiences of museums and visitor attractions. It will also give visitors an opportunity to look behind the scenes at what it took to make Blackpool such a special part of the country's tourism and entertainment history.

It is anticipated that Showtown will attract about 300,000 local, regional, national and international visits each year, creating around 40 new full-time jobs.

The latest contribution to the funding of the museum has come from the Wolfson Foundation, which has made a £75k grant.

NOTE: The Showtown team will present more detail on the new museum at the BBLG meeting on Friday 31 January.

PRIDE BLACKPOOL

A host of internationally-acclaimed music stars are lined up for Pride Blackpool's biggest ever weekend.

The festival will open on the night of Friday 5 June on the Tower Festival Headland with performances by two of the UK's most enduring music acts - **Right Said Fred** and **Marc Almond**.

Then, on the Saturday night, June 6, America's **Jake Shears**, lead singer of the award-winning Scissor Sisters, will take to the stage for his Blackpool debut.



Jake will be supported on the Saturday night by Blackpool's Jenny Ball, who has enjoyed a decade of stage success including appearances on The X-Factor, The Voice and Britain's Got Talent, and is a veteran of many Pride events.

Tickets for the event are now on sale. Further details about Pride Blackpool Weekend 2020, including family entertainment and a parade along the seafront on the Saturday, will be revealed in the coming weeks. Check www.prideblackpool.co.uk or www.visitblackpool.com/pride for more information.

NEW CHILDREN'S ATTRACTION

A new television-themed attraction aimed at pre-school children is planned to open at Madame Tussauds in Blackpool in May this year.

Blackpool Council, which owns the site, has agreed to borrow £700k to help fund the investment.

The attraction will be developed by operators, Merlin Entertainments, in an under-utilised part of the building on Central Promenade.

FLOYD IN BLACKPOOL

Floyd Mayweather, one of the most successful boxers in sporting history, is lined up to make a guest appearance in Blackpool.

Unbeaten over 50 fights, Mayweather will appear at The Grand Hotel (formerly the Hilton) on Sunday 1 March when he will take part in a Q&A and meet-and-greet session.

For ticket details, go to: www.tickettailor.com/events/goldstarpromotions

ZOO RELIEF FOR AUSTRALIA

Blackpool Zoo marked Australia Day earlier this week by raising funds to support the millions of animals affected by the country's devastating bush fires.

There were various activities and events based around Australian themes to increase awareness of the crisis and encourage people to donate to the relief effort.

A dedicated Australian Trail took visitors on a journey to see species native to the country including wallabies, kangaroos, potoroos, White's tree frogs, cockatoos, emus, kookaburra and parrots.



All money raised will be donated to the Zoo and Aquarium Association Australia's Wildlife Conservation Fund to help rescue and rehabilitate affected native wildlife and ongoing habitat restoration.

2019 SEASON

Key tourism indicators for April to October show variable results, illustrating what appears to have been a season of mixed fortunes for the resort with a very positive Easter (April), August Bank Holiday, and final week of October half-term. Easter and August Bank Holiday clearly benefited from exceptional weather and October half-term from a substantial events programme.

Other parts of the season were adversely affected by inconsistent weather, with the Met Office reporting the summer as one of the wettest on record. Severe weather also impacted on the summer events programme with one day of the Blackpool Air Show weekend cancelled and the other day going ahead with a slimmed-down programme.

A general lack of consumer confidence during 2019 has also been cited for what appears to have been a similar picture for attractions and destinations across the UK.

Car parking patronage on Council car parks over the main tourism season was comparatively flat during the 2019 season compared to 2018, despite record figures in April and August.

Inbound rail travel showed considerable growth compared to previous year, reflecting a stabilization of some of the timetable issues that the resort suffered during the summer of 2018. However, there were still issues relating to cancellation of Northern services, particularly on Sundays, over a number of weekends in the main summer season in 2019.

One area that bucked the trend was VisitBlackpool's Resort Pass scheme. More than 19,000 passes were sold in 2019 with record monthly sales in April, June, July and October.

The detailed STEAM report analysis for 2019, which provides headline visitor numbers and the value of the tourism economy, will be available later this summer.

JOE LONGTHORNE THEATRE TRIBUTE



The theatre at Blackpool's North Pier is to be renamed in memory of entertainer Joe Longthorne who died last year.

The pier owners and his husband, Jamie Moran, have been in discussions for several months about the tribute.

The Hull-born performer, who died in August, played his first summer season at the pier in 1987. He went on to do more than 20 seasons in the 1,400-seat theatre on the Grade II-listed pier, which he described as his all-time favourite venue.

The Joe Longthorne MBE Theatre will be officially opened on May 30 followed by a gala evening on what would have been the entertainer's 65th birthday.

A small museum dedicated to him with various items of memorabilia including his grand piano, MBE and gold disc will open next to the theatre.

PLEASURE BEACH DOMINATES CHARTS

Blackpool Pleasure Beach has claimed three of the top 10 spots in a list of the best UK attractions over the past decade.

The list, compiled by the attractions network Blooloop, showcases the best new attractions introduced across UK theme parks. Pleasure Beach entries include:

Nickelodeon Land (placed at number three in the list); Wallace & Gromit's Thrill-O-Matic ride (number six) and the new ICON rollercoaster (above) which opened in 2018 (number seven).



The chart was topped by Warner Bros' studio tour – The Making Of Harry Potter.

- Pleasure Beach WOW Weekends, with wristbands available at £19.95, will run every weekend from Saturday 15 February to Sunday 29 March. The park will then open daily from April 1.

DESTINATION GUIDE 2020

The 2020 Blackpool Destination Guide showcasing the myriad of events and attractions across the resort is now out.

The free 100-page guide, produced by VisitBlackpool, highlights a vast range of new shows, hotels and entertainment for the coming year including:

- The opening of the resort's first five-star hotel, the Sands Venue Resort Hotel & Spa situated on the Golden Mile, as well as a new 150-bedroom Premier Inn opposite North Pier (now due to open in June)
- The Tower Coaster, one of several virtual reality experiences in the new Fifth Floor family entertainment area within The Blackpool Tower
- An exciting line-up of top-class shows, concerts and festivals including The Sound of Music, Grease The Musical, Footloose, Hot Ice Euphoria, the British Country Music Festival and concerts by international stars including Sir Cliff Richard
- A spectacular free events programme including the two-day Blackpool Air Show (August 8 & 9); Ride The Lights (September 1); Illuminations Switch-On Concert (September 4); World Fireworks Championship Blackpool (September 11, 18 and 25 and October 2); Blackpool Illuminations (September 4 to November 8); and Lightpool Festival (October 16-31)
- The guide, which is illustrated with stunning photography, includes an eight-page guide to eating out and a special focus on the 100th anniversary of the Blackpool Dance Festival at the Winter Gardens



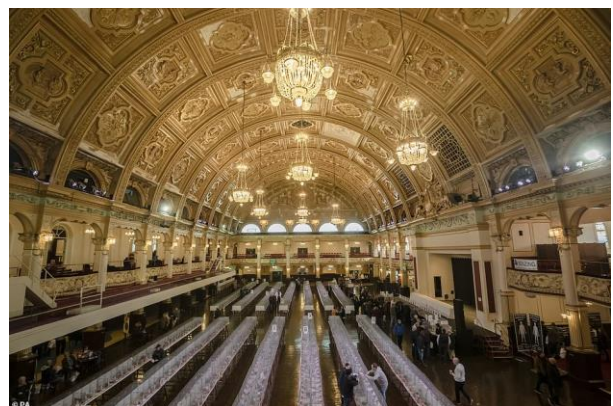
There is a wealth of information on a wide selection of hotels and accommodation, night-time attractions, as well as tips on how visitors can get the best of all that Blackpool has to offer including a guide to the award-winning Stanley Park.

There is useful information on transport links and accessibility, and the Blackpool Resort Pass which gives heavily discounted access to the resort's major attractions.

PIGEONS RETURN HOME

The UK's largest gathering of pigeon fanciers returned to Blackpool's Winter Gardens this month for an event that attracts tens of thousands of visitors and more than 2,000 racing birds.

As well as providing a significant boost to the resort's visitor economy in the first month of the New Year, the show attracted national and international media coverage.



The photograph (above) shows just some of the hundreds of exhibits inside the historic Empress Ballroom.

RESORT PASS IS BACK



The Blackpool Resort Pass is back for the new tourism season, giving visitors the opportunity to make significant savings on their favourite attractions.

Created in 2013, the Resort Pass has increased in popularity over the years, with almost 20,000 sales last year.

There are two options for visitors:

- The Original Blackpool Resort Pass, which gives visitors access to Blackpool Pleasure Beach, Nickelodeon Land, The Blackpool Tower Eye and 4D Experience, The Blackpool Tower Dungeon, SEA LIFE Blackpool and Madame Tussauds. It offers a 45% saving against standard adult admission prices.
- Blackpool Resort Pass Plus includes those in the Original Resort Pass plus Blackpool Zoo, Sandcastle Waterpark and Blackpool Model Village & Gardens.

Various bolt-ons can be added including bus and tram tickets, parking packages and access to various other attractions such as the Blackpool Tower Circus, Tower Ballroom, Funny Girls, Hot Ice, Viva Blackpool and South Pier's Adrenaline Zone.

The passes are available to purchase now for use from Saturday 4 April, when all of the participating attractions are open daily for the new season. The passes can be activated to be used in any seven-day period up to the end of the Blackpool Illuminations, which run this year until November 8.

Prices are the same as last year with The Original Resort Pass priced at £57.50 per person while the Resort Pass Plus is £85. Passes are valid for seven days and give users one visit to each attraction.

WE WILL ROCK YOU

The UK tour of the Queen-based musical played to sell-out audiences at the Opera House in the Winter Gardens in early January. Almost 20,000 people watched the show, which originally ran in London's West End for 12 years.



NEW SHOWS & ENTERTAINMENT

A number of new shows and concerts have been added to the extensive programme already announced for 2020/21 at the Winter Gardens and Grand Theatre. These include:

DREAMGIRLS

The dazzling West End musical Dreamgirls is heading to Blackpool's Opera House.

The show, which had its critically-acclaimed UK premiere in 2016, will run from October 27 to November 7. It features classic songs including And I Am Telling You I Am Not Going and One Night Only.



MICHAEL BOLTON

Award-winning singer-songwriter Michael Bolton is returning to the UK this year for his Love Songs Greatest Hits tour. The itinerary will see him perform at the Opera House on October 22 as well as a date at London's prestigious Royal Albert Hall.

MANFORD'S COMEDY FESTIVAL

After a hugely successful inaugural festival last year, Jason Manford's Comedy Festival returns to the Winter Gardens.

Jason will open the festival on May 1 with special guests including Rich Hall, Tez Ilyas and veteran comic, Jasper Carrott. The following night, Russell Kane will host a top-class line-up featuring Sara Pascoe, Dara O'Briain, Zoe Lyons and Marlon Davis.

There will also be an afternoon family comedy show and the semi-final of the New Comedy Award featuring the best up-and-coming comedians.



MRS BROWN'S BOYS – D'LIVE SHOW

Brendan O'Carroll and Mrs Brown's Boys bring their latest adventure to the Blackpool Opera House from July 13-15. Voted the best sitcom of the 21st century, the TV show has won a myriad of accolades and the stage version has played to sell-out audiences across the world.

STRICTLY BALLROOM THE MUSICAL

The award-winning stage musical based on the worldwide film phenomenon starts out on a UK tour this year, landing in Blackpool in 2021. With direction from dancer, choreographer, theatre director and Strictly judge, Craig Revel Horwood, Strictly Ballroom the Musical will run at the Opera House from May 24-29, 2021. It will bring a cast of 20 world-class stage performers.

LIPSTICK ON YOUR COLLAR



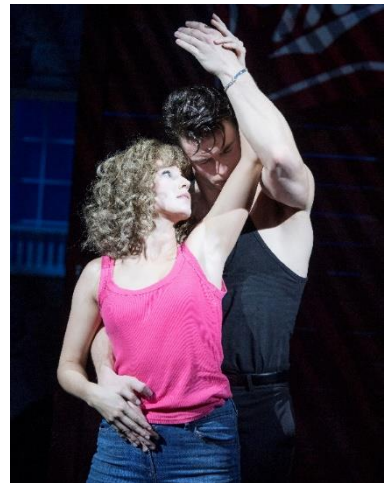
Direct from London's West End, the classic musical *Lipstick on Your Collar* comes to the Grand Theatre on February 9, 2020. Performed by a full live band, it features the golden age of music from the 1950s and 60s with more than 40 hit songs from the likes of Connie Francis, Brenda Lee, Buddy Holly, Chuck Berry, The Beatles, The Ronettes, Cliff Richard, Cilla Black and many more.

DIRTY DANCING – THE CLASSIC STORY

The iconic musical is lined up for a month-long summer season at the Grand Theatre.

The smash-hit production tells the classic story of Baby and Johnny with a musical backdrop with hit songs including *Hungry Eyes* and *I've Had The Time Of My Life*.

This new production opens on August 4 and runs until Saturday 29 August.



5IVE LIVE

Chart-topping band 5IVE are heading to Blackpool for an intimate performance at the Layton Institute.

The show, which will come at the end of their UK-wide *The Boys Are Back* arena tour, will take place on Saturday 4 April in front of an expected sell-out audience of just 500 people.



PANTO SEASON

Two pantos have also been announced for Christmas 2020. **Cinderella** will run at the Opera House from December 13 to January 3 and **Snow White & The Seven Dwarves** at The Grand Theatre from December 4 to January 3.

Section 2: Town Centre Economy

HOME & HQ

The town centre nightclub, Home & HQ, closed suddenly in January after the owners said it was no longer viable.

It is understood that they are now looking at modifying the building, which opened in 2016 after a £1.5m refurbishment, with a view to replacing it with a three-roomed “superclub”.

The current owners have applied to Blackpool Council to vary the premises licence to make some changes to the building including a new DJ unit on the ground floor, the removal of a bar and a new external smoking area.



GRAND THEATRE 1894 CLUB

Blackpool’s Grand Theatre has introduced a new loyalty scheme called the 1894 Club.

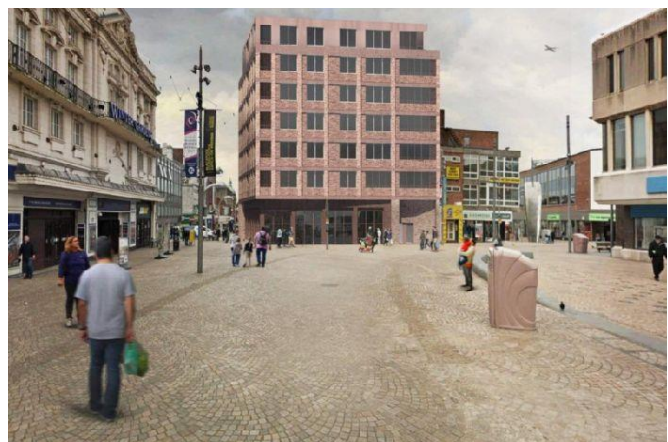
It will offer members a range of benefits including priority seats, competitions, discounts at the theatre bar as well as at major Blackpool attractions such as Pleasure Beach Resort, Blackpool Tower and Circus, Madame Tussauds, Sea Life Blackpool, Blackpool Transport and restaurants.

The loyalty club has three levels – Silver, priced at £29, Gold £49 and Diamond £99.

ST JOHN’S SQUARE DEVELOPMENT

Plans have been submitted for a six-storey apartment development on the corner of Church Street and Abingdon Street in the town centre. If the plan gets the go-ahead from Blackpool Council’s planning department it could see the current three-storey building replaced by a block of 29 apartments with commercial use on the ground floor.

The ground floor is currently occupied by Pizza Express, Ladbroke’s Bookmakers and Warren James Jewellers.



The site sits within the Town Centre Conservation Area, opposite the Winter Gardens and overlooking St John’s Square.

BANK RESTAURANT PLAN

The Blackpool-based Fabrik Property Group has put forward plans to convert the former Royal Bank of Scotland building on Talbot Road into a restaurant and bar. The plans will be considered by Blackpool Council’s planning committee. The building, which currently lies empty, is opposite the new Premier Inn North Pier development.

NEW HIVE EXHIBITION

Following its highly-successful Hundred Heroines photographic exhibition last year, Hive artisan coffee shop is now staging a pirate-themed exhibition entitled Libertalia.

The multi-media exhibition, on the upper floors of the Church Street business, is a collaboration between Arrested Development and Collective Moves, an international group of artists.

It tells the story of European pirates who fought for people's rights and guarded their liberties. They are said to have founded 'Libertalia' 300 years ago with pirate gold, to create a place where people could be equal and masters of their own destiny.



It features original works from more than 30 artists, from Blackpool, Liverpool, Sweden and South Africa. It will run until mid-February.

GRUNDY WINTER PROGRAMME

Grundy Art Gallery has unveiled its winter exhibition and events programme. It includes:

SCHOOLS EXHIBITION, Jan 18-Feb 22

This year, the annual exhibition presents the work of pupils aged 7-10 years of age from six schools across the Fylde Coast.

In Autumn 2019, pupils visited the gallery to experience the light-themed exhibition, 'A Trick of the Light'. During follow up workshops, pupils produced their own work inspired by what they experienced.



OPEN 2020, Jan 18-Feb 22

A spotlight on creative talent across the Fylde Coast, with more than 100 works on display.

SPOTLIGHT ON SCULPTURE, Jan 18-Feb 22

The gallery is showing works from its collection ahead of 110th anniversary celebrations next year.

SHY GIRL, Jan 18-Mar 28

Shy Girl, by Garth Gratrix, continues the gallery's programme of solo exhibitions by artists living and working on the Fylde Coast. Born in Blackpool, he is founding director of Abingdon Studios.

OTHER TRANSMISSIONS, Mar 7-21

This exhibition brings together artists, with and without disability, from Blackpool and Manchester. It will also include works on loan from the Musgrave Kinley Outsider Art Collection, the UK's largest collection of Outsider art which is housed at the Whitworth in Manchester. The exhibition is presented by the gallery as part of its participation in the Access Fylde Coast project.

Section 3: General News

YEADON WAY UPDATE



Work on the major improvement works on Yeadon Way are progressing well ahead of the scheduled re-opening in May.

Contractors, Eric Wright Civil Engineering, gave media an opportunity to view the scale of the £3.3m scheme, which is now almost halfway through a 28-week programme.

The direct link between the M55 motorway and Blackpool town centre is due to re-open by May 25 following extensive strengthening work on a 2km stretch between Hawes Side Lane Bridge and the Ashworth Road roundabout.

Yeadon Way carries on average 12,000 vehicles a day bringing hundreds of thousands of tourists into Blackpool during the height of the holiday season.

As well as strengthening the road, it will be completely resurfaced and drainage is being moved from the centre to the edge. The old concrete embankment barriers have been removed and crushed because their weight was adding to the pressure causing the carriageway to sink.

They will be replaced by steel barriers and fencing capable of withstanding the same level of impact as motorway barriers.

Drivers will also see 90 new street lights installed when the road is reopened.

RAIL UPDATES

BANK HOLIDAY DISRUPTION

Major engineering work will take place on the West Coast mainline railway over four weekends in April and May.

Sections of the line will be closed between London Euston and Birmingham, Merseyside and Cumbria from April 10-13 (Easter), May 2-3, and May 23-25 (Whitsun Bank Holiday). The VE 75th Anniversary Bank Holiday on Friday 8 May will not be affected.

Customers are advised that if they do travel over these dates, journeys will take longer with busier trains and fewer seats available. Passengers are advised to plan their journeys at www.nationalrail.co.uk/westcoast

NORTHERN

The Transport Secretary Grant Shapps has advised that Northern Rail could be nationalised. He announced that he was evaluating a proposal from the train operator on options for continuing its franchise, one of which is taking it into Government control.

He will decide whether to award parent company, Arriva Rail North, a short-term management contract or ask the Department of Transport's own "operator of last resort" to step in and deliver passenger services.

Meanwhile, the long-running dispute with unions, which has resulted in extensive disruptions to Sunday services in and out of Blackpool over the past couple of years, has now been resolved. Northern say that services should now stabilise from February onwards.

AVANTI

Avanti West Coast is the name of the new InterCity West Coast rail franchise operated by FirstGroup and Trenitalia. The partnership took over the franchise from Virgin in early December.



Under the new West Coast Partnership, First Trenitalia says it is committed to delivering a range of passenger enhancements for services and passengers will benefit from more trains, more seats, simplified fares and more frequent services.

The fleet of 56 Pendolino trains will be completely refurbished with 25,000 brand new seats, more reliable Wi-Fi and improved catering. By 2022, there will be 263 more train services every week to more places and a fleet of new trains introduced.

GRAND CENTRAL

Train operators Grand Central are gearing up for their arrival in Blackpool. They are planning to introduce five return services per day (four on Sunday) between London Euston and Blackpool from spring this year. The company is opening a base on the ground floor of Number One Bickerstaffe Square, opposite North Station.

LINE RE-OPENING?

Transport Secretary Grant Shapps has announced a £100k contribution to a feasibility study into the possible re-opening of the Fleetwood to Poulton-le-Fylde line, which closed in 1970.

NEW BRAND FOR NEW ERA



Blackpool Football Club has officially launched a new era with its “Backing Blackpool” campaign.

It will step up the club’s efforts to re-connect with fans, businesses and the wider community less than a year after owner Simon Sadler completed a takeover at Bloomfield Road.

Incorporating some much-loved aspects of the club’s heritage, ‘Backing Blackpool’ will become part of the club’s long-term brand, using the signature tangerine and white colours, as well as navy blue.

The campaign also adopts the popular Tower Power logo from the late-70s and 80s, which currently features on the back of the club’s home and away shirts. The campaign will feature across the club’s digital assets, including the official club website and social media channels.

Note: Club officials will talk about the campaign and the club’s ambitions at the BBLG meeting to be held at the football club on January 31.

PREMIER PRIZE

Blackpool taxi firm Premier Cabs was awarded Private Hire/Taxi Company of the Year at an awards ceremony held at the British Motor Museum in Warwickshire.

HOME OF FRESH AIR

New research shows that Blackpool has some of the cleanest air in the country.

The Centre For Cities’ annual survey reveals that the resort has the lowest proportion of deaths linked to air pollution in England and the fourth smallest in the UK.

Last year, there was a cross-party agreement on Blackpool Council for the adoption of a declaration on climate change. The authority has also launched a Green & Blue Infrastructure Plan to encourage more tree planting and better use of open space.

Section 4: Enterprise & Economic Development

AIRPORT ENTERPRISE ZONE UPDATE



A revised hybrid planning application for Phase One is in the final stages of preparation to be submitted in February. The new detailed application will reflect a revised location for the eastern gateway road and proposed changes in replacement sports provision aimed at satisfying recommendations from Sports England.

Work has commenced to provide a new airport boundary fence to map out the land required to accommodate new grass sports pitches, with engineering contracts due to commence in the first quarter of 2020 to provide a new airport perimeter track and crash gates, and to create the playing surface and drainage.

Grass playing pitches will be laid in May 2020 for use by the Aug/Sep 2021 season. A decision on the hybrid application is subject to Secretary of State consideration due to this being a change of use of greenbelt land. This is anticipated later in the year.

A public consultation will be held in the spring where local residents and businesses can view the revised planning application.

Construction is underway on land under private ownership at Amy Johnson Way for a site providing two industrial units and car parking for a local events and exhibition company.

Full planning consent has been granted by Blackpool Council for the development of speculative 4,000 sqm unit on a site at Amy Johnson Way. Negotiations are ongoing with a prospective occupier and a construction contract is expected soon.

To date, the EZ has attracted 73 new companies and enabled more than 1,500 jobs for the local area. Enquiries for both existing property and development plots remain high.

Section 5: Requests For Private Sector Support

PINK LINK

Pink Link's International Women's Day Lancashire Event is to be staged on Friday 6 March at The Boulevard Hotel, Blackpool. Sponsored by the Northern Powerhouse Investment Fund, the day will consist of networking, exhibitor stands, and masterclasses and business speakers.

Limited exhibitor space is available. For details call 01253 425443 or via this link <https://www.pinklinkladies.co.uk/international-womens-day-lancashire/>

NOTE: Pink Link's 2020 Enterprise Vision Awards are now open for entries and **nominations**. This year, the EVAs are celebrating a decade of showcasing female entrepreneurs and their businesses in the North West.

There are 19 different categories, with entries closing on June 7. The awards dinner will be staged at the Winter Gardens on September 25. For details, click here: [Enterprise Vision Awards](#)

Philip Welsh
Head of Tourism & Communications