



BLACKPOOL BUSINESS LEADERSHIP GROUP

Business Partnerships Report – November 26, 2021

Town Centre Update

CIVIL SERVICE HUB



More than 3,000 civil servants are to be relocated to a new £100m office development in Blackpool town centre.

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) has come to an agreement with Blackpool Council and partner Muse Developments to develop a new regional hub in Talbot Gateway.

It will result in DWP staff from existing sites at Warbreck House and Ryscar House moving into the Blackpool Hub and Centre for Health and Disability Assessment (CHDA) at Talbot Gateway when the new offices are completed in the autumn of 2024.

The DWP has signed a 25-year lease to occupy the highly-sustainable, purpose-built offices as part of a strategic plan to centralise civil service jobs in the heart of Blackpool.

The council has been negotiating this deal for several years as part of its stated ambition to rejuvenate the town centre by the introduction of high-quality office developments that will create and protect local jobs, drive footfall and breathe new life into the retail economy.

The seven storey offices will be on a 2.4 acre site on King Street in a new leafy town centre square with cycle and pedestrian routes. The offices will be within walking distance of a new tram interchange at Blackpool North Station.

- Blackpool Council's Growth and Prosperity Director, Nick Gerrard, will present more details on the scheme at the November 26 meeting.

TOWN CENTRE VACANCY RATES

The latest town centre survey of vacancy rates shows a net decrease of six vacant units in the town centre compared to the last survey in August this year.

It brings the overall total down to 146 and reduces the vacancy rate within the town centre boundary from 24% to 23.2%, the lowest since August 2019.

The wider core retail and periphery town centre areas each recorded net decreases of three vacant units.

The vacancy rate reduction is in part due to the removal of a number of previously vacant units from the survey, which have since been demolished to make way for the Talbot Gateway Phase 3 development works which will create the new Civil Service Hub described earlier in this report.

The newly-vacant units include: Trespass, Peacocks (Houndshill); Vita Health & Beauty (Church Street); Misty Sandwich Bar (Clifton Street); The Galley Café (Topping Street) and Hidden Finds (Milbourne Street).

Encouragingly, a number of businesses have occupied previously vacant units since August.

These include: Trespass (Houndshill); Wonderland (Victoria Street); SASCO (Church Street); Planet Anime (Birley Street); Luxury Nails and Beauty, The Big Star Barbers (Talbot Road) and Topping Street Bakery (Topping Street).

November 2021: Vacant Units

Area	Total Units ¹	Total Vacant Units	Vacancy Rate
Principal Retail Core (Local Plan boundary based around Houndshill, Victoria Street, Bank Hey Street, Church Street, Corporation Street and Adelaide Street West)	161	28	17.4%
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)	463	94	20.3%
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, Caunce Street and the new Talbot Gateway area)	629	146	23.2%
Periphery Town Centre Area (the Town Centre Boundary area excluding the units contained within the Core Retail Area)	166	52	31.3%

LEVELLING UP BID

Blackpool Council's bid for £20m from the Government's Levelling Up Fund has been turned down in the first wave of applications.



The bid included £7m to help convert the former Post Office building on Abingdon Street into a 148-room Hotel Indigo and Indigo Suites.

Plans for this scheme have already been approved by councillors who were advised that the condition of the building was deteriorating.

Alternative options are now being considered for the funding of the hotel scheme which is being led by Ashall Projects.

Blackpool's Levelling Up bid also sought £9m for town centre road improvements to ease congestion and improve the public realm between the Winter Gardens, the Houndshell extension and the Blackpool Central leisure development.

A further £4m was sought for redevelopment work and the creation of new convention space and retail within the Olympia area of the Winter Gardens to complement the new conference centre which is due for completion at the end of this month.

A total of 305 Levelling Up bids were submitted across the country with 105 approved in this first round. A second round of bids is due to open in spring 2022.

Tourism Update

CHRISTMAS IN BLACKPOOL



Blackpool's biggest ever programme of Christmas events and entertainment has been launched as part of the resort's post-pandemic tourism recovery plan.

The programme comprises a Christmas By The Sea village on the Tower Festival Headland and a Winter Wonderland with markets and funfair rides in and around the Winter Gardens. It is supported by a substantial marketing campaign including TV, radio, digital and out-of-home advertising across the region.

The promenade village, supported by Northern, officially opened on November 19 and will remain open until Monday 3 January to complement the two-month extension to the Illuminations season.

It includes a skating rink, simulated snowfalls, log cabins, a forest of Christmas trees, larger-than-life light installations, festive light projection shows and Magical Express tram rides along the Golden Mile.

Dancing On Ice star Dan Whiston officially opened the 40m-long rink together with young cast members from children's charity BIDCA who performed excerpts from the musical, Mary Poppins.

Standing in the shadow of the iconic Blackpool Tower, the synthetic skating rink is free to use and includes skate hire. There are 40-minute sessions from Thursday to Sunday from November 19 until December 17, and then daily until January 3. No advance bookings are required, people can simply turn up to book a session.

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Alongside the rink is a magical forest with 35 Christmas trees, a dozen log cabins serving a range of food, drink, gifts and souvenirs, light installations including a giant illuminated bauble, and regular artificial snowfalls to create the full alpine experience! The cabins have been offered free of charge to local businesses as part of the tourism recovery plan.

The opening of the Christmas By The Sea village also saw the world premiere of Frost Fairies, a newly-created 3D light projection show on the front of the Blackpool Tower building.

Specially produced by video projection artists Illuminos, Frost Fairies is an enchanting children's story of fairies, fireflies, precious jewels and ice palaces. It is being shown nightly along with several other projection shows until January 3.



Blackpool Transport has added to the festive feel with Magical Express Tours on a Christmas-themed heritage tram. All tours will depart from the North Pole, a specially renamed tram stop located next to the Tourist Information Centre and otherwise known as the North Pier and Tower Heritage Tram Stop!

Tours will take people on a 25-minute journey and run every 30 minutes. Tickets are priced at £4 for adults and £2 for children.

Alongside the Christmas By The Sea village, is Europe's tallest aerial ride, Star Flyer, which was originally planned for St John's Square as part of the Winter Gardens Wonderland event, but subsequently relocated to the promenade (pictured right).

Wonderland, with an extensive range of indoor and outdoor Bavarian-style market stalls, funfair rides, virtual reality experiences and a Santa's Grotto with animated reindeer will officially open on Friday 26 November.

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Most of the resort's major attractions, including Sandcastle Waterpark, The Blackpool Tower, Sea Life, Blackpool Zoo, Coral Island, and Madame Tussauds, will be open at selected times during the Christmas season, many offering a unique seasonal flavour. Pleasure Beach is operating every weekend until December 12.

There is also a wide range of shows and entertainment on offer including:

Snow White And The Seven Dwarfs, traditional panto in the glorious surroundings of The Blackpool Grand Theatre. Performances from December 3 until January 2.

Aladdin, starring Kevin Simm and Emmerdale's Kelsey Beth Crossley, and showing at the Blackpool Pleasure Beach Globe Theatre from November 25 until December 24. **Note:** Blackpool Transport is offering a 10% discount off a 24-hour pass for anyone booking a panto ticket at Pleasure Beach. Details here www.blackpooltransport.com/aladdin-pantomime-travel-discount

And for those who prefer an alternative way of celebrating Christmas, the hit West End musical, **Hairspray**, will be at the Winter Gardens from December 13 to January 2.

Two of Blackpool's most popular free events are also returning for the festive season. The annual Ride The Lights event, which usually takes place at the end of August ahead of the Illuminations Switch-On, will see a repeat performance on Sunday 5 December.

Ride The Christmas Lights will give cyclists of all ages a chance to ride along a traffic-free promenade beneath the Illuminations. It will start at 4pm in the afternoon and finish at 8pm.

And families will be invited to say "goodbye" to 2021 and get ready to say "hello" to 2022 with a celebratory fireworks display that will take place late afternoon on the Tower Festival Headland on New Year's Eve.

The free fireworks display, which will be launched around 5pm on December 31 from the beach in front of The Blackpool Tower, will create a stunning finale to end the year.

It has already been announced that from November 17 until January 3, visitors to Blackpool will be able to park on the majority of Council-owned car parks for just £1 for three hours. The offer, which is being funded by Blackpool Council and Blackpool Town Centre BID, is available using the PayByPhone app.

For full details of Blackpool's Christmas programme, including opening times, booking details, Illuminations switch-on times and more information on shows, entertainment, Christmas nights out, accommodation and shopping, head to visitblackpool.com/Christmas

DECK THE STALLS!

Blackpool Grand Theatre launched its own Christmas campaign encouraging people to buy show tickets, gift vouchers and experiences as the theatre prepares for its traditional panto season followed by a full programme of shows and activities in 2022, ranging from ballet to comedy to drama and children's shows.

Details can be found at the www.blackpoolgrand.co.uk

You can watch the trailer of the Christmas campaign launch here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fuAuNAEsM0o>

ROYAL WELCOME



A Blackpool seafront attraction has given a right royal welcome to a very important guest.

Her Majesty the Queen arrived in horse and carriage, flanked by Royal Livery guards, to the sound of the Royal Yorkshire Military Band as she prepared to take up residence in her new home at Madame Tussauds.

HM Queen Elizabeth II is joined by the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge who can be seen standing by her side alongside one of her beloved corgis.

The Queen, then Princess Elizabeth, was just two years old when her figure was first immortalised in Madame Tussauds London in 1928. Since then, a total of 23 waxworks have been created, depicting Her Majesty at various stages throughout her life.

The new figure of HM The Queen will replace the figure created in 2012 in celebration of the monarch's Diamond Jubilee, when she first appeared in Madame Tussauds Blackpool.

LANCASHIRE TOURISM AWARDS

A number of our Blackpool-based tourism businesses have been nominated in this year's Lancashire Tourism Awards. They include:

Winter Gardens (Cultural Venue/Organisation Award and Large Visitor Attraction categories)

Sandcastle Waterpark (Ethical, Responsible & Sustainable Tourism Award)

Blackpool Heritage Tram Tours (Experience Of The Year)

Viva Blackpool (Large Visitor Attraction Of The Year)

Ridgeway Farm (New Tourism Business Award)

The winners in each of the categories will be announced at the Lancashire Tourism Awards 2021 which will take place on Wednesday 2 February 2022. Location to be announced.

BLACKPOOL CENTRAL MOVES FORWARD

Proposals to create a new world-class, year-round leisure destination at the former Blackpool Central railway station have been given the go-ahead.



The £300m scheme will be the largest single investment in Blackpool for over a century and is expected to create around 1,000 new jobs, bring an estimated 600,000 additional visitors each year, and boost annual spend in the town by around £75m.

At a meeting of Blackpool Council's Planning Committee in October, members approved Nikal Ltd's and Media Invest Entertainment's detailed planning application for the initial phases of the scheme, which include a new 1,306 space Multi-Storey Car Park (*shown above*) and Heritage Quarter.

Outline plans to deliver a major public events square for live events, three indoor entertainment centres, a hotel, restaurants and additional leisure and hospitality space at Blackpool Central were also given the go ahead.

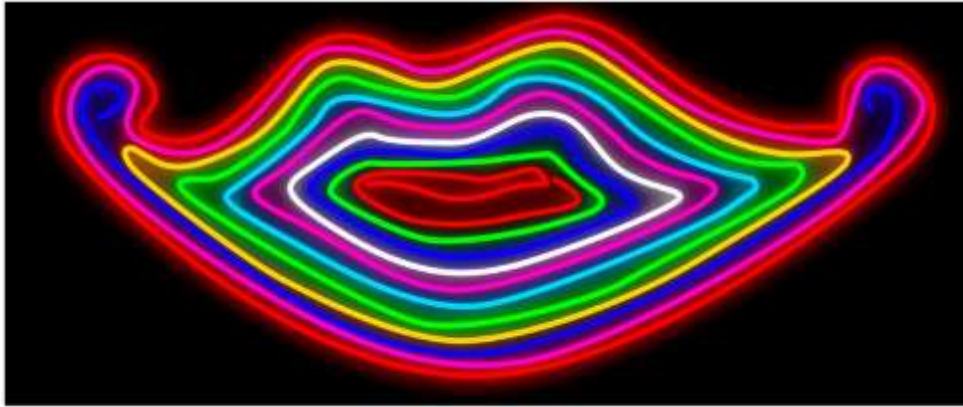
Delivering a new Multi-Storey Car Park is critical to unlocking the wider Blackpool Central scheme as it will free up land for the future phases and ensure that there continues to be appropriate parking provision for visitors to the town and local residents.

The redevelopment of Blackpool Central will restore the site's existing heritage buildings to create a thriving new Heritage Quarter. The Grade II Listed former King Edward VII Picture House will be transformed into a new artisan food hall, which spills out on to new outdoor space for al fresco dining.

The locally-listed King Edward VII pub will be refurbished into a new pub and hotel, creating a modern, family-friendly environment. The King Edward VII apartment building will be renovated into a high-quality aparthotel keeping its original character.

Construction of the Multi-Storey Car Park and Heritage Quarter is expected to start in 2022 and will take around two years to complete. Nikal Ltd and Media Invest Entertainment will also prepare a detailed planning application for the wider scheme during the delivery of the Multi-Storey Car Park and Heritage Quarter.

BLACKPOOL – LIGHT OF CHILA'S LIFE



The exterior of the Grundy Art Gallery is displaying a new light art installation by the internationally-recognised artist, Chila Kumari Singh Burman.

After high-profile projects for Tate Britain and Covent Garden in London, the artist turned her sights to Blackpool and the town's Grade II listed gallery. Until January 3, visitors will be able to see a riotous display of multi-coloured new light works that have been specially commissioned for the exterior of the Grundy.

Brought together under the title, Blackpool Light Of My Life, the exhibition is the artist's love letter to the town which she visited regularly as a child, with Blackpool Illuminations being an abiding memory.

It has been co-commissioned by the Grundy, Blackpool Illuminations and Lightpool Festival, made possible by funding from an Arts Council England National Lottery Project Grant.

NEW ATTRACTION

A brand new world-class attraction on Blackpool seafront has been given the go-ahead.

Blackpool Council's Executive has agreed a scheme to redevelop part of the Golden Mile Centre on Central Promenade into a new £2.3m attraction.

Following an extensive procurement process Merlin Entertainments has been selected as the regeneration partner to transform and redevelop the key site.

In the first phase of redevelopment the south end of the site, on the ground floor between Golden Mile Amusements and Funland, will be transformed into a family-focused visitor attraction due to open in 2022.

The Golden Mile Centre is adjacent to the site earmarked for development of the £300m Blackpool Central scheme. Further details of the attraction will be released early next year.

SHERATON POOL OPENS IN STYLE

Famous faces from the world of professional swimming helped launch a new £400,000 pool at a Blackpool hotel.

Hotel Sheraton unveiled its refurbished leisure facilities in memorable style – by recreating the multi-award-winning John Smiths Bitter TV commercial from 2002, with the help of some sporting stars.

Known as ‘The Voice of Swimming,’ professional swimming coach Hamilton Bland, from Lancashire, commentated on every aquatic event over 23 years for the BBC, including six Olympic Games. He is probably best known for his voiceover work on the original John Smiths TV advert in 2002 featuring comedian Peter Kay as one of the entrants in an international diving final.

After seeing his rivals perform breath-taking manoeuvres, Kay’s character opts for the ‘running bomb’ - a feet-first splashdown into the water which earns him maximum marks and the accolade of ‘Top bombing’ from the commentator. Bland was joined at the opening event by Olympic diver Hugo Ordonez and Blackpool’s own world record marathon swimmer Dr Julie Bradshaw MBE.

Guests at The Sheraton and nearby Elgin Hotels can now take advantage of the new-look 9x4m pool and six-person Jacuzzi and seating area plus changing rooms, showers and lockers. The facilities will also be accessible for hotel staff before opening to guests.

Request for business participation

ONLINE CONSULTATION

Since 2011/12, Central Government funding for local authorities has decreased meaning the local authority’s financial pressures are significant, with Blackpool Council having around £1.2 billion less to spend on services since then.

Those who work or live in the town are being invited to complete an online survey to help the Council understand what services are important to them, the Council’s priorities and any areas where additional revenue could be made or savings can be considered.

The results gathered from the survey will be considered by councillors and council officers with further exercises put in place to bring forward the budget proposals that could impact specific services.

To have your say, please fill in the stakeholders’ survey at www.blackpool.gov.uk/Consultations by **Sunday 12 December** so that your organisation’s views can be considered as part of the budget-setting process.

All responses are strictly confidential. If you think there is somebody better placed in your organisation to respond to the survey, please forward details to the appropriate person. For more information or support with the survey, please contact infusion@blackpool.gov.uk

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