



BLACKPOOL BUSINESS LEADERSHIP GROUP

Business Partnerships Report – January 25, 2019

Section 1: Visitor Economy

BLACKPOOL CENTRAL



Plans for the biggest single investment in Blackpool's tourism industry for more than a century have been unveiled. The £300m Blackpool Central development will bring world-class visitor attractions to a landmark 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 that explores alien encounters and unsolved mysteries of ancient civilisations.

Chariots Of The Gods will be the main theme for Blackpool Central including the anchor attraction - the UK's first "flying theatre", a fully-immersive thrill ride that will create the incredible sensation of human flight.

The 17-acre site, which currently includes one of Blackpool's biggest surface car parks alongside the magistrates' courts and former police station, was once earmarked as the site of a Vegas-style super-casino. The phased development could start as early as 2020.

The two partners in the project, Nikal Ltd and Media Invest Entertainment, who own the intellectual property rights to *Chariots Of The God*, will present at the January 25 meeting.

2019 DESTINATION GUIDE

The 2019 Blackpool Destination Guide showcasing the myriad of attractions in the resort is now available.

The free 84-page guide puts special focus on the 125th anniversary celebrations of two of the resort's most iconic heritage assets – The Blackpool Tower and The Grand Theatre.

To mark these historic milestones, the cover of the guide features an extraordinary photograph taken inside the Tower Ballroom when a giant replica moon was suspended above the celebrated ballroom floor during the Lightpool Festival.

The publication includes details of all of Blackpool's major attractions and events, including Armed Forces Week (June 24-30); Blackpool Air Show (August 10 and 11); Ride The Lights (August 27); Blackpool Illuminations Switch-On (August 30); and World Fireworks (September 6, 13, 20 and 27).

It also features information on a wide selection of hotels and accommodation, restaurants and night-time attractions, and an expansive programme of shows and live entertainment, as well as tips on how visitors can get the best of all that Blackpool has to offer.

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

New inclusions for 2019 are:

- ❖ The opening of The Boulevard, a stylish new seafront hotel, bar and restaurant at Blackpool Pleasure Beach
- ❖ The brand new Dr Who exhibition at Madame Tussauds with a remarkably lifelike figure of Jodie Whittaker as the programme's first ever woman doctor
- ❖ New shows and festivals including American Idiot; Little Miss Sunshine; Motown The Musical; Kinky Boots; and Dr Dolittle The Musical

COMEDY FESTIVAL

A new comedy festival is to be launched in Blackpool this year. The inaugural Manford's Blackpool Comedy Festival, in association with Absolute Radio, will take place in the Winter Gardens from Friday 10 May to Sunday 12 May and will feature a wide variety of top comedy acts as well as the final of a new comedy award which will feature heats across the UK.

Jason Manford & Friends will open the festival on the Friday with special guests Sean Lock, David O'Doherty, Jo Caulfield and Daliso Chaponda.

The following day, John Bishop & Friends will take to the Opera House stage with special guests including Mick Miller and Mock The Week's Milton Jones.

Further announcements will be announced in the coming weeks.



RIBBY'S FIVE STAR STATUS

Ribby Hall Village has had its five-star rating confirmed for another year following a recent quality assessment visit from Visit England.

This is the 10th consecutive year that the holiday village at Wrea Green has been awarded the accolade and it remains the only five-star holiday village in the North West of England.

Assessors rated the site in 10 different operational areas and every single one received a five-star rating.



During 2019, Ribby Hall Village, which employs around 600 staff and welcomes more than a million visitors a year, will hold a number of events to celebrate its 25 years in business.

STEREOPHONICS COMPLETE LINE-UP

One of Britain's best live bands, Stereophonics, have been confirmed as one of the headline acts for this year's Lytham Festival from July 10-14. They will perform on the Thursday night.

Organisers of the festival, which is celebrating its 10th anniversary in 2019, had already announced Human League on the Wednesday night, Kylie Minogue on the Friday night, Rod Stewart the Saturday night and Michael Ball and Sheridan Smith on the Sunday night.

CONFERENCE AMBASSADOR PROGRAMME

Visit Blackpool has launched a new business tourism advocacy and ambassador recruitment programme aligned to the town's new Conference & Exhibition Centre.

In addition to promoting the £28m facility, which is set to officially open later this year as part of the existing Winter Gardens complex, the initiative will also look to raise awareness of the £500m of recent regeneration projects which are transforming the resort.

These include several new hotels, a tramway extension, public transport interchange and newly-electrified rail connections.

The advocacy programme is to be led by Sir Andrew Parmley, a former Lord Mayor of the City of London and an Honorary Fellow of the Royal Academy of Music. Now living in London, Sir Andrew was born in the North West, grew up on the Fylde Coast, and attended Blackpool Grammar School.

PLEASURE BEACH WOW WEEKENDS

Blackpool Pleasure Beach's acclaimed WOW Weekends are back for 2019.

The half-price wristbands give access to the amusement park for £19.50 when booked online in advance and visiting on the opening weekends between February 16 and March 31. The park will open daily for the 2019 season from April 1.

RETURN OF PIGEON WEEKEND

An estimated 25,000 pigeon fanciers from across the UK attended the Royal Pigeon Racing Association's annual show at the Winter Gardens over the weekend of January 19 and 20.

The British Homing World Show of the Year is the largest of its kind in Europe. The two-day event included more than 100 trade stands, charity pigeon auctions, raffles for new lofts and the showing and judging of over 2,000 of the top homing pigeons in the country.



The BBC's National Security Correspondent Gordon Corera also attended to sign copies of his new book, *The Secret Pigeon Service*.

The book is based on a true story about 16,000 homing pigeons that were dropped in an arc from Bordeaux to Copenhagen as part of a secret British operation to bring back intelligence from those living under Nazi occupation.

MUSIC RUN BACK FOR 2019

Following on from the success of the first ever Blackpool Music Run, the event will be back in 2019, on Father's Day, Sunday 16 June.

There will be a new route and distance for 2019, with the 10k now taking in the North Promenade past Gynn Square. Along with this new 10k route there will also be a 5k which will be open to people of ages 11 and above on the day of the event.

All participants will start and finish on the Comedy Carpet where the Tower Festival Headland will host a Finishers' Festival.

Tickets are on sale for both the 5k and 10k events, with early bird tickets priced at £16 and £20 respectively. All tickets purchased include Finishers' Festival entry as standard.

Further details are available here: <http://www.blackpoolmusicrun.co.uk/>

SLIMEFEST IS COMING!

Nickelodeon's SLIMEFEST is scheduled to return to Blackpool during the October half-term.

Full details will be announced over the coming weeks, but it is anticipated that there will again be six shows over three days at the Pleasure Beach Arena.

Last October, more than 12,000 people attended the shows. Ticket data reveals that families travelled from all over the UK to see the exclusive shows with 12% coming from London and the South East, 15% from the Midlands, 11% from Scotland and 10% from Yorkshire and the Humber region.

STEAM TRAIN EXCURSION



A steam train excursion called the Pennine Blackpool Express is heading for Blackpool on Saturday 13 April.

An electric train will leave London Euston early morning and head up the West Coast Main Line to Carnforth. From there, a steam locomotive will be attached to take passengers on a tour via North Yorks and the Ribble Valley before arriving at Blackpool North mid-afternoon.

Passengers will then be given sufficient time to enjoy some of Blackpool's attractions before an electric train takes over the return journey to London in the evening.

STAYBLACKPOOL OPEN DAY

StayBlackpool will be holding its annual Open Day Trade Show at the Empress Ballroom in the Winter Gardens from 10am to 4pm on March 26.

The show is open to all hospitality businesses including bars, clubs and restaurants as well as the hotel and guest house sector. Any company or organisation that provides a service or product for this sector can pre-register an interest for a stand using the link below:

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/stay-blackpool-open-day-stall-holders-declaration-of-interest-tickets-48067511220>

SANDCASTLE INVESTMENT

Blackpool's Sandcastle Waterpark has invested £100k into its new Typhoon Lagoon wave machine known as The Breaker.

The system is controlled by a state-of-the art-computer program which allows the wave machine to produce a variety of different wave patterns every two seconds. It also allows the machine to produce waves with variable heights of up to 1.2m.

As well as the wave machine, a new interactive children's attraction was launched just before Christmas. The waterpark is currently undergoing a period of winter maintenance and refurbishment and will reopen on February 16 in time for the first half-term of the year.

Section 2: Town Centre Economy

GRAND THEATRE 125 LAUNCH



A host of star-studded names attended a special event to commemorate Blackpool's iconic Grand Theatre.

More than 350 people from across the UK turned out to celebrate the theatre's 125th anniversary in 2019.

To mark the historic anniversary, the theatre will host some of the country's leading national shows this year, including *Woman In Black*, Agatha Christie's *The Mousetrap* and *Thriller Live*.

The theatre will be staging its own special summer show and a pantomime favourite for Christmas, *Peter Pan*. During the next few months, there will also be a series of special celebratory events including heritage tours and a week-long production of *Romeo And Juliet* by the Royal Shakespeare Company.

Coronation Street star Lucy Fallon, the Blackpool actress who started out as a youngster at the theatre, was in attendance at the launch event as was Tom Lister, formally of *Emmerdale* and ex-*EastEnders* actress, Cheryl Fergison.

The theatre's latest fundraising efforts and plans for renovating the dome of Grade II listed building were also announced during the celebratory event.

BARS WITH A VIEW

Separate plans have been revealed for two rooftop venues in the centre of Blackpool.

The first proposal is for the roof of the building which houses Las Iguanas restaurant at the corner of Church Street and the Promenade.

The plan is for a contemporary bistro and bar on the top of the art deco building. It would be housed in a pavilion set back from the front elevation and surround by an open balcony seating area. The planning application also includes proposals to convert the upper floors of the building into 18 managed holiday apartments.

Meanwhile, Blackpool-based architect Joseph Boniface has drawn up designs for a rooftop bar at the Cedar Tavern in the heart of Blackpool town centre (*pictured right*).

The pub, which is currently closed, sits in the town centre conservation area and overlooks Cedar Square. Improvement works would also include restoring parts of the façade of the building.



ROADWORKS UPDATE

The re-opening of Blackpool Promenade around North Pier has been put back to allow for snagging works to be carried out on roadworks associated with the new tramway extension.

The stretch of carriageway between West Street and Queens Square was due to reopen on Monday 21 January but will now remain closed until the end of February.

The delay does not affect the completion date of all other roadworks associated with the tramway extension.

The works on Talbot Road between the Promenade and Dickson Road are on schedule for completion by the end of the February 2019. The junction of Abingdon Street and Talbot Road remains open.

Signed diversion routes remain in place and there is pedestrian access to all businesses which are open as usual. Traffic can leave the Promenade at Church Street to access West Street car park.

- ❖ Part of the Promenade close to Gynn Square also remains closed to traffic after a seafront building was declared unsafe.

FUNNY GIRLS TAKEOVER

Thwaites Brewery has confirmed that it has taken over the operation of the Funny Girls empire which includes the main venue on Dickson Road as well as associated venues including Flamingo and The Flying Handbag. Thwaites had been running the complex on a temporary basis since September when the venue got into financial difficulties.

GRUNDY'S WINTER PROGRAMME



The Grundy Art Gallery has unveiled a calendar of events for the start of 2019.

The programme, which was launched on January 19 and runs until Saturday 2 March, includes the ever-popular OPEN exhibition; the Annual Schools' exhibition; a solo exhibition by Blackpool-based artist Tina Dempsey; and, to celebrate its 135th anniversary, a display of work by The Blackpool Art Society alongside work from the Grundy Art Gallery's collection.

The 2019 Open exhibition showcases the wealth of creative talent across Blackpool and the Fylde Coast. The opportunity is open to all residents aged 18 years and over from eligible postcodes with works being hung in the date order in which applications were received.

The Schools Exhibition, entitled Future Blackpool, displays the work of pupils aged 5-14 years from seven schools across Blackpool and the Fylde Coast. Pupils were asked to imagine their Blackpool of the future and produce a poster to tell that story.

This year's participating schools are Our Lady of the Assumption Catholic Primary School; Moor Park Primary School; Highfurlong School; Thames Primary Academy; Kincaig Primary School; Hodgson Academy; and Hawes Side Primary School.

A programme of events will also take place throughout the winter season, including talks, workshops and exhibition tours. Please check Grundy Art Gallery's website for further details: www.grundyartgallery.com

WINTER GARDENS OPEN DAY

The popular Winter Gardens Open Day, giving the general public access to all areas of the historic venue, will take place on Saturday 26 January.

Doors open at 11am with the sounds of the famous Wurlitzer Organ playing live in the Opera House, along with resident pianist, Brant Nuttall playing in the Mazzei Café.

Activities will be taking place throughout the venue including displays of the original building plans and a chance to see one of the beautiful chandeliers from the Empress Ballroom up close.



The Promenade Concert Orchestra will take centre stage in the Pavilion Theatre throughout the day whilst popular guitar duo Pineapple Jack take to the Gillow's stage from 1-3pm.

During the event, guests can explore every nook and cranny of the world-famous grade 2* listed building including treading the Opera House boards and viewing rooms where stars and world leaders have gone before them.

A minimum donation of £1.40 is encouraged, with all money raised going towards the 140th fund and the continued restoration of the venue.

For more information about the open day, visit www.wintergardensblackpool.co.uk or call the Winter Gardens on 01253 625252.

FUTURE HIGH STREETS FUND

The Government has unveiled a £675m fund aimed at revitalising the UK's ailing town centres.

Details of the Future High Streets Fund were announced on Boxing Day when it was confirmed that towns will be given the opportunity to bid for a share of the fund. The Fund will contribute up to a maximum of £25m to each successful place.

The emphasis for the bid projects will be on the transformation of traditional high streets into community hubs, with the aim of reducing reliance on retail.

Blackpool Council has already declared its intention to bid for a share of the fund and is exploring several options prior to making an expression of interest submission by the March 22 deadline.

Section 3: General News

COUNCIL BLUEPRINT FOR THE FUTURE

Blackpool Council has set out an ambitious blueprint for the future, with a heavy focus on maximising opportunities and life chances for local people.

The Council Plan 2019-24 seeks to build on the successes of the previous plan which has already delivered hundreds of millions of pounds worth of improvements and investment, and galvanised local communities through ground-breaking initiatives.



The Plan, which will go before the Council for adoption later this month, charts the major achievements of the past four years including the huge investment that has already been made in the visitor economy to maintain Blackpool's status as the UK's number one family resort and the foundations that have been laid for large-scale job creation through economic growth initiatives such as the Blackpool Airport Enterprise Zone.

Alongside these physical improvements, the Plan shows how community-based initiatives such as Better Start, HeadStart and the Opportunity Area programme have already started to shift the public perceptions of what life can be like for young people in Blackpool, as well as putting a high degree of emphasis on teaching and education in order to raise pupil aspirations.

From an economic perspective, the Plan shows how major projects such as the newly-announced £300m Blackpool Central development and the planned opening of the Conference Centre, museum and "next generation" hotels will set a new quality benchmark for the resort's tourism offer. All of which will provide much-needed jobs for local people.

This activity will be complemented by investment in transport infrastructure; revitalisation of the town centre to reduce its dependence on retail; expansion of the business district within Talbot Gateway with new office development; creation of new jobs for local people; and the renewal and development of high-quality affordable housing.

SMOKING ADVISORY SERVICE

A new free telephone advisory service has been launched to help people stop smoking.

The new service for Blackpool residents is designed to support Blackpool Council's SmokeFree goal of reducing overall smoking rates in the town and increasing life expectancy.

It is accepted that people are four times more likely to quit successfully if stop smoking medication is combined with specialist advice and support.

Trained telephone advisors will now work with smokers over the phone to create personal quit plans. A smoker can receive up to 10 calls over two months to help them in their journey to quit.

The service will sit alongside a range of stop smoking information offered by the Council on its website that is designed to meet people's different needs.

For more information visit www.blackpool.gov.uk/smokefree or call 0300 123 1044.

FAIRTRADE RENEWAL

Blackpool has successfully renewed Fairtrade Town status for two years.

The town was first awarded Fairtrade status in 2017 in recognition of the strong support for the movement within Blackpool and the achievement of five qualifying goals, such as a wide availability of Fairtrade products in local shops and catering outlets, high levels of support from local people, businesses, the council, faith groups and schools.

SELECTIVE LICENSING

Further steps to protect local communities from rogue landlords and anti-social tenants have been approved by the Secretary of State for Housing and Homelessness.

Proposals to introduce selective licensing to private housing in the central area of Blackpool, which have been approved by Blackpool Council's Executive, have now secured Government approval.

The central area of town includes three wards: Talbot, Brunswick and the northern half of Bloomfield.

Selective licensing aims to improve standards in the area by addressing the poor management of some private landlords and the poor property conditions that they offer.

The scheme will require all landlords within the designated area to adhere to strict guidelines around providing a good standard of living conditions and effectively managing anti-social behaviour from their tenants and visitors.

It will also allow the council to address the high levels of anti-social behaviour and crime that blights the lives of those who live in the area.

The selective licensing scheme will apply to properties in the designated area which lies between Waterloo Road at the south end, through the central Gateway area bordered by Seaside Way and Central Drive, encompassing the town centre all the way to Talbot Road at the north end. The area will stretch inland as far as Devonshire Road and Whitegate Drive.

FURTHER RAIL DISRUPTION

Further disruption is likely for services in and out of Blackpool over the coming weeks. Network Rail has advised that engineering works will take place over the weekends of March 9-10 and 16-17 to enable the replacement of a bridge at Highbury Road, St Annes.

As a result, the line between Blackpool South and Kirkham will be closed over both weekends. There will be trains as normal to Blackpool North and rail replacement services between Preston and Blackpool South.

In addition, services between Blackpool North and South continue to be disrupted every Saturday by strike action. All four Saturdays in January have been affected and there is no sign of any resolution. Saturday services have been adversely affected virtually every weekend since August 2018.

OFSTED INSPECTION

A children's commissioner will now be drafted in for three months to work with Blackpool Council on a rapid improvement plan after an Ofsted inspection rated children's social care services as "inadequate".

The Commissioner will bring together evidence to assess the Council's ability to deliver improvements within a reasonable timescale and in a sustainable manner.

If they do not find sufficient evidence, he or she will advise the Department for Education on alternative delivery and governance arrangements outside of local authority control.

Prior to the inspection, the Council already had an improvement plan in place. Amendments are now being made to ensure that changes happen at a faster pace. There will also be a stronger focus on working with partners including the police and NHS.

RACE FOR LIFE

Entry to this year's Race For Life events in Blackpool is being offered at a discounted rate in January to encourage more people to participate. This year, for the first time, Cancer Research UK is inviting men, women and children to join the programme.

A Pretty Muddy Kids event and a 5k Pretty Muddy event for adults will take place at Lawson's Showground on Saturday 8 June. In addition, 5k and 10k Race For Life events will be held on Blackpool Promenade on Wednesday 10 July.

To enter Race For Life visit raceforlife.org or call 0300 123 0770. Entrants signing up during January will receive 30% off entry fees using the code RFL30.

INTERNET BOOST

Blackpool Council is seeking to secure almost £3m of Government funding to boost internet connectivity in the town. The funding would enable fibre network infrastructure along the length of the tramway from Starr Gate to Fleetwood, giving businesses on and around the Promenade faster digital access.

It is estimated that around 30,000 residential and commercial properties will benefit including the new conference centre at the Winter Gardens and the Blackpool Airport Enterprise Zone.

Section 4: Requests for Private Sector Support

RESILIENCE REVOLUTION



Private sector support is still being sought for the Resilience Revolution Pathway project that was presented at the November 2018 meeting of the BBLG.

It appears that some businesses wishing to contribute to the scheme struggled to make payments via the fundraising website because it requires a PayPal account. If any business wants to contribute, please contact hilary.wood@blackpool.gov.uk

Full details of the project, which will result in a pathway being built from Dickson Road to the Promenade, can be viewed at the following link: <https://www.spacehive.com/resiliencepathway>

TRINITY HOSPICE/BRIAN HOUSE UPDATES

TEE OFF AND MAKE A DIFFERENCE

The Brian House Charity Golf Day is back. The four-ball competition will be at Royal Lytham & St Annes Golf Club on Thursday 6 June, featuring an 18-hole competition, brunch, individual gift bags, a golf clinic and an evening dinner with drinks reception and prize presentation.

A team of four costs £995, which will go to Brian House to support the Fylde coast's most fragile children.

JOIN THE FYLDE COAST £50 CHALLENGE

Businesses are being encouraged to get staff to raise money for the 2019 Fylde Coast £50 Challenge. Trinity will give a £50 starter fund and businesses then use various ideas to turn it into as much money as possible for either Trinity Hospice or Brian House. Sign up today on 01253 359362.

NIGHT RUN



Trinity Hospice, which organises some of the town's most successful charity events including Santa Dash, the Beaverbrook's Blackpool 10k Fun Run and the Neon Memory Walk, has launched a new event for 2019.

Blackpool Night Run will take place along the Promenade from outside The Blackpool Tower, up to Red Bank Road and back, giving people the opportunity to run, walk or jog under the Illuminations before they are officially switched on.

The event, which will support Brian House Children's Hospice, takes place on Wednesday 28 August, and already more than 2,000 people have signed up! Trinity is looking for additional sponsorship for Night Run. If you can help call 01253 359362.

Philip Welsh
Head of Tourism & Communications