



BLACKPOOL BUSINESS LEADERSHIP GROUP

Business Partnerships Report – March 25, 2022

1. Visitor Economy Update

RED ARROWS ARE BACK!



The world-famous Red Arrows display team will return to Blackpool this summer to perform on BOTH days of the annual Air Show.

They will be joined on Saturday 13 and Sunday 14 August by the RAF Typhoon display team and the Battle of Britain Memorial Flight, also confirmed for both days of the free event.

Due to COVID restrictions on large-scale events, this will be Blackpool's first Air Show since 2019 and the first time the Red Arrows have performed since 2018.

The Red Arrows, one of the world's foremost aerial aerobatic display teams, will perform high above the seafront opposite The Blackpool Tower.

The weekend show, which attracts up to 100,000 visitors over the two days, will also feature a whole host of incredible flying machines with the full programme of civil and military aircraft to be confirmed in coming weeks. To complement the aerial programme, there will be plenty to see and do on the ground with a wide range of stalls, attractions and food concessions in the Air Show Village on the Tower Festival Headland.

PRIME MINISTER OPENS NEW CONFERENCE CENTRE....

The Prime Minister, Boris Johnson, has officially opened Blackpool's new £30m conference and exhibition centre.

Mr Johnson unveiled a plaque in the reception hall of the new building, which is situated within the historic Winter Gardens, on the second and final day of the Conservative Party Spring Conference.

It is the first time the Conservative Party has staged a major conference in the resort since 2007.



The new state-of-the-art conference centre has been designed so that it seamlessly integrates with the Winter Gardens complex.

With 2,400sq metres of dedicated space set over two floors and equipped with cutting-edge audio-visual technology, the new build adds a unique contemporary twist to the Winter Gardens, which first opened in 1878.

With a direct link into the Empress Ballroom, Opera House and Empress Buildings, the new centre has created a hub of 12 distinct venues, giving a total capacity of 7,000 delegates and almost five acres of connected conference, meeting, event and exhibition space.

Built on the site of a former car park, the scheme was facilitated by £17.8m of funding from the Government's Growth Deal, which is managed by the Lancashire Economic Partnership (LEP), almost £3m from the Coastal Communities Fund and the remainder from Blackpool Council and the Blackpool Entertainment Company Ltd (BECL).

It is the first major building development at the Winter Gardens since the construction of the Opera House in 1939.

....AND ENJOYS A JOG ON THE BEACH

Earlier in the day, the Prime Minister took advantage of a gloriously sunny day in Blackpool to go for a jog on the beach opposite Pleasure Beach.

He was full of praise for his seaside experience, saying: "I went for a run this morning on the beach. Absolutely beautiful. Better than anything in the Caribbean. That is not near gallantry. It is true."



LAUNCH OF ENGLISH TOURISM WEEK



The Tourism Minister Nigel Huddleston MP took advantage of his attendance at the Conservative Party Spring Conference to launch English Tourism Week in Blackpool.

The Minister undertook a whistle-stop tour of various attractions along the Golden Mile including Madame Tussauds, the SEA LIFE Centre, the new Peter Rabbit attraction and The Blackpool Tower.

CIRCUS TIME CAPSULE

A time capsule has been placed within the newly-refurbished ceiling recess of The Blackpool Tower Circus, to mark the countdown to its official reopening on April 2.

Packed with handwritten letters, photographs, messages from local school children and even a lateral flow COVID test and mask, the capsule has been hidden away for future generations to discover within the top of one of the four legs of The Blackpool Tower.

The idea to create the capsule came after construction workers found signatures inscribed in the ceiling of the circus while carrying out renovations with the writing dating back to 1900.

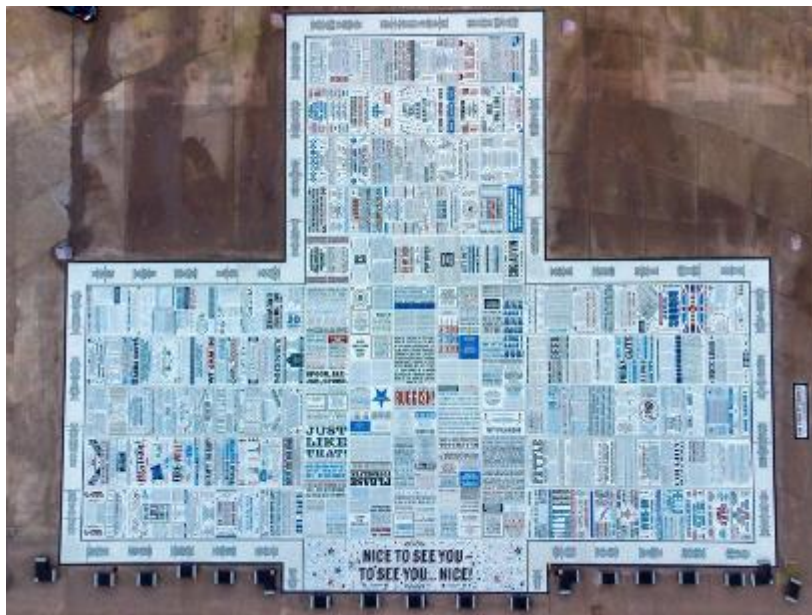
Keen to leave a lasting memory of 2022 and preserve the circus' history, the Tower's team worked with the local community to give a snapshot into 2022 life, news and culture. The contents also include a gifted school book from Westminster Primary Academy in Blackpool, filled with memories, messages and images from pupils.

Current copies of The Blackpool Tower Ballroom and Circus brochures have also been placed inside the capsule, together with a USB with video footage of the 4D Experience from the Tower Eye, a view which will most likely evolve and change over time.

WINTER GARDENS AWARD

The 120-strong team at Winter Gardens Blackpool is celebrating after winning a prestigious Lancashire Tourism Award for best Large Visitor Attraction. The venue welcomes over 1.3m visitors every year from more than 60 different countries to attend over 500 diverse events.

COMEDY CARPET SPRING CLEAN



The Comedy Carpet spring clean is part-funded by the European Regional Development Fund

Blackpool's Comedy Carpet has been given a spring clean ahead of the start of the 2022 tourism season.

The carpet, which sits in the shadow of The Blackpool Tower, celebrates the jokes, songs and comedy catchphrases of Britain's best-loved comedians and writers.

Around 1,000 are celebrated with letters ranging in size from a few centimetres to almost a metre tall so that the laughs can be enjoyed close up and at height from the top of the Tower. In total, the artwork contains over 160,000 granite letters and is a remarkable homage to those who have made the nation laugh through the generations.



Created by artist Gordon Young in association with leading design agency, Why Not Associates, the carpet has been given a deep clean by local commercial cleaning service, HLS Cleaning, in readiness for an influx of visitors over the forthcoming Easter holidays.

The work has been undertaken thanks to the Government's Welcome Back Fund which is helping to facilitate Blackpool's post-pandemic tourism recovery.

STAYBLACKPOOL OPEN DAY

The StayBlackpool Trade Show will be held at the Empress Ballroom within the Winter Gardens Blackpool from 10am-4pm on Thursday 7 April.

The show will provide a one-stop shop for all services required to run a hospitality business with over 100 exhibitors offering services from laundry to insurance, booking systems to crockery, the Primo drinks village to stock your bar, and attractions with show information.

Anyone interested in taking a stand should contact Philip Brown on: 07739 072426 or email: tradeshow@stayblackpool.com

WORLD FIREWORKS DATES REVEALED



The dates have been revealed for this year's spectacular World Fireworks Championship Blackpool. Three countries will participate over alternate Saturdays on September 17, October 1 and October 15.

The stunning displays, which are set to music, will take place over the beach in front of The Blackpool Tower. All of them are free to watch.

Over the years, the firework events have become one of the resort's biggest draws. Details of this year's competing countries will be announced over the coming months.

Further information on all of the VisitBlackpool major events will be released over the coming weeks. Check out the [visitblackpool.com](https://www.visitblackpool.com) website for more details.

WIZARD GOLF COMING TO TOWN

A new wizard-themed mini-golf course will open on the seafront ahead of the main summer season.

The Hole In Wand Blackpool attraction will take visitors through nine holes of magical golf, each providing a different immersive experience including a train station, forest and castle



The attraction, which is due to open in May, is located on the Promenade in a section of the empty Woolworths building and the vacant unit next door. Guests will enter via the promenade and exit via Bank Hey Street. It will create 15 jobs. For further details go to: <https://www.theholeinwand.com/blackpool/>

2. Town Centre Update

TOWN CENTRE CAMERAS

Enforcement cameras are to be introduced in Blackpool town centre in a move to improve public transport journey times and safety for passengers.

The cameras will deter drivers who flout the law by driving in areas designated for buses, taxis and authorised vehicles. They will enforce restrictions from 1 May, between the hours of 10.30am and 6pm on:

- Market Street – from West Street to Church Street
- Church Street – from Market Street to Corporation Street
- Corporation Street – from Church Street to West Street

Across many other towns and cities in the UK, enforcement has been introduced to improve public transport journey times and reliability of services for passengers, as well as to ensure that emergency vehicles and taxis maintain access to key areas.

As part of the Making Blackpool Better town centre regeneration plans, Corporation Street now has more space for buses to stop and wait, making it easier for passengers to connect with other services in the town centre. Recent work has included widening the road for safer access for buses and taxis, as well as improving the road and pavement surfaces.

The cameras will operate seven days a week, enforcing restrictions between 10.30am and 6pm. Only buses, taxis and authorised vehicles will be permitted during those times, and clear signposting will ensure that motorists are aware that enforcement is taking place.

From the May 1 implementation date, drivers who persist in using the bus lanes will be fined £60. However, if payment is made within 14 days of the Penalty Charge Notice (PCN) being served, the charge is reduced to £30.

If payment is made after a service of charge certificate (after 28 days), the fine will increase to £90. Any PCNs issued will include full details on what to do, how to pay and how to appeal.

NEW BENCH INSTALLATION

A new contemporary bench designed by local artist, Tina Dempsey, has been installed on Edward Street.

It is the second bench Tina has designed for the town centre with the 'Fancie Bench' on King's Square opposite St John's School already a popular local landmark.



Tina secured the commission through an open competition for artists to submit their ideas for public art as part of the major improvement works being carried out across the town centre. The project was a collaborative effort with the Blackpool Illuminations team who put their specialist skills into practice to fabricate the work.

TOWN CENTRE VACANCY RATES

The latest survey of vacant units carried out in February in Blackpool town centre shows a net decrease of one vacant unit compared to November 2021, bringing the overall total down to 145 and reducing the vacancy rate from 23.2% to 23.1% – the lowest vacancy rate since August 2019.

The vacancy rate reduction is largely due to a net decrease of three vacant units in the core retail area. Both the principal retail core and periphery town centre areas experienced a net increase of one vacant unit over the same period.

The newly-vacant units include: UIKO, Wonderland (Victoria Street); Mobile Phone Repair Centre (Corporation Street); Burgers & Shakes (Promenade); Miss Saigon Nails (Church Street); Talbot Treatment Rooms, LC Wedding & Party (Talbot Road); Electronic Convenience Shop (Deansgate); Alfies (Topping Street) and Willow Tree House Hotel (Springfield Road).

Encouragingly since November, a number of businesses have occupied previously vacant units. These include: Toy King (Houndshill); H+H Fone Repairs (Victoria Street); Urban Greenhouse (Birley Street); Food Plus (Abingdon Street); Talbot Grill, New Second Chance (Talbot Road), Sherlocks (Queen Street); The Sweet Place, Renegade (Topping Street) and the Youth Hub (No. 1 Bickerstaffe Square).

February 2022: 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	29	18.0%
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	92	19.9%
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)	628	145	23.1%
Periphery Town Centre Area (the Town Centre Boundary area excluding the units contained within the Core Retail Area)	165	53	32.1%

¹ Excluding the properties to the south of the Palatine Buildings; development sites (Sands Hotel); units within Blackpool North Station & Sainsbury's; community sites (e.g. churches, libraries, schools etc.) and civic sites (e.g. Town Hall).

GRUNDY SPRING PROGRAMME

Grundy Art Gallery has announced details of its upcoming spring programme. It includes:

RACHEL GOODYEAR: STIRRINGS

26 March–11 June

Featuring the work of an internationally renowned, North West-based artist, commissioned by the Grundy and the University of Salford Collection and including new large-scale drawings and animation.



COLLECTION SPOTLIGHT: PATTI MAYOR Part Two

26 March– 11 June

A further opportunity for the Grundy to highlight individual artists or showcase a specific selection of works from the Grundy's collection. In 2022, Grundy Art Gallery is marking the 150th anniversary of the birth of the Preston born artist and suffragist, Patti Mayor.

WE'RE STILL HERE!: Stuart Linden Rhodes

14 February–11 June

Continuing the Grundy's forecourt exhibition series with a solo exhibition of the work of Stuart Linden Rhodes. The exhibition is presented as part of a project called We're Still Here! developed by Blackpool-based artists, Garth Gratrix and Harry Clayton-Wright. We're Still Here! seeks to create a visual and oral histories archive of LGBTQIA+ communities in Blackpool.

BLACKPOOL STANDS BETWEEN US AND REVOLUTION: TOM IRELAND

Date to be announced, Grundy Art Gallery exterior

An illuminated text-based artwork, this work is a large-scale rendering of a quote from the 1920s that underlines Blackpool's vital role within the lives of working people as a place for recreation. The work is the result of a 2019 open commission opportunity led by Blackpool Council's Arts Service to provide Blackpool with a number of new permanent and temporary public realm art works. Tom Ireland is a Blackpool-based artist and curator, whose work has been exhibited locally, nationally and internationally.

WORKSHOPS/TALKS AND EVENTS:

The spring programme will be supported by a range of activities and events that will provide opportunities to find out more about the art and artists on display, as well as exploring and developing the participants' own creativity.

People are encouraged to sign up to the Grundy newsletter via the Grundy website www.thegrundy.org

TOP TABLE HONOUR

Blackpool's own Michael Wan's Mandarin & Michael Wan's Wok Inn (pictured right) were both named in the top 100 restaurants in the UK 2021 by OpenTable diners.

The list is based on more than 960,000 verified reviews submitted in the last year by OpenTable diners at restaurants across the UK.

OpenTable is one of the largest global restaurant reservation platforms, now hosting over 10,000 restaurant in the UK, including 400-plus venues in Lancashire.



The Mandarin and Wok Inn were the only two restaurants listed from Lancashire, proudly helping boost representation from the North West, which managed just 14 of the top 100 spots - the majority being in London.

GRAND APPEARANCE



Blackpool's Grand Theatre featured in an episode of the brand-new BBC and NBC Universal International Studios children's drama series, DODGER!

Filming of the series took place across the North West, including Blackpool's iconic Victorian theatre, Blackpool Grand. Filming at the venue took place during the theatre's closure as a performance venue during COVID-19. The filming helped towards the theatre's running costs during the enforced shutdown. Click here to watch:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/p0bl8th0/dodger-series-1-5-phantom>

3. General News

LEVELLING UP BLACKPOOL

The Government's Levelling Up Secretary, Michael Gove, has unveiled a package of new measures to help improve the lives of people in Blackpool by turning the tide on deprivation.

Blackpool, which has eight of the 10 most deprived neighbourhoods in England, will now receive support to deliver a root and branch transformation of the town including:

- New funding to improve housing standards and drive out unscrupulous landlords by scaling up the local enforcement team to crack down on those not meeting current standards
- Blackpool's selection as one of 20 areas in England primed for levelling up regeneration and investment styled on the rejuvenation of Kings Cross in London
- Transformation of derelict areas to create more good quality homes

The plans have been developed by Government, Blackpool Council, Pride Of Place and community groups working together to tackle the inequalities that have held the town back, as part of a new strategic partnership.

In announcing the partnership ahead of the start of the Conservative Party Spring Conference in Blackpool, Mr Gove set out some of the detail of the support measures:

Tackling Rogue Landlords

Longstanding neglect by some local landlords has led to Blackpool experiencing some of the worst housing conditions in the country, with at least one in three properties classified as "non-decent".

An expanded local enforcement team will take tough action against those not meeting existing standards and measure landlords against future national standards. This beefed-up inspection regime will tackle exploitation in the local private rented sector and supported housing market, driving up housing quality and protecting the most vulnerable.

Alongside this enforcement drive, Homes England will join forces with Blackpool Council, using additional funding of £650,000 to explore regeneration opportunities to improve Blackpool's housing stock and quality of place.

There is also support for residents in supported housing with a portion of a further £20m over three years, to improve standards of support and drive out unscrupulous providers.

A Plan to Regenerate Blackpool

In a further boost, Blackpool has been named as one of 20 areas in England to receive a Kings Cross-style transformation through an ambitious regeneration programme.

Homes England will work at pace with local leaders on the ground to find exciting new opportunities for regeneration, delivering new homes and jobs for the community.

Blackpool will have access to the £1.5 billion Brownfield Fund, to kick-start regeneration of unused land and build new homes and communities.

TOWN DEAL APPROVAL

Blackpool Council has announced that £39.5m earmarked for the seven Blackpool “Town Deal” projects has been fully approved by Government and work can commence on all of the projects.

The funding is aimed at strengthening the local economy and revitalising the town and will help to increase economic growth with a focus on regeneration, improved transport, better broadband connectivity, skills and culture. The projects which are now fully approved are:

- **Blackpool Central Courts Relocation** – allocated £6.95m
Supporting the relocation of Blackpool’s County and Magistrates Courts by releasing land for the final phase of the £300m private sector investment at Blackpool Central. This will provide a brand new, world-class, visitor attraction, open year-round providing a major boost to the visitor economy including significant job creation.
- **Blackpool Multiversity Land Assembly** – allocated £9m
Land assembly to enable the relocation of the Blackpool & The Fylde College’s Palatine Road campus to allow the creation of a world-class university learning environment in the town centre. It will help to address local skills needs, working with local employers and in partnership with Lancaster University. The new Multiversity Campus has been designed to accommodate over 3,600 learners.
- **Blackpool Airport Enterprise Zone** – allocated £7.5m
Creating a new road to open up development sites to attract jobs and investment at the Blackpool Airport Enterprise Zone (EZ). Through the creation of new highways, the scheme will support business and jobs growth, opening up 10.5 hectares of previously inaccessible development land.
- **Revoe Community Sports Village** – allocated £6.5m
This project will aid the regeneration of the Revoe area, creating new sports pitches and facilities for community use. It will catalyse investment within Blackpool FC’s Bloomfield Road ground and surrounding area. The overall project aim is to provide a sports village with leisure, education, and residential uses and attract further private investment to the area.
- **The Edge** – allocated £4.5m
Redevelopment of the existing town centre Stanley Buildings to create modern office space and business advice for new start-ups and growing businesses. The Edge is the name given to the new extended managed workspace that will bring into use large parts of the upper floors of the building to create a vibrant business hub with a choice of offices, meeting rooms, co-working and breakout spaces.
- **Blackpool Illuminations** – allocated £4.5m
The project will provide investment to upgrade the world-famous Blackpool Illuminations to attract new visitors by developing new features and lighting technology. A number of new centrepiece attractions will be designed alongside new lighting infrastructure improvements and essential technical equipment needed to deliver the illuminations in a greener, more sustainable way.
- **Youth Hub** – allocated £0.5m
See item on next page – **Platform Opening**

PLATFORM OPENING

A new service for 16-24 year olds in Blackpool has been launched.

The Platform, set up by Blackpool Council in partnership with the Department for Work and Pensions, will help 16-24 year olds to find a job, access education and training, or find a way back into work.

Anyone getting in touch with the new service, based at the Council's Bickerstaffe Square headquarters in the town centre, will be met by a team of experienced employment advisers.



They will work with young people to ensure that they get support with things like CV writing, interview techniques, confidence building, arranging work experience placements, education and training, and linking in with local job opportunities.

The number of NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training) young people in Blackpool is amongst the highest in the country and as a result of the impact of the pandemic, more will need intensive support to become financially independent or return to work.

Funding will support those young people using a 'hub' approach that brings together a range of services and young people themselves will have a say in shaping the new service. The Platform will also become the 'go to' place for employers who want to recruit new staff.

The service will build relations across the town with employers linking them with potential new staff but also listening to and acting on their recruitment and skills needs.

The project has received £443,824 from the Government through the UK Community Renewal Fund. In future, the service will be funded from Blackpool's Town Deal funding allocation.

The centre was officially opened by the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, Thérèse Coffey, ahead of the Conservative Party Spring Conference in Blackpool. Picture shows one of the first customers, Anton Cartwright.

- ❖ The Platform is based at Unit 3, Bickerstaffe House (next to the new Post Office). It is open 9am-5pm, Monday-Friday. Young people can call in to make an appointment to see an adviser. Call on 01253 477775 and speak to a member of the team, text or call on 07342 056 448 or email youthhub@blackpool.gov.uk for an appointment.

CENTRAL CAR PARK ACCESS

The planned closure of the main access to Central Car Park to allow for the start of the new £300m Blackpool Central development has been delayed until after Easter. The exception is the link down to Chapel Street which will close over the next few days.

Access to the car park via Seaside's Way was due to close on March 23, but will now be postponed until the end of April (date to be confirmed) due to signage delays.

Car parking spaces on Central Car Park will still be reduced with immediate effect as the contractors continue to fence off parts of the car park as per their programme of works. Other car parks along the central corridor remain unaffected.

The delay will allow time for permanent signage to be installed, further communication with Blackpool's residents and visitors about the changes, and for people to get used to diversionary routes ahead of the summer season.

4. Requests For Business Support

EVA NOMINATIONS NOW OPEN

The 2022 Enterprise Vision Awards are now open. The EVAS are the largest and most prestigious business awards outside London that are dedicated solely to women.

Please take a moment to show your appreciation for the region's talented female entrepreneurs and nominate them for their outstanding work.

Entries close on Friday 27 May and the winners will be announced at a glittering awards ceremony at the Empress Ballroom at The Winter Gardens. Sponsorship opportunities are available. Nominate here <https://www.enterprisevisionawards.co.uk/enter>

Philip Welsh
Head of Tourism & Communications