



Blackpool Business Leadership Group

Business Partnerships Report – July 29, 2022

Visitor Economy Update

A TOUCH OF VEGAS COMES TO BLACKPOOL!

Legendary actor and comedian Johnny Vegas is to switch on this year's Blackpool Illuminations.

Johnny, who has already provided the "voice" of a seagull that fronts the resort's biggest ever marketing campaign, will pull the switch at the end of a live concert in The Tower Ballroom on Friday 2 September to trigger four months of Illuminations.

The concert, which is being produced in association with MTV, will feature performances from Blue, one of the UK's most successful bands over the past 20 years, singer-songwriter Tom Grennan and Mae Muller, one of music's most exciting new talents.



This year's Switch-On concert will be played out to a live audience made up of more than 2,000 winners of a free-to-enter ballot. Although the ballot has now closed, there will be a limited number of "golden tickets" going on sale later this month which will guarantee entry.

The concert and Switch-On moment will also be live streamed to a global audience across MTV and VisitBlackpool channels, and VisitBlackpool are exploring the possibility of streaming the event to an outdoor audience on the Tower Festival Headland.

Switch-on star Johnny Vegas follows in the footsteps of a host of national and international celebrities who have pulled the switch down the years including the likes of Peter Kay, Tim Burton, Alfie Boe, Diversity, Star Trek, Jayne Mansfield and Robbie Williams.

Last year's Switch-On celebration saw Shirley Ballas, head judge of BBC's Strictly Come Dancing, pull the switch, watched by a worldwide audience with more than 160,000 views from as far afield as Australia, Canada and the United States.

Johnny is one of Britain's best-known comic talents. He has performed in numerous TV shows including Benidorm, Shooting Stars, Sunday Brunch, Still Open All Hours, and 8 Out of 10 Cats Does Countdown. He also featured in the award-winning film, Eaten By Lions, which was set in Blackpool.

Two months ago, he was revealed as the voice of the Only In Blackpool TV ad campaign, fronted by 'spokesbird' Nigel C Gull, a puppet created by award-winning puppeteer Andy Heath.

BATTLE OF THE BALLROOM



TV documentary maker and former *Strictly* star Stacey Dooley took cameras behind the scenes at the prestigious Blackpool Dance Festival.

The annual event launched in 1920 and sees thousands of dancers from more than 40 countries descend on the Empress Ballroom at the Winter Gardens.

Blackpool's Ballroom Battle, an hour-long special from the production company, Little Dooley, follows the "real-life tears, tribulations and triumphs, the glitz and the glamour" of the competition.

Viewers will meet dancers, trainers and coaches of ballroom as they compete for the coveted title of British Open Champion.

The special, which will air on BBC One and the iPlayer streaming service in the autumn is the first entertainment commission for the independent production company, which launched in 2019.

Dooley rose to prominence as a documentary maker through her BBC Three programmes, including 2007's *Blood, Sweat And T-Shirts*, about the Indian factories that make clothes for the UK high street.

Since then she has also made programmes about child soldiers, sex trafficking, homelessness and domestic abuse, as well as claiming victory on *Strictly* in 2018 alongside her now boyfriend, pro dancer Kevin Clifton.

TICKETING PARTNERSHIP

The Winter Gardens Blackpool has launched a new partnership with one of the world's leading ticketing services and box office system providers, EVENTIM.

Hosting over 500 events each year, the Winter Gardens welcomes more than 1.2 million visitors to events, including touring theatre, festivals, concerts and world-renowned Dance Festivals. Operating in 24 countries, EVENTIM is Europe's largest ticketing and live entertainment company.

GARDEN IN THE SKY



Blackpool's famous Tower Eye has been transformed into the region's highest indoor garden, immersing visitors in a floral wonderland 380ft in the sky.

Featuring thousands of displays, including trailing vines and a flower wall, Tower Top Garden is in place until August 28, offering visitors the chance to soak up the views across the coast and get the perfect selfie.

An array of artificial botanical and floral arrangements have been created especially for the landmark, including orchids, palm trees, pink cherry blossoms and lilies.

Once in the garden, visitors also have the chance to experience the famous Skywalk, a 5cm-thick glass viewing platform, offering a unique view of the Blackpool promenade directly below.

MEETBLACKPOOL LAUNCH

Winter Gardens Blackpool, VisitBlackpool and Blackpool Council have launched a new partnership to showcase the seaside resort as a destination for large-scale events and conferences.

MeetBlackpool will provide a single point of contact to simplify and streamline the generation and management of conference and visitor enquiries. The offer is based around the new £30m Winter Gardens Blackpool Conference & Exhibition Centre, which opened earlier this year and hosted the Conservative Party Spring Conference as its inaugural event.

With the addition of the new Conference & Exhibition Centre, the full Winter Gardens Blackpool complex provides 12 distinct venues, all under one roof, offering a total of 4.9 acres of connected conference, meeting, event and exhibition space.

Note: The Winter Gardens team will present full details of the MeetBlackpool partnership at the July 29 meeting of the Blackpool Business Leadership Group

BLACKPOOL CENTRAL BREAKS GROUND

Plans to transform the former Blackpool Central railway station site into a year-round leisure destination are pressing ahead with main construction works getting underway to build a new 1,300-space multi-storey car park.



After gaining detailed planning consent in October 2021 for the car park and heritage quarter as part of a wider hybrid planning application for the Blackpool Central redevelopment, the developer, Nikal, selected construction company, Ballast Nedam, to build the multi-storey. It is expected to be completed by next summer and will be operated by Blackpool Council.



Delivering the new car park is critical to unlocking the wider Blackpool Central scheme as it will free up land for the future phases and ensure there continues to be appropriate parking provision for residents and visitors to the town.

The next phase of the scheme will restore the site's existing heritage buildings to create a new heritage quarter offering an artisan food hall, outdoor space for al fresco dining, a modern family-friendly pub and hotel, and a high-quality aparthotel.

Future phases of Blackpool Central will deliver a new major public square for live events, three indoor entertainment centres, a hotel, restaurants and additional leisure and hospitality space.

The development is expected to create around 1,000 new jobs in the local economy, bring an estimated 600,000 additional visitors each year, and boost annual spend in the town by around £75m.

REBELLION RETURNS

The UK's largest independent punk festival is returning to Blackpool – with four days of music both inside the Winter Gardens and on the Tower Festival Headland. The festival runs from August 4-7 and, for the first time, will include an outdoor R-Fest inside a specially-constructed arena opposite The Blackpool Tower. Full details including the line-up over the four days can be viewed here:

[Information \(rebellionfestivals.com\)](https://rebellionfestivals.com)

AIR SHOW LINE-UP REVEALED

The full line-up of aircraft that will perform at this year's Blackpool Air Show has been unveiled.

The free two-day show on Saturday 13 and Sunday 14 August will feature thrilling displays from a wide range of military and civil aircraft including the Red Arrows, the Battle of Britain Memorial Flight, Typhoon, Chinook, Muscle Pitts stunt plane, Strikemaster and the AeroSuperBatics Wingwalkers.



A number of the aircraft featured in the spectacular Platinum Jubilee celebrations in London over the extended bank holiday weekend.

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 in the resort since 2018.

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. This summer, the village is sponsored by the family entertainment centre – Coral Island which is located close to the Tower in the heart of all the action.

The Red Arrows, who are touring the UK this summer with a seven aircraft formation (rather than the usual nine), will perform the finale of the Blackpool Air Show on both days.

Note: An overspill car park will be created at Blackpool Airport over the Air Show Weekend to help alleviate potential traffic congestion (Blackpool FC have a home game on the Saturday).

BLACKPOOL CUP TOPS LEAGUE

The Blackpool Cup, an international youth football tournament staged at Common Edge Road sports fields over April and May, has been ranked the number one best junior football tournament in Europe!

Out of 16 international tournaments organised by Euro-Sportring, Blackpool scored top spot with a rating of 95% out of a 100% for the quality of the sports facilities, tournament organisation, entertainment, transport and accommodation.

The event, held over two weekends, and sponsored by Blackpool Council and VisistBlackpool, was an outstanding success attracting over 10,000 visitors to the town and 900 teams from five different countries.

The tournament will return to Blackpool over the Easter and May Day bank holiday weekends next year.

COMMONWEALTH BATON RELAY



The arrival of the Birmingham 2022 Queen's Baton Relay was celebrated in true Blackpool fashion - on board a heritage tram!

The baton, which travelled the length and breadth of the country ahead of the start of the Commonwealth Games on July 28, was carried on the tram by ultra-marathon runner and Samaritans volunteer, Tony Howarth from Lytham St Annes.

As the tram arrived at the Tower Festival Headland, it was passed to Keith Stevenson from Blackpool, the founder of the Mulberry Community Project charity which helps those in recovery from addiction. He carried it into the famous Tower Ballroom for a quick spin on the dance floor in front of the awaiting TV cameras before the relay continued its journey through Lancashire.

LANCASHIRE TOURISM AWARDS

A number of Blackpool businesses have been nominated as finalists in this year's Lancashire Tourism Awards. They include:

Business Events Venue of the Year: Merlin Events; Winter Gardens Blackpool

Camping, Glamping and Holiday Park of the Year: Newton Hall Holiday Park, Blackpool

Cultural Venue/Organisation Award: Winter Gardens Blackpool

Dog-Friendly Business of the Year: Bella Vista Lodge, Blackpool

Experience of the Year: Blackpool Heritage Tram Tours; Blackpool Pleasure Beach 'Walk The...' Experiences

Large Hotel of the Year: Hampton by Hilton Blackpool

Resilience and Innovation Award: Winter Gardens Blackpool

Visitor Attraction of the Year: The Blackpool Tower

MARTON MERE INVESTMENT

Holiday company Haven celebrated the launch of new high adrenaline activities at its Marton Mere Holiday Park in Blackpool, with a special visit from Team GB rower and double Olympic medallist Will Satch, MBE.

Following a £3.5 million investment over the winter across a range of indoor and outdoor facilities as well as new accommodation, the holiday park unveiled new climbing walls, golf course and Segways, and a freefall experience called The Jump.

In addition to the new leisure activities, Haven has invested in 70 extra pitches for holiday homes at the site and developed a new location on park, Lakemere View near the Marton Mere nature reserve.

The investment, which has created an additional 35 roles, also includes a Burger King and new outdoor dining areas providing plenty of space for guests to enjoy the park.

PLEASURE BEACH APP

Blackpool Pleasure Beach has launched a new app which guests can download and use to enhance their visit to the park.

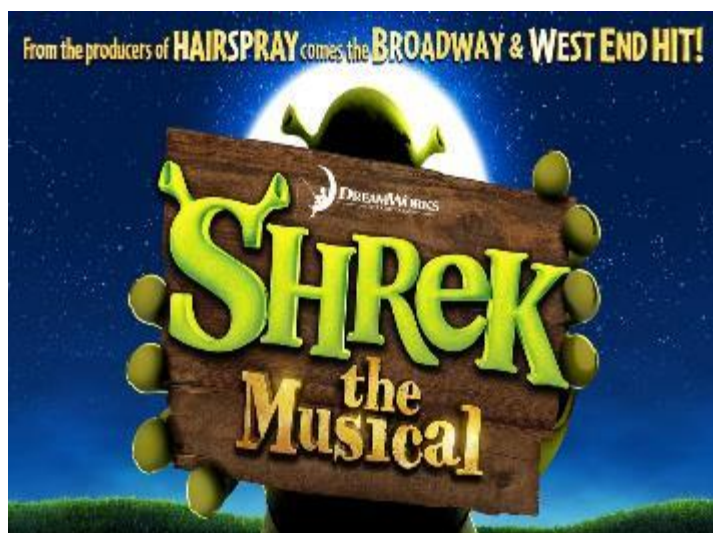
The Blackpool Pleasure Beach eGuide provides guests to the park with useful information including up-to-the-minute queue times and what's on information for shows, events and on-park entertainment. It can also be used to store and access eTickets as well as be used to book rides on ENSO, the spinning seat upgrade on ICON, and Speedy Ones, the park's fast pass system.

PAINTING THE TOWN GREEN

A brand new production of Shrek The Musical is heading to Blackpool for Christmas 2023.

The award-winning Broadway and West End show will be at the Opera House from Tuesday 12 to Saturday 30 December next year as part of a UK tour. Early bird tickets are already on sale.

The Oscar®-winning DreamWorks animated film Shrek celebrated its 20th anniversary last year. Shrek the Musical was first performed on Broadway in 2008, receiving eight Tony award nominations, and the award for Best Costume Design.



Town Centre Update

TRAMWAY EXTENSION TESTING



Trams have been operated along the extended section of track along Talbot Road between North Pier and Blackpool North Tram Hub as part of a week-long exercise to operationally test the track and signalling equipment.

The milestone is a major step in the delivery of the Talbot Gateway Phase 2 project which will house an integrated tram and train transport hub, a four-star Holiday Inn hotel, Marco Pierre White's New York Italian diner and new retail units in a bright, modern new underpass linking to Blackpool North train station.

Talbot Gateway is a £220m investment that will improve transport links for residents and visitors to the resort. Residents will enjoy a direct link to shops and leisure activities and commuters will benefit from quicker journeys to and from Blackpool North Train Station.

The Talbot Gateway Phase 2 development, delivered via a 15 year partnership by Blackpool Council and Muse Developments, is expected to be complete in spring 2023.

£80m of investment in Phase 1 included offices, a flagship Sainsbury's superstore, a gym, retail units, new public realm and a multi-storey car park, helping to transform the once run-down area to the north of the town centre.

HOUNDS HILL MANAGEMENT

Ellandi has been appointed as the new strategic asset manager for Houndhill Shopping Centre, Abingdon Street Market and the Corporation Street/Victoria Street property portfolio in partnership with Blackpool Council.

These properties are an important part of the council's ambitious regeneration plans for the town.

The 298,000 sq ft Houndhill Shopping Centre, includes over 55 stores, including Primark, Next and River Island.

In addition, a new leisure phase (*pictured right*) including an IMAX-ready cinema will be delivered in 2023, along with a new family dining outlet and a 22,500 sq ft Wilko store.



Abingdon Street Market (*left*) is currently undergoing a full refurbishment that will provide a bright, modern space for shopping and socialising, including a new 250 seating area, new stalls for food produce, food and beverage, artisan retail stalls and a coffee and bar area.

Note: A detailed presentation on the cinema development which is under construction on the former Tower Street car park will be given at the July 29 meeting of the Blackpool Business Leadership Group.

GRUNDY SUMMER PROGRAMME

The Grundy Art Gallery summer programme is now underway with several exhibitions both inside and outside the Queen Street building.

It includes a solo exhibition of the work of North West-based, internationally recognised sculptor, Tony Heaton, OBE, and Shining Light, a presentation of artwork by the artist and designer Aliyah Hussain in partnership with students from Aspire and Highfield Leadership Academies.



On the roof of The Grundy is a new illuminated text artwork by Blackpool-based artist, Tom Ireland, entitled Blackpool Stands Between Us And Revolution. The summer programme runs until Saturday 24 September.

KING STREET DEMOLITION WORKS



Demolition works are underway on King Street as part of the development of a new regional hub for the Department of Work and Pensions.

A number of properties backing on to East Topping Street car park will be demolished over a six-week period. The car park itself will remain open with a temporary reduction in spaces during the demolition works.

Access to surrounding businesses will not be affected.

Once completed, the new office hub will bring over 3,000 civil servants into the town centre. Extensive landscaping, paving, new walkways, seated areas, walking and cycle paths will also be created.

BANKSY-STYLE ART APPEARS OVERNIGHT



A new artwork of a boy holding a yellow umbrella has appeared on the gable end of a Blackpool terraced house.

The mostly black and white image, which was painted overnight on the side of the property on Milbourne Street in the town centre, created speculation that it had been painted by guerrilla graffiti artist, Banksy, because of the distinctive style of the artwork.

It is now believed it was created by a different artist.

General News

GRAND TRIBUTE TO SIR KEN DODD



A tribute to comedy legend Sir Ken Dodd OBE has been unveiled at Blackpool's Grand Theatre.

The bronze bust, which features the comedian with his famous tickling stick and Dicky Mint, one of his beloved Diddymen, was commissioned by the Friends Of The Grand and created by renowned artist Graham Ibbeson.

Lady Anne Dodd attended a special ceremony at the theatre along with guests from the entertainment industry to watch the unveiling of the tribute to her late husband. The bust will now take pride of place in the Dress Circle.

Sir Ken was a founding member of The Friends and an invaluable supporter of The Grand Theatre, offering his time and talent on numerous occasions to help raise the funds to save the theatre from demolition back in the 1970s. When it finally reopened, he performed on stage every year, making his last appearance in October 2017.

Sculptor Graham Ibbeson undertook the commission from 2020-21 during the national lockdown. His previous works include celebrations of comedy greats Les Dawson, Morecambe & Wise and Laurel & Hardy.

Sir Ken received a knighthood from Prince William at the age of 89 for his charity work and his outstanding career in entertainment lasting more than six decades. He passed away at his home in Knotty Ash on Merseyside in March 2018, aged 90.

BLACKPOOL FC TRAINING GROUND CONSULTATION



Blackpool Football Club has launched a consultation on proposals for a new training ground off Garstang Road.

The club agreed a land deal to acquire the site, which borders the Grange Park Estate and Baines School, earlier this year. The club had considered various locations for a new training ground in and around Blackpool as it seeks to relocate from the existing Squires Gate complex.

Designed by AFL Architects, the proposed training ground includes eight full-size pitches, a half-size indoor pitch, a 9v9 pitch, goalkeeper training zones, as well as an eco-friendly training centre with classrooms, medical areas, office space and a gym.

The new facility will see Blackpool's senior side team and academy squad train at the same facility for the first time in the club's history.

The consultation on the proposals will run until 5 August. A planning application for the project is due to be submitted later this year.

Note: Blackpool Football Club has announced a two-year principal partnership with Utilita Energy. The partnership will see Utilita's brand feature on the front of all Seasiders' first team and replica shirts for the 2022/23 season. The energy supplier will also take over the club's food bank, which will now be known as the Utilita Food Bank.

GRANGE PARK HOUSING SCHEME

The foundations for the first phase of a new housing development in Blackpool are being laid. The £20 million project, will see the construction of 96 affordable houses, five bungalows and 30 sheltered apartments at Grange Park.

The new homes will be partially funded by a grant from Homes England. Funding from the European Regional Development Fund will support the installation of air source heat pumps in 30 of the homes along with a new cycle path.

Local firm, RP Tyson Construction Ltd has been appointed as the principal contractor for the development and 60% of the people working on site are from the local area.

The development is split across two sites – Chepstow Road and Dinmore Avenue. Work began at the end of last year to clear the Dinmore Avenue site behind the @TheGrange community centre.

The first properties are expected to be handed over in 2023.

VOTE FOR STANLEY PARK!



Blackpool's Stanley Park has once again been nominated for the UK's Best Park Award, after winning the title on two occasions in recent years.

It was previously crowned the nation's favourite park in 2019, when it topped the poll of 36,832 voters from 364 nominated parks and green spaces.

The resort's biggest park was described as "a beautiful, tranquil place away from the hustle and bustle of the Blackpool seafront". The "great volunteers and staff who keep it in tip-top condition" were also recognised in the online nomination.

The competition is organised by Fields In Trust, an independent charity that has been protecting parks and green spaces for almost 100 years.

You can cast your vote for Stanley Park using this link: <https://www.fieldsintrust.org/favourite-parks/nominations> Voting closes on **Thursday 18 August**.

NEW BLACKPOOL RESPITE CENTRE

A new £2m respite and short breaks service has officially opened in Blackpool. Coopers@Ambleside will help adults with a learning disability and/or who might have support needs relating to autism.

The building, previously known as Colton House, on Ambleside Road at Mereside in Blackpool, was previously operating as three flats, providing supported living accommodation for people with learning disabilities.

It has now been transformed into a purpose built two-storey modern facility with six bedrooms, state-of-the-art assisted technologies, a dining/kitchen, lounge, duty office, laundry, sensory and garden rooms, and staff facilities.

NHS England has worked with Blackpool Council and care providers, along with service users and families to add a range of sensory adaptations to the new scheme designed to help better meet the needs of people with autism.

REAL LIVING WAGE

Blackpool Council has committed an additional £2m of its budget in to provide a 'Real Living Wage' to social care staff.

From April 1 this year the National Living Wage (people aged 23 and over) increased from £8.91 to £9.50 per hour. For several years now Blackpool Council has been reflecting a higher than National Living Wage rate in their costing models to support social care providers with the challenges of recruitment and retention.

This year, for the first time, the proposals include the 'Real Living Wage', which takes hourly pay up from £9.50 per hour to £9.90, which has meant an additional investment of £2m from the council's budget.

The local authority has been working closely with providers on this proposal and a total of 73 adult social care providers have signed up to pay the Real Living wage to their staff. The council also continue to work with those providers who are not able to commit to the Real Living Wage just yet to understand the issues and try to address the barriers.

Philip Welsh
Head of Tourism & Communications