



# Blackpool Business Leadership Group

## Business Partnerships Report – September 30, 2022

### 1. Town Centre Update

#### MULTIVERSITY SITE REVEALED



The site of Blackpool's proposed multiversity educational facility has been revealed for the first time – with a large chunk of commercial and residential properties set to be redeveloped to make way for the £65m scheme.

The development is earmarked for a three-acre site behind the Blackpool Council offices on Bickerstaffe Square, taking in parts of George Street, Grosvenor Street, Milbourne Street and Cookson Street. It forms another phase of the Talbot Gateway regeneration scheme where a Holiday Inn and tram terminal are nearing completion. and work is due to start on a new £100m Civil Service hub.

The proposals would see Blackpool and the Fylde College relocate the University Centre Blackpool Campus from Park Road to the new site with a capacity for up to 3,000 students. It is hoped to negotiate the purchase of property required for the development, but the Council is expected to seek a compulsory purchase order if necessary.

Funding of £9m has already been secured for site assembly for the multiversity as part of the Town Deal, while a bid for £40m towards construction has been made to the Government's Levelling Up Fund.

## IMAX CINEMA



Blackpool's new town centre cinema complex will feature one of the largest IMAX screens in the country, standing at a massive 10.8m.

IMAX has signed up to deliver state-of-the-art, immersive movie experiences at the new multi-screen development which will be known as the Backlot Cinema.

The Backlot Cinema will comprise nine screens and a total of 850 luxury seats and will be the anchor tenant of the Phase 2 extension of the Houndshell Shopping Centre.

The Backlot Diner will open for all day dining to the local and tourist population with a classic yet contemporary menu. The new 22,500 sq ft Wilko home retail store will also be housed in the Phase 2 extension.

Work on site is progressing and on schedule with steelworks taking shape to build the structure that will feature ground-breaking IMAX with laser technology, as well as IMAX's 12-channel sound technology.

The completed Phase 2 scheme is expected to create more than 100 new jobs and attract an additional 1.2m residents and visitors to the shopping centre each year.

### DESTINATION BAR

The art deco Cafe Mazzei in the Winter Gardens will be transformed into a destination lounge bar where customers can book their own booths

Town hall planners used delegated powers to approve applications to improve the Cafe Mazzei and the Empress Grill, which both open out into the Floral Hall. The plans will not impinge upon the historic features of the Council-owned Grade II listed building.



These changes will enable drinks to be served to customers in the Floral Hall and take pressure off the neighbouring Galleon Bar at intervals during shows at the Opera House.

## TOWN CENTRE VACANCIES

The latest survey carried out in Blackpool town centre in August shows there was a net decrease of 15 vacant units compared to May 2022, bringing the overall total down to 129 and reducing the vacancy rate from 22.9% to 20.9% – the lowest vacancy rate since May 2018.

This vacancy rate reduction is mainly due to the demolition of properties on King Street in order to facilitate Phase 3 of the Talbot Gateway Regeneration Scheme, which has resulted in the loss of 11 previously vacant units from the survey.

Nevertheless, even without taking into account the removal of these 11 units, there would have still been a net reduction of four vacant units over the three-month period. Encouragingly, this represents the fifth successive survey that has seen a vacancy rate reduction following the third national Covid-19 lockdown.

The newly vacant units include: Simply Iconic (Houndshell); Coronation Rock (Bank Hey Street); the relocated Abingdon Street Market (Victoria Street); Blackpool Bargains (Church Street); K Dolls Boutique (Clifton Street); Planet Anime (Birley Street); E&J Bargains (Talbot Road); Shadow Queen (Queen Street); Moments in Time (Cedar Square); The Sweet Place and Pets Paradise (Topping Street).

Since May, a number of businesses have occupied previously vacant units. These include: Lids (Houndshell); Victoria Street Market, Perfect Nails & Beauty (Victoria Street); Love Bargains, Smart Menswear, Blackpool Market, Bar 137, Records & Relics (Church Street); Neighbourhood Sub (Birley Street); Precious Gifts Shop (Clifton Street); Stays in Blackpool (Queen Street); Moments in Time, Melissa Louise, Blackpool Inspirations (Topping Street) and NHS Lancashire Oral Surgery Clinic (Cookson Street).

### August 2022: Vacant Units

| Area                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | Total Units <sup>1</sup> | Total Vacant Units | Vacancy Rate |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------|--------------|
| <b>Principal Retail Core</b> (Local Plan boundary based around Houndshell, Victoria Street, Bank Hey Street, Church Street, Corporation Street and Adelaide Street West)                                                                                                                                  | 160                      | 27                 | 16.9%        |
| <b>Core Retail Area</b> (as above but also including Topping Street, Queen Street, Clifton Street, Birley Street, Market Street, Talbot Road, Abingdon Street and Cedar Square)                                                                                                                           | 463                      | 89                 | 19.2%        |
| <b>Town Centre Boundary</b> – 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) | 618                      | 129                | 20.9%        |
| <b>Periphery Town Centre Area</b> (the Town Centre Boundary area excluding the units contained within the Core Retail Area)                                                                                                                                                                               | 155                      | 40                 | 25.8%        |

<sup>1</sup> 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).

## 2. Visitor Economy Update

### ILLUMINATIONS SWITCH-ON



TV celebrity and designer Laurence Llewelyn-Bowen switched on the resort's Illuminations to kick-start an extended four month season.

The star of Channel 4's Changing Rooms pulled the switch at the end of a 90-minute concert in front of a 2000-capacity live audience in the Blackpool Tower Ballroom, produced in association with MTV and featuring Blue, Tom Grennan, Nina Nesbitt, Fuse ODG and Mae Muller.

Thousands of people who had gathered on the Promenade to watch the show on a giant screen (pictured above) were treated to a burst of fireworks and a spectacular light show on The Blackpool Tower. The show and switch-on moment were also live-streamed to a worldwide audience via MTV's YouTube channel, attracting around 25,000 viewers.



Laurence, who stepped in to replace actor and comedian Johnny Vegas, had earlier told the show's host Becca Dudley of his love and affection for the Illuminations and his pride at being invited to perform the Switch-On ceremony. His appearance as Switch-On star this year coincides with the unveiling of a dazzling makeover for the Golden Mile in which Laurence has created a stretch of Art Deco-style features that celebrate a golden age of 1930s glamour.

The Illuminations Switch-On concert will generate further national publicity when two additional shows, The Best of Blackpool Switch-On and a Tom Grennan Special, are premiered on the night of Friday 30 September across the MTV Music channel. A short video of the highlights has also been created for use across our social media channels: Link here: <https://we.tl/t-7V6gumFe7h>

### **TRIBUTE TO LIONESSES**

A special tribute is being paid to England's all-conquering women's football team in this year's Blackpool Illuminations display.

The portraits of manager Sarina Wiegman and her 23-player squad are up in lights in a new promenade display celebrating their amazing triumph over Germany in the European Championships final.

The team captured the nation's hearts after a stunning victory at Wembley Stadium on July 31. On the night of the game, the famous Blackpool Tower was lit in red and white to mark the occasion.

The resort's Illuminations manufacturing team then went a step further by creating a tribute that will remain in place at the northern end of the display for an extended four-month autumn and winter season.



### **SANDCASTLE WATERPARK CONTRACT**

Blackpool Council has awarded a contract to manage the Sandcastle Waterpark to Merlin Entertainments, one of the world's biggest entertainment companies.

Merlin, a global leader in location-based entertainment, has been successful in a tender application to become managing agent for the Council-owned waterpark at South Beach.

The attraction is the UK's largest indoor waterpark, with over 18 fantastic slides and attractions in a tropical 84 degree climate. The waterpark will join Merlin's other attractions in Blackpool which include The Blackpool Tower, Circus, Dungeon, Ballroom, Madame Tussauds Blackpool and SEA LIFE.

The acquisition of the Sandcastle Waterpark Blackpool supports Merlin's strategy to establish clusters of attractions in key strategic locations, and further expands its offering within Blackpool, following the opening of a brand-new £1 million attraction for young children, Peter Rabbit Explore & Play, which opened earlier this year.

Merlin Entertainments took over the day-to-day operation of the Sandcastle Waterpark Blackpool earlier this month. The management contract is provisionally for a two-year period.

### **TOURISM RECOVERY GROUP**

The group that was established during the first lockdown in 2020 continues to meet on a weekly basis with representation from attractions, venues, and transport and accommodation providers. It remains an invaluable forum for sharing performance (and particularly accommodation booking and attraction ticket sales trends) and common issues such as recruitment and staff training.

## TOURISM PERFORMANCE UPDATE

### Footfall

In addition to the annual research such as STEAM, VisitBlackpool monitors a basket of performance indicators each month to give us a more immediate picture of trends within the visitor economy. Given the impact of pandemic lockdown and restrictions during 2020 and 2021, it uses a four-year horizon. The comparison between 2022 and 2019 is an important one because that gives an indication of whether we are returning to pre-pandemic levels.

| Promenade Footfall   |                   |                   |                   |                   |
|----------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
|                      | 2022              | 2021              | 2020              | 2019              |
| April                | 4,417,136         | 2,597,349         | 484,507           | 2,301,339         |
| May                  | 4,108,034         | 3,109,198         | 732,841           | 2,241,472         |
| June                 | 3,619,331         | 3,532,554         | 1,020,270         | 2,152,878         |
| July                 | 3,657,807         | 4,748,189         | 1,930,471         | 2,429,515         |
| August               | 3,187,937         | 6,102,629         | 2,737,102         | 3,051,723         |
| <b>Total</b>         | <b>18,990,245</b> | <b>20,089,919</b> | <b>6,905,191</b>  | <b>12,176,927</b> |
| Town Centre Footfall |                   |                   |                   |                   |
|                      | 2022              | 2021              | 2020              | 2019              |
| April                | 2,966,623         | 1,563,970         | 849,231           | 2,760,107         |
| May                  | 2,942,049         | 1,997,215         | 1,467,710         | 2,541,160         |
| June                 | 2,684,844         | 2,222,935         | 1,770,706         | 2,345,667         |
| July                 | 2,742,331         | 3,086,972         | 2,985,963         | 2,793,972         |
| August               | 2,382,828         | 3,824,129         | 4,400,031         | 3,861,442         |
| <b>Total</b>         | <b>13,718,675</b> | <b>12,695,221</b> | <b>11,473,641</b> | <b>14,302,348</b> |

Footfall was previously monitored using half a dozen cameras located at key points in the town centre and on the Promenade. However, this only monitored footfall movements rather than individuals and didn't pick up those on the western side of the promenade.

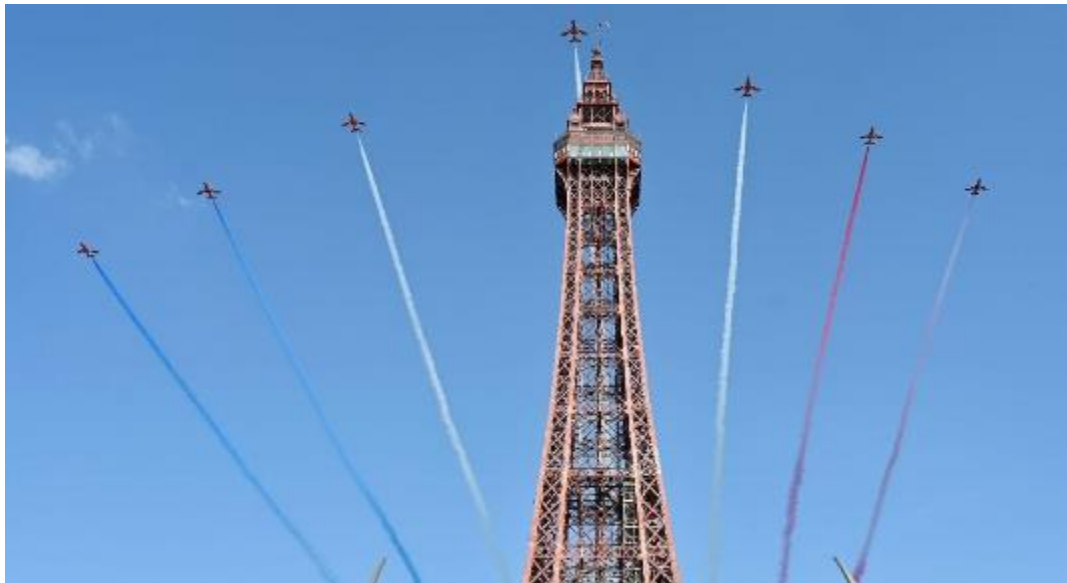
The figures above are taken from Visitor Insights, our new method of monitoring which provides anonymised GPS and mobile phone tracking data, which can be used to identify the location and movements of pedestrians in the town centre and on the Promenade. There are a number of sensor sites which give the total number of unique individuals in a given area.

This method is much more insightful because it includes all of the Promenade and, as you will see from the Air Show figures included in this report, it can provide information on where our visitors are coming from.

As you will see from the above figures, the April to August comparison for 2022 vs 2019 is extremely positive. The comparison versus 2021 is showing a deficit, mainly due to exceptionally high figures in July and August last year when the staycation effect was particularly strong given that people could not choose overseas travel as an alternative to domestic holidays.

The downturn in numbers during July and August also coincides with a dramatic increase in fuel prices and a worsening cost-of-living crisis, which is having a dampening effect on the UK's tourism and hospitality industry.

## AIR SHOW WEEKEND



A record number of people turned out to watch Blackpool's annual Air Show as a combination of scorching weather and the long-awaited return of the Red Arrows brought crowds flocking to the resort from across the UK.

Around 230,000 people turned out over the two days to watch hours of spectacular free entertainment.

As well as the Red Arrows performing a dazzling finale on both the Saturday and Sunday, there were breath-taking displays by the Typhoon display team, the Battle of Britain Memorial Flight, Chinook, Muscle Pitts stunt plane, Strikemaster and the AeroSuperBatics Wingwalkers.

Although the Tower Festival Headland provided the main viewing and commentary point alongside an Air Show Village, huge crowds lined the six miles of promenade.

Visitor Insight mobile phone data shows more than 130,000 visitors on Saturday, almost 100,000 on the Sunday. The analysis shows how far people travelled for the event.

| Distance Travelled | Total         | %   |
|--------------------|---------------|-----|
| 0 - 20km           | 133732        | 58% |
| 21 - 100km         | 59854         | 26% |
| 101 - 385km        | 36812         | 16% |
|                    |               |     |
| <b>Total</b>       | <b>230398</b> |     |



Blackpool Air Show will return next year on Saturday 12 August and Sunday 13 August 2023.

## RIDE THE LIGHTS



Thousands of families took the opportunity to ride along a traffic-free promenade and get a sneak preview of the 2022 Illuminations display.

Ride The Lights was staged on the night of Tuesday 30 August – three days before the Illuminations were officially switched on.

Bikes of all shapes and sizes took advantage of the seafront route in a free family event that is suitable for all ages. The Promenade was closed to traffic from 6.30pm until 10.30pm.

Cyclists were able to participate at any time during that period although recommended to join the event at either the Starr Gate or Red Bank Road gateways to the promenade.

A temporary car park was set up at the airport for those joining at the south end of the route.



## TOURISM BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT (TBID)

The TBID was formed in July 2021 and is now firmly established with a management steering group in place. Its mandate is to support destination marketing as well as establishing new events.

It has a five-year mandate and has the potential to generate around £1.5m to support the tourism industry over that period.

In its first full year of activity it has already funded the Queen's Platinum Jubilee celebrations as well as making significant contributions to destination marketing and the 2022 Christmas By The Sea event.

## FORTHCOMING EVENTS

### WORLD FIREWORKS BLACKPOOL

A fourth fireworks event has been added to our autumn events programme – thanks to a new sponsorship deal with Coral Island.

The seafront family entertainment centre will put its name to the three World Fireworks Championship Blackpool events and also to a new UK showcase display in October half-term.



The first of the events, scheduled for Saturday 17 September was postponed due its proximity to Her Late Majesty's Funeral and will now be staged in October half term.

The three countries that will compete are Finland on Saturday 1 October; Barbados on Saturday 15 October; Wales on Thursday 27 October; ending with the showcase event on Friday 28 October

### LIGHTPOOL FESTIVAL

The award-winning festival returns for 16 nights in October with a spectacular programme of light-based art installations, live performance, 3D projection shows and family-friendly activities.

There will be an array of international works from France and the Netherlands, with new artwork never seen before in the UK.

The festival, which runs from October 14-29, will also see the unveiling of *Odyssey*, the biggest standalone light installation ever produced by our own Illuminations team at Lightworks.

The huge interactive installation, which will be located just south of the Comedy Carpet, has been co-created by international designer Jack Irving and a team from Lancaster University.



It will remain in place throughout the extended Illuminations season.

## RETURN OF STRICTLY



The BBC's Strictly Come Dancing will return to the Blackpool Tower Ballroom for the first time since 2019, with the show broadcast over the weekend of November 19 and 20.

The 20th series of the BBC show will see 15 celebrity contestants taking to the dance floor including Ted Lasso actress Ellie Taylor, Paralympic swimming gold medallist Ellie Simmonds, actor Will Mellor, Loose Women star Kaye Adams, Coronation Street actress Kym Marsh, ex-soccer star Tony Adams, and radio presenters Fleur East and Tyler West.

The series launched on September 23 on BBC One and BBC iPlayer, with a BBC 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary themed week announced alongside returning favourites like Movie Week, Halloween Week and the much-loved Musicals Week.

Memorable Strictly moments from the Blackpool Tower Ballroom over the years include 2016's entrance by former shadow chancellor Ed Balls, who was lowered from the ceiling playing a piano before taking to the dance floor to jive with Katya Jones to the Jerry Lee Lewis hit, Great Balls Of Fire.

Ahead of the launch of the new series, TV documentary maker and former Strictly star Stacey Dooley took cameras behind the scenes at the prestigious Blackpool Dance Festival at the Empress Ballroom in the Winter Gardens.

It resulted in an hour-long special, titled Blackpool's Ballroom Battle, which went out at prime time on BBC 1 and on the iPlayer streaming service.

## CHRISTMAS BY THE SEA



Blackpool's spectacular Christmas village is returning this winter – thanks to the resort's tourism businesses and national broadband providers, TalkTalk.

The Tourism Business Improvement District (TBID), which represents hundreds of tourism operators, has joined forces with sponsors TalkTalk to ensure the event can go ahead during the extended Illuminations season.

Last year, Christmas By The Sea delivered the highest visitor numbers ever recorded on the seafront during the winter months.

Situated on the Tower Festival Headland opposite The Blackpool Tower, the village will once again include a free-to-use skating rink, festive light installations and projection shows, themed log cabins, artificial snowfalls, Christmas trees and Christmas tram rides.

The village, which will operate from Friday 18 November to Monday 2 January, will also see themed children's attractions and the return of the Star Flyer which, at 260ft tall, is one of Europe's tallest swinging rides.

## CHRISTMAS TO REMEMBER

Strictly Come Dancing favourites Aljaž Škorjanec & Janette Manrara will star in a new Christmas spectacular which is heading to the Opera House Blackpool in December.

A Christmas To Remember, which will be staged on Sunday 11 December, will feature an outstanding cast of dancers and singers, combined with lavish sets and costumes.

The family show will feature a wide range of music with everything from pop classics, to the Golden Age of Hollywood and Disney Christmas songs.



## NEW LITERATURE FESTIVAL



A new family literary event is heading to the Winter Gardens this autumn.

Word Fest., which will take place between Friday 7 and Monday 10 October, features a packed line-up of celebrity authors including Lenny Henry, Anton Du Beke and Paul O'Grady.

The festival is being co-produced by the Winter Gardens and local independent bookstore Book Bean & Ice Cream and will see authors talk about their love of writing, their books, answer questions and sign books for fans.

There will also be a special Seasiders' live podcast with former Blackpool star Gary Taylor-Fletcher talking about all things tangerine and Rory Stewart and Alastair Campbell will host a live version of their podcast, The Rest Is Politics.

Many of the tickets include the gift of the author's book and are now on sale priced from £20.00 at <https://www.wintergardensblackpool.co.uk>

### GRAND THEATRE AUTUMN LAUNCH

The Grand Theatre has unveiled a spectacular line up of entertainment for the autumn and winter season.

Highlights include hit West End musicals Beautiful – The Carole King Musical (pictured right); the raucous Rocky Horror Show and the award-winning Titanic The Musical.

Drama includes Twopence To Cross The Mersey, a new production of Sherlock Holmes And The Valley Of Fear, and the timeless classic, Around The World In 80 Days.

Comedy highlights include SPIKE, a new play about the work of comic genius Spike Milligan, and the Grand will be celebrating Christmas with the magical fairytale Sleeping Beauty, starring Steve Royle and Blackpool's own Hayley Tamaddon.

You can download a digital copy of The Grand Theatre brochure [here](#).



**BE AFRAID!**



Blackpool Pleasure Beach has unveiled its Journey To Hell Freak Nights in the run-up to Halloween.

The event features live actors through eight themed areas of the theme park. Scare zones include The Legend of the Cursed River Caves, Pleasure Beach Hexpress, Rising Ghost Train, The Lost and more.

Journey to Hell Freak Nights take place on selected nights from October 7 to 30 after the park has closed to daytime customers.

For more information on Journey to Hell, and to book tickets, please click [HERE](#)

#### **PROMENADE DEVELOPMENTS**



#### **TURTLE BAY RESTAURANT**

Plans are in the pipeline for a new Caribbean-style restaurant to open on Blackpool seafront. Developers have submitted a full planning application for the scheme to bring a Turtle Bay restaurant to the ground floor of Forshaw's Hotel (formerly the Ibis) in Talbot Square. It would have its own Promenade entrance.

Turtle Bay, which has branches throughout the UK, has already applied for a premises licence to serve alcohol at the former Che Bar and Coco Lounge which closed in 2016.

## **PROMENADE DEVELOPMENTS (continued)**

### **AMBASSADOR HOTEL DEVELOPMENT**



Work is due to start early next year to turn a derelict site on Blackpool's seafront into luxury apartments after planners approved a £4m scheme.

The plan is being developed by Blackpool-based businessman Ged O'Mahoney of Go Developments on the site of the former Ambassador Hotel. It will comprise a seven-storey block of 26 serviced holiday apartments.

The hotel, situated on the corner of Derby Road and North Promenade, had to undergo emergency demolition works in November 2020 after it was deemed to be in a dangerous condition.

### **SOUTH PROMENADE DEVELOPMENT**

Updated plans to redevelop four hotels as new homes on Blackpool's seafront have been submitted to Blackpool Council.

The revised proposals show 89 apartments, compared to 92 originally proposed for two sites on New South Promenade, when plans were first revealed earlier this year

The north site would see the redevelopment of the Conwy Hotel, Hotel Skye and Sandpiper Apartments, while the south site would see the Headlands Hotel demolished.



The apartment blocks would comprise four, five and six storeys with 40 apartments and 45 parking spaces on the south site accessed from Harrowside West. There would be 49 apartments and 49 parking spaces on the north site accessed from South Promenade.

Work is already underway a short distance away on a £7m extension to the Hampton by Hilton hotel. It will add a further 74 rooms to the 130-bedroom hotel

### 3. General News

#### **BLACKPOOL LISTED AS POTENTIAL INVESTMENT ZONE**

Blackpool has been named as one of the Government's potential new Investment Zones.

The new Chancellor announced that the Government was in discussions with 38 local authorities to establish the zones in order to drive economic growth and unlock housing by lowering taxes and liberalising planning frameworks to encourage rapid development and business investment.

The initial announcement revealed:

- Businesses in designated areas in investment zones will benefit from 100% business rates relief on newly occupied and expanded premises. Local authorities hosting Investment Zones will receive 100% of the business rates growth above an agreed baseline in designated sites for 25 years.
- Businesses will receive full stamp duty land tax relief on land bought for commercial or residential development and a zero rate for Employer National Insurance contributions on new employee earnings up to £50,270 per year.
- To incentivise investment there will be a 100% first year enhanced capital allowance relief for plant and machinery used within designated sites and accelerated Enhanced Structures and Buildings Allowance relief of 20% per year.
- Accelerated development – there will be designated development sites to both release more land for housing and commercial development, and to support accelerated development. The need for planning applications will be minimised and where planning applications remain necessary, they will be radically streamlined. Development sites may be co-located with, or separate to, tax sites, depending on what makes most sense for the local economy

In England, the Government will deliver Investment Zones in partnership with Upper Tier Local Authorities (of which Blackpool is one) and Mayoral Combined Authorities.

The Secretary of State for the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities is expected to set out the selection criteria to become an Investment Zone, and the process for designating sites within it over the coming weeks.

#### **FRACKING BAN LIFTED**

The ban on fracking has been lifted by the Government. A moratorium was put in place in 2019 following concerns over earth tremors, with more than 100 of them in the vicinity of the Cuadrilla fracking site at Preston New Road near Blackpool.

The site was targeted by anti-fracking protesters throughout its exploratory operations.

The decision has been made against a backdrop of a global energy crisis and a scramble for new energy supplies. Following the Government announcement, Cuadrilla reportedly welcomed the move, but said that any resumption still depended on local planning approvals and the issuing of permits.

## **DRIVE TO IMPROVE SUPPORTED HOUSING**

Vulnerable tenants living in poor-quality supported housing with little to no support from providers will see significant improvements as Government helps local authorities crack down on unscrupulous landlords.

Blackpool is one of a handful of councils that will receive more than £6m from the Government's Supported Housing Improvement Programme to carry out more frequent and thorough inspections of such accommodation.

Supported housing provides accommodation alongside care, support, or supervision for residents who might have experienced homelessness, mental health issues or domestic abuse. Schemes should provide them with the skills and confidence needed to enter longer-term accommodation and live more independent lives.

Many residents receive good quality, tailored support but the Government is aware there are instances of supported housing landlords providing unacceptable levels of support while charging extortionate rents.

This programme allows councils to use enforcement measures, such as inspections, to improve quality and value for money in the provision of supported housing by landlords.

Councils have the power to issue penalty charge notices, prohibition orders that could stop part or all of the building being used, and to prosecute where poor accommodation standards risk the health and safety of residents.

The funding announcement followed successful pilots in four council areas (including Blackpool), which helped them carry out over 1,000 property inspections of supported housing.

## **NEW LEARNING FACILITY**

A new learning facility designed to help residents develop their employability skills has been opened by Blackpool Council.

Located within Healthworks on Clifton Street in the town centre, the new Blackpool Learning Rooms provide a dedicated learning space for adults aged 19 and over who are looking to get back into work.

Local residents will be able to boost their job prospects by developing existing skills as well as learn something new from the variety of courses on offer, which include a wide range of daytime and evening courses from IT, maths and English to health and wellbeing and cooking.

Formerly known as the Adult Community and Family Learning Service, the facility has seen a £150,000 investment to create designated classrooms and learning spaces. The new purpose designed setting allows learners to access up-to-date equipment and quality resources, run by a team of professional, friendly and qualified course tutors.

Local residents can contact the team on 01253 478131 or email [learning.rooms@blackpool.gov.uk](mailto:learning.rooms@blackpool.gov.uk) for help finding the right course or to get careers and training advice.

For more information, visit [www.blackpool.gov.uk/learningrooms](http://www.blackpool.gov.uk/learningrooms)

## **RAIL STRIKES**

Further rail strikes will affect the North West during October. Strike action has already been announced on Saturday 1, Wednesday 5 and Sunday 9 October when Northern Rail customers are advised not to travel. Services are also likely to be affected on Sunday 2 and Saturday 8 October.

Avanti West Coast have also announced disruption to services due to industrial action. The company will not be running any services on its routes on October 1 and 5, and there is likely to be a significantly reduced timetable in place on October 8. Again, services on the days after the industrial action will also be affected.

## **MOTORWAY CLOSURES**

The planned full closures of the M6 north of Preston (between junctions 32 and 33) are no longer taking place. These closures were due to start on a Friday evening and continue until Monday morning on each of the four weekends.

After the first of the weekend closures on the southbound carriageway resulted in severe disruption and representations from various organisations, National Highways decided not to proceed with the remainder.

A new schedule of works will be carried out using lane closures for four weeks starting on Sunday October 2, which will ensure the motorway remains open during the daytime.

As part of this revised programme, there will be an overnight closure of the M6 southbound (J33-32) on Saturday 1 October (9pm-5am) to enable the installation of traffic management systems.

From Sunday 2 October 2, for four weeks, the M6 southbound (J33-32) will have permanent daytime lane closures (with speed restrictions) with two narrow lanes remaining open during the day.

During the same period, overnight restrictions (typically 9pm-5am) will be in place throughout, which will result in the closure of the M6 southbound carriageway (J33-32). A fully signed diversion route will be in place using the A6 from M6 J33 before re-joining the motorway network at M55 (J1).

Additional lane closures on the northbound carriageway (typically 9pm-5am) will also be in place for the duration of these works.

- It has also been announced that the eastbound and westbound carriageways of the M55 will be closed between 8pm and 6am on each night between October 3 and 7. Given the potential impact on Illuminations traffic, the timing of these restrictions are being challenged. An update will be provided at the September 30 meeting.

## 4. Requests for private sector support

### **HOSPITAL CHRISTMAS CAMPAIGN**

The Blue Skies charity is seeking business support for the Christmas displays at Blackpool Victoria Hospital. They are offering sponsorship packages for the purchase of branded baubles for the Christmas tree that will form the centrepiece of the festive display.

A small bauble can be sponsored at £250 or more, medium £500 or more, or large at £1500 or more.

If you want to support the Blue Skies team and get involved, email: [kila.redfearn@nhs.net](mailto:kila.redfearn@nhs.net) or phone her on 01253-955766

### **COUNSELLING IN THE COMMUNITY**

The Counselling In The Community charity is seeking business support for its locally-based mental health support services.

For £50 a month, businesses will be provided with window posters/stickers that carry a message of “We care about mental health locally”, and they will be promoted across the charity’s website and social media.

All sponsorship monies would be used to reduce waiting times at the services, which is currently seeing around 130 people a week at the moment. A further 90 are in a virtual waiting room and with ever-increasing demand, the waiting list has jumped from two to eight weeks.

If you are interested in supporting the service, contact:

[stuart.hutton-brown@counsellinginthecommunity.com](mailto:stuart.hutton-brown@counsellinginthecommunity.com)

For further information, go to: [www.counsellinginthecommunity.com](http://www.counsellinginthecommunity.com)

**Philip Welsh**  
**Head of Tourism & Communications**