



Blackpool Business Leadership Group

Business Partnerships Report – September 29, 2023

1. Visitor Economy Update

SOPHIE LIGHTS UP BLACKPOOL

Singer Sophie Ellis-Bextor brought a sprinkling of stardust to Blackpool's Golden Mile when she switched on the famous Illuminations in front of a crowd of more than 50,000 people – the biggest turn-out for many years.

Sophie, one of the nation's best-loved pop stars, performed a medley of songs including her classic hit, Murder On The Dancefloor, before pulling the switch to trigger a four-month Illuminations season.

The Switch-On moment, the first to be held outdoors since 2019, marked the finale of a spectacular free event which included a Nickelodeon float parade, live entertainment, a light show on The Blackpool Tower and a fireworks finale. The parade featured larger-than-life characters from SpongeBob SquarePants, PAW Patrol, Baby Shark, Monsters High and Transformers, as well as around 100 street performers.



AND PHOTOGRAPHER GREGG WAS THERE TO CAPTURE THE SWITCH-ON IN ALL ITS GLORY...



This remarkable drone shot taken by local photographer Gregg Wolstenholme shows the enormous crowds that turned up for the Switch-On parade and event between Central and North Pier.

The image was viewed by millions of people across social media and was featured by several national media organisations including the Sunday Mirror and Sunday People.

Gregg, who specialises in aerial and drone photography, had another spectacular photograph, this time taken during the first of the World Fireworks events, featured in The Guardian (*see image on Page 4 of this report*). Another of his dramatic fireworks images (taken during last year's displays) has seen him nominated in the drone category of the British Photographer Of The Year Awards.

BLACKPOOL ILLUMINATIONS 2023



Three dazzling new light installations are taking pride of place in this year's Illuminations display.

Internationally-renowned artists Dr Chila Kumari Singh Burman, MBE, and Bruce Alfred have designed two spectacular tableaux for 2023.

Merseyside-born Burman is celebrated around the world and has produced numerous high-profile works including installations for the Tate Gallery and Covent Garden in London, as well as special commissions for film companies, including Netflix.

In 2021, she produced an installation called "*Blackpool, Light Of My Life*" on the front of Blackpool's Grundy Art Gallery and vowed to return to design something of scale in the Illuminations. The result is a 26 metre-wide animated tableau entitled "*Lollies In Love With Light*", a kaleidoscopic celebration of Blackpool with a technicolour ice cream van at its centre (*pictured above*).

Canadian-born Bruce Alfred specialises in Native American art and has created an evocative design featuring hand-drawn images of eagles and Orca whales. It is the first Illuminations display to be designed by a North American artist and one of the first to be developed using 3D printing technology.

This year's display also includes a new-look Spitfire Island - a large-scale installation developed in collaboration with designer and Illuminations curator, Laurence Llewelyn-Bowen. This installation has also been created using 3D printing technology. Located on Gynn Roundabout, it features replicas of three Spitfires - Progress I, II and III - all funded by Blackpool residents during World War Two. The installation is sponsored by model kit company, Airfix.

All three features have been built by the Illuminations' team based at the Lightworks manufacturing facility in Blackpool.

Other new features in the 2023 display include a new Hollywood-inspired BLACKPOOL sign illuminated with Cabochon lamps and, by popular demand, a return of Spiro, an immersive 26m-long tunnel of light with individually-mapped LEDs (*both pictured right. Photo credit: Karl Houghton*).



Note: Several features in this year's display are supported by the Towns Fund, part of the Government's plan for Levelling Up the UK economy.

WORLD FIREWORKS



Tens of thousands of people lined the Promenade to watch a fireworks team from India light up the night skies with a magnificent display.

The display, the first to be staged in this country by India, marked the start of the annual World Fireworks Championship Blackpool.

Week Two on Saturday 30 September, will see the Swiss pyrotechnics company, SUGYP, take centre-stage. The third and final performance, by Italian fireworks company Pirotecnica Soldi, will take place on the evening of Friday 20 October, to coincide with the launch of this year's annual Lightpool Festival in Blackpool.

RETURN OF WORD FEST

After a highly-successful debut last year, Word Fest is returning to the Winter Gardens in October.

The literary festival, which is a partnership between Blackpool Entertainment Company and Elaine Silverwood who runs the Kirkham-based Book, Bean & Ice Cream business, will run from Thursday 12 to Sunday 15 October.

It will open with a presentation by the acclaimed Scottish crime fiction writer, Val McDermid. That will be followed by individual sessions featuring a plethora of renowned authors including John Whaite, Jack Meggitt-Phillips, Milly Johnson, A.J. Pearce, Ciannon Smart, Sophie Hannah, and Michael Davies among others.

Each author session promises a blend of insightful discussions, book signings, and interactive workshops.

The festival will also include a live version of the popular podcast, The Price Of Football, with its keen insights into the intricate financial workings of the football world.

Tickets for each event, which include a signed copy of the author's book, are now on sale.

BLACKPOOL TOWER IMPROVEMENT WORKS



Blackpool Council is set to invest millions of pounds over the next few years in an ongoing renewal programme of the steel and paint work at Blackpool Tower.

Work on the Grade I listed structure is deemed vital due to its age and exposure to adverse weather.

The £11m of funding will come from prudential borrowing, with the overall cost forecast to be around £16.7m over the loan period of up to 24 years. Revenue from the attraction will fund the repayments.

The paint being used for the steelwork is expected to have a 20-year lifespan and the Tower would remain open while work is carried out over a period of five to seven years.

A Council report said maintenance had taken place since it bought the Tower in 2010, including replacing the lift shaft and renewing steelwork.

It said the new works were "essential" in order to significantly extend the useful economic life of the asset, preserve and maintain the structural integrity of the Tower and safeguard the ability to continue to operate the Tower as a world-class family attraction.

Scaffolding and wraps around the steelwork will be needed, and will move up the 518ft high structure as required, but work affecting the main tourist areas, including the Tower Eye, would be done out of season.

SEASIDE HERITAGE NETWORK WINNERS

Blackpool Tower came runner-up in the inaugural Bucket and Spade List compiled by the Seaside Heritage Network.

The public were invited to vote for the top 10 favourite seaside places and experiences. The Cliff Tramway at Saltburn-by-the-Sea secured first place, with Morecambe's Winter Gardens finishing in third place.

The awards ceremony was held in the Baronial Hall at Winter Gardens Blackpool with designer and seaside regeneration expert Wayne Hemingway MBE presenting certificates to the top three.

AIR SHOW ATTRACTS RECORD CROWDS

Blackpool's major events programme kicked off in August with the return of the two-day Air Show weekend.

With the Red Arrows and Typhoon display teams performing on both days and the added bonus of a Spitfire and replica Red Arrow within the Air Show village, the event attracted record crowds.

Mobile phone data showed that the footfall on the Promenade was more than 350,000 across the two days, outperforming what was a spectacular turn-out last year.



The show also attracted national and international media coverage as two thrill-seekers scaled the Blackpool Tower for a stunning selfie as the Red Arrows flew over to start their display.

Wing Commander Adam Collins hung from the Tower's flagpole 518ft from the ground and saluted his RAF display team as they flew past.

Russ Edwards, a rescue and training specialist at Arco Professional Safety Services, oversaw the amazing aerial photographs.

TRAVELLERS' CHOICE AWARDS

Merlin Entertainments has been recognised by TripAdvisor as a 2023 Travellers' Choice award winner for four of its Blackpool attractions. The Blackpool Tower Ballroom, Blackpool Tower Dungeons, SEA LIFE and Madame Tussauds have each been awarded the accolade after consistently receiving great traveller reviews on TripAdvisor over the last 12 months.

STAYBLACKPOOL TRADE SHOW 2024

StayBlackpool has announced that next year's Trade Show will be held on Tuesday 19 March at Norcalympia. The show is being staged in partnership with HB Clark, the UK's largest wholesale drinks supplier and the events team at the Norbreck Castle.

The show provides an opportunity for the hospitality trade to see what is on offer within the industry, with exhibitors showcasing new products and innovative ideas including interiors, food, drink, equipment, technology, property advice, insurance, and booking platforms.

PLEASURE BEACH UPDATES

VALHALLA WINS AGAIN



Blackpool Pleasure Beach is celebrating after Valhalla was named The Best Water Ride in the World for a seventh year in the international Golden Tickets Awards.

The Viking-themed water attraction was closed for refurbishment at the end of 2019 and reopened earlier this year after a £4m investment.

The re-imagined ride gives thrill-seekers more than four minutes of high-speed action with special effects including fire, water, snow, thunder and lightning.

Blackpool Pleasure Beach also scooped eight awards at the UK Theme Park Awards, bolstering its status as one of UK's top amusement parks.

The accolades included Gold awards in the Best Seaside Park category, Best Live Entertainment for Hot Ice, Best Water Ride for Valhalla, and Best Theme Park Hotel for The Boulevard. The park also took home a Silver award in Best Reimagined Attraction for Valhalla, and three Bronze awards: Best Thrill Ride for Red Arrows Skyforce, Best Theme Park Food for Loki's, and Best Theme Park for Thrills.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY, BIG DIPPER!

Pleasure Beach celebrated the 100th birthday of the beloved Big Dipper rollercoaster with a special party.

Guests flocked to the park for an evening celebration with fizz, cupcakes, live entertainment and confetti cannons.

Each guest was presented with a certificate to commemorate the fact that they rode the Big Dipper on her 100th birthday.



CHRISTMAS BY THE SEA IS BACK

Blackpool's spectacular Christmas village is returning this winter.

VisitBlackpool has confirmed that the hugely-popular outdoor village will open on Friday 17 November with an exciting range of new festive family attractions - plus extended opening hours for the free skating rink which will open every day until January 1 (barring Christmas Day).

Last year, Christmas By The Sea, which is staged on the headland opposite The Blackpool Tower, delivered the highest visitor numbers ever recorded on the seafront during the winter months.

In addition to the free-to-use skating rink, this year's village will include festive light installations and projection shows, themed log cabins with food, drink and gifts, artificial snowfalls, Christmas trees and festive tram rides.



It will also see a variety of themed children's attractions, the return of the Star Flyer which, at 196ft tall, is one of Europe's tallest swing rides, and exciting new thrill rides including a 100ft-long snow slide.

Christmas By The Sea will be complemented by a full Illuminations display along the seafront after Blackpool Council announced earlier this year that the Illuminations would once again be extended by two months to run from September 1 through to January 1.

The staging of the village is in association with the Tourism Business Improvement District (TBID), Blackpool Pleasure Beach and Triangle Attractions.

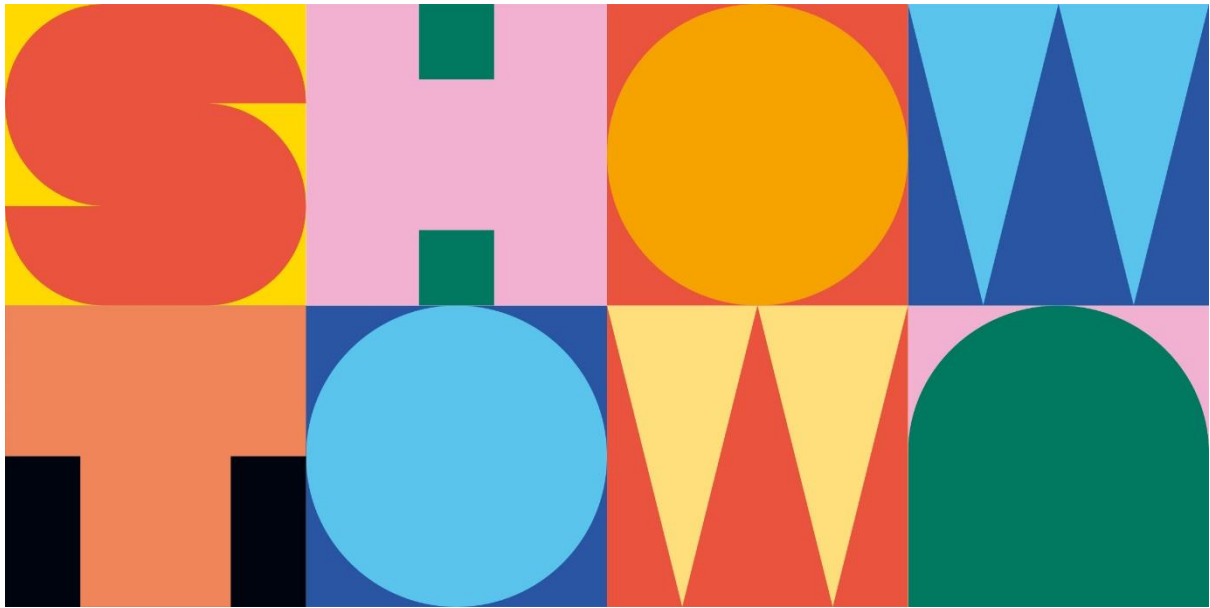
ANOTHER CHART SUCCESS!

Blackpool has been revealed as the second most popular holiday destination to visit this autumn – beaten only by London.

TripAdvisor's Autumn Travel Index put Blackpool ahead of the likes of Edinburgh, Liverpool, York, Manchester, Llandudno, Bournemouth, Windermere and Glasgow.

The company estimates that around 40 per cent of UK citizens are planning to take a domestic break between now and the end of the year.

SHOWTOWN OPENING DATE



Blackpool's Showtown: The museum of fun and entertainment, will open its doors to the public on March 15, 2024.

When open, Showtown will offer a world-class interactive museum, celebrating the seaside, circus, magic, shows, dance and Blackpool's famous Illuminations, as well as some of the entertainers who have helped put the town on the map.

The opening announcement comes alongside the appointment of Liz Moss as chief executive of the Blackpool Heritage and Museum Trust, the charity that will operate Showtown.

The Trust aims to deliver engagement programmes which foster knowledge, understanding, appreciation and enjoyment of the history and heritage of Blackpool, and the maintenance and preservation of the Blackpool heritage collections.

This also includes the operations of the Showtown History Centre, located at Blackpool Central Library, which is currently closed for renovation.

Liz joins the Showtown team from her role as chief executive at Heritage Trust for the North West and was previously chief operating officer at Lakeland Arts.

The museum is expected to attract more than 200,000 visitors each year with its six interactive, fun and family-friendly galleries, making a positive contribution to Blackpool's economy through job creation and tourism. Tickets will go on sale this autumn.



2. Town Centre Update

POST OFFICE HOTEL PLAN



Revised plans to convert the Grade II listed Post Office building on Abingdon Street into a four-star hotel have been approved by Blackpool Council.

The £26m scheme was awarded £8m by the Government in the March Budget after twice being turned down for funding in bids made by the Council to the Levelling Up Fund.

Full planning permission was originally granted in November 2021 with the site earmarked to become a 144-room Indigo Hotel.

The revised application, submitted by Franklin Ellis Architects on behalf of developer Ashall Projects, seeks permission for a number of small amendments including a mixture of around 150 rooms, suitable for both the corporate and leisure markets.

The ground floor would also include a restaurant and bar for hotel guests and non-residents, with frontages on both Abingdon Street and Edward Street, with the design incorporating the old Post Office counter.

Existing planning approval allows for a four and five-storey link extension with roof top terraces between the former Post Office and sorting office, a three-storey rear extension to the former Post Office, and internal and external alterations.

The Post Office closed in 2007.

TOWN CENTRE OCCUPANCY REPORT

The latest survey carried out in August shows a net increase of nine occupied units in the town centre compared to May 2023, bringing the overall total up to 485 and increasing the occupancy rate from 76.9% to 78.1%.

Conversely, the vacancy rate decreased from 23.1% to 21.9% over the three-month period. The latest occupancy rate upturn is largely due to a net increase of seven occupied units in the core retail area, with an additional net increase of one occupied unit in each of the principal retail core and periphery town centre areas. The latest occupancy rate is the highest since November 2022 and is amongst the highest occupancy rates post Covid-19.

Encouragingly since May, a number of businesses have occupied previously vacant units. These include: Goldstar, Bob & Bert's (Victoria St); Kandi Land (Church St); The Greedy Pig (Bank Hey St); Marvin's Bar, ICONZ (Clifton St); Abingdon Street Market Food Hall, SMS Mobility (Abingdon St); Le Plonk Wine Bar (Cedar Sq.); Showstoppers (Topping St) and Mystic Shots & Cocktail Bar (Queen St).

The newly-vacant units include: Glamour Forever, The Vapour Corner (Houndshill); Northside Lettings (Clifton St); The Sofa Outlet and Showstoppers (former location on Topping St).

August 2023: Occupied & Vacant Units

Area	Total Units ¹	Total Units		Rates (%)	
		Occupied	Vacant	Occupancy	Vacancy
Principal Retail Core (Local Plan boundary based around Houndshill, Victoria St, Bank Hey St, Church St, Corporation St and Adelaide St West)	157	136	21	86.6%	13.4%
Core Retail Area (as above but also including Topping St, Queen St, Clifton St, Birley St, Market St, Talbot Rd, Abingdon St and Cedar Sq)	462	375	87	81.2%	18.8%
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 Rd, Dickson Rd, King St, Cookson St, Counce St and the new Talbot Gateway area)	621	485	136	78.1%	21.9%
Periphery Town Centre Area (the Town Centre Boundary area excluding the units contained within the Core Retail Area)	159	110	49	69.2%	30.8%

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).

FRASERS FIT-OUT UNDERWAY

Work is underway on the new Frasers department store in the Houndshill Shopping Centre.

The conversion of the former Debenhams store will also see the opening of a new branch of luxury fashion store, Flannels, and a Sports Direct store.

All are expected to open for business before the end of the year.



3. General News

ELMER ART TRAIL LAUNCH DATE



Brian House Children's Hospice – the charity behind Elmer's Big Parade Blackpool – has announced the date for the town's first ever large-scale public art trail.

The free, family-friendly trail, which will see at least 30 large Elmer sculptures in key locations around Blackpool, will run for eight weeks from April 13 to June 9, 2024.

During that period, residents and visitors will be able to use an App to "collect" the various Elmers, each of which will be individually designed and painted by artists, and earn rewards.

At the end of the trail, the Elmers will come together for a final farewell event – the only time the unique herd will come together – before they are sold at auction to raise money for Brian House.

BLACKPOOL TAKES BIBAS HONOURS

Three Blackpool-based companies/organisations won awards at the annual BIBAs, staged at the Tower Ballroom earlier this month.

The Boathouse Youth was named Community/Third Sector Business Of The Year; The Small Business Academy won Micro Business Of The Year; and Highfurlong School was named as Education Establishment Of The Year.

GRAND THEATRE UPDATES

Return of Grand Young Company

Blackpool Grand Theatre has relaunched the Grand Young Company (GYC) which will offer high-quality training and artist development opportunities to young people aged 14 to 19 who have an interest in working towards careers in theatre-making and performance.

The theatre has firm roots with an in-house Young Company dating back to 1996. At the time it staged numerous, excellent, high-quality productions and commissioned new work.

In 2015, the company became part of the National Theatre Connections Programme and performed at various high-profile venues including Kendal's Brewery Arts Centre, Manchester Lowry and York Theatre Royal, as well as working with the Royal Shakespeare Company.



The new class of 2023-2024 will have the opportunity to take part in an exciting programme of activity consisting of creative and practical sessions, focused on building skills in professional performance and contemporary, collaborative theatre-making practice, delivered by leading artists and theatre companies from across the UK. The group will also perform a new play as part of the nationwide National Theatre Connections Festival.

The Grand Young Company will be led by a former Young Company member, Mykey Young, the theatre's recently appointed Creative Programmes Producer. Open audition workshops are taking place at the Grand Theatre Studio on Thursday 28, Friday 29 and Saturday 30 September. Places can be booked at www.blackpoolgrand.co.uk/gyc

Friends Of The Grand Golden Jubilee

The Friends Of The Grand charity, a group of supporters formed to save the theatre from demolition, is celebrating its 50th birthday.

Established in 1973, the first "friends" undertook various maintenance jobs including painting dressing rooms and repairing holes in the ceiling, as well as raising vital funds to rescue the Grade II listed theatre. In 1981, they purchased it from the then owners, EMI.

Early "friends" included showbiz personalities such as Violet Carson (Ena Sharples), Alistair Cooke, Sir Ken Dodd OBE, Leslie Crowther, Tim West and Prunella Scales, Billy Pearce and Johnnie Casson.

To celebrate 50 years, a special "Show & Dine" event is taking place on October 5 starting with a matinee performance of the West End show, Noises Off, followed by a dinner at the White Tower restaurant. Tickets are available from the Grand Theatre Box office on Church Street.

National Recognition

Blackpool Grand Theatre has been nominated for a UK Theatre Award for Excellence In Arts Education in recognition of its Story-Led Resilience Programme. The prestigious awards celebrate industry excellence outside of London's West End. The nomination is further recognition of the outstanding work of Celine Wyatt, the theatre's Head of Creative Development & Learning and her team. The awards ceremony will take place at London's Guildhall on Sunday 8 October.

BLACKPOOL WINS NETWORK FUNDING

Blackpool has won a share of an £88m Government funding pot to run a pilot programme aimed at improving mobile access at peak times.

The Government's Department for Science, Innovation and Technology has made awards to 19 projects to help support the development of open network solutions such as 4G and 5G.

These include major urban centres in Glasgow, Cambridge, Liverpool, Bath and the City of London; iconic sports and entertainment venues including Cardiff's Principality Stadium and Sunderland's Stadium of Light; and the seaside resorts of Blackpool and Worthing.

Blackpool Council will work with partners in Yorkshire and Lincolnshire on a £3m pilot scheme to address the issue of high volumes of mobile traffic which present a challenge to existing mobile technologies.

Supported by Virgin Media O2, potential solutions will be trialled along Blackpool Promenade and at the Winter Gardens.

The trials will run until March 2025.

NEW HOUSING DEVELOPMENT

Blackpool-based Create Homes has secured full planning permission for a new housing development in Bispham.

The regional house builder secured the permission from Blackpool and Wyre Councils to build 51 new homes. Blackpool Council had received land release funds towards infrastructure costs, helping to open up the site.

The Groves development will offer three and four-bedroom homes under the new Create Homes 'Executive Collection' brand.

As part of the development, there will be 16 affordable homes built in partnership with Great Places, which will provide rental opportunities for locals to access.

Work started on site last month.

ART MURAL GRANT AWARD

Historic England has announced a £15k grant through its "History in the Making" scheme to support youth organisations in Blackpool to work together and create a street art mural that focuses on the heritage and the history of the Talbot and Brunswick area of Blackpool.

The creative arts project will be a collaboration of Blackpool's Youth Provision Partnership and local partners.

Blackpool Boys and Girls Club will lead on the delivery of the scheme working with the Youth Provision Partnership, Blackpool Council, Streetlife and with support from Empowerment (a Blackpool-based charity committed to supporting local communities).

Young people will be asked what matters to them about the architecture and character of Blackpool and specifically about the Talbot and Brunswick area to inspire them to learn about its local history and ultimately create an imaginative street art mural.

AIRPORT/ENTERPRISE ZONE UPDATES

New road junction for Sports Village

A new road junction improving access to the Common Edge Community Sports Village is now complete.

The widened junction improves access for visitors to the sports village and to South Shore Cricket Club alongside the new Division Lane West. The junction allows for two-way traffic to safely enter and exit the sports village, while a traffic island to aid pedestrian crossing has also been installed.

New, widened footpaths and improved fences have also improved the look of the site, while the road junction at Division Lane East has also been raised and widened to make it safer.

The Common Edge Community Sports Village includes 14 new grass football pitches, along with a full-size 3G football pitch, sports pavilion with changing rooms and community space, plus a grass rugby pitch and training area to follow.

The seven 11 v 11 football pitches are complemented by five seven-a-side and two nine-a-side pitches. Additionally, a full sized 3G all-weather pitch is available with access directly from the new changing rooms. Grass for a new rugby pitch and training area is growing ready to use next year.

The new sports pavilion also includes six changing rooms, two officials' rooms, two kitchens and a large community room. A 194-space car park with sustainable drainage has also been completed as part of the works.

The sports facilities provide a major upgrade from the previous facilities and will provide a range of new football options for community and youth football teams.

New hangars plan

Plans for new hangars at Blackpool Airport have been unveiled which could see the first new developments at the airport in over 15 years.

As part of the Blackpool Airport Enterprise Zone, outline planning consent is being sought for three 20,000sq ft hangars suitable for light general aviation and small planes, including small corporate turboprops and warbird (former military) aircraft.

The application to Blackpool and Fylde Councils also includes two hangars capable of housing larger planes such as a Boeing 737 or Airbus A321 for maintenance, repair and overhaul activities.

The hangars would be developed at the east side of the airport on land owned by Blackpool Council. The application also includes a new road off Amy Johnson Way to access both sets of hangars, plus a small 6,000sq ft commercial business unit.

The development of the new Airport East hangars signals a period of regeneration for the airport and surrounding land, as part of the main Blackpool Airport Enterprise Zone masterplan.

A corporate jet hangar, executive aircraft handling facility hangar, airport administrative facilities and, in the longer term, a large apron and additional hangar facilities are also planned for the areas at the west and centre of the airport.

Plans relating to other critical infrastructure at the airport including the Air Traffic Control tower and rescue and firefighting services will also follow later this year.

TOP OF THE WORLD

Blackpool-based House Of Wingz – who presented at the last BBLG meeting in July – enjoyed a highly-successful weekend at the UDO World Street Dance Championships at the Winter Gardens in August.

The crew took on dancers from across the globe and finished with a second place.

Individual dancers were also placed in solo and duo categories with Eli Diamante becoming World Champion.



NEW GRUNDY EXHIBITION FOR AUTUMN

A new exhibition at Blackpool's Grundy Art Gallery will celebrate emerging and early career artists from arts educational and learning institutions across the UK.

The widely-anticipated Bloomberg New Contemporaries 2023 exhibition, which opens at the gallery on September 30, includes 55 exhibiting artists selected by internationally-renowned artists Helen Cammock, Sunil Gupta and Heather Phillipson through an open call that received over 1,900 entries. The artworks will be presented thematically within the Grundy's gallery spaces.

A variety of supporting events will also be open to the public including artist talks and workshops, view www.thegrundy.org for more information. The exhibition closes on December 16.

INVESTMENT IN PLAYGROUNDS

A £150,000 investment in a number of community playgrounds in Blackpool is underway.

Last year Watson Road, Red Bank Road Play Area, Gynn Sunken Gardens, Bispham Recreation Ground, Moor Park and Stanley Park all benefited from playground upgrades.

The investment is set to continue this autumn at Carr Road, followed by Boundary Park.

The improvements at Carr Road playground will allow a full-scale renovation to take place including the installation of accessible play equipment.

Boundary Park will get updated play equipment, including a new climbing structure, roundabout, swing and new surfacing.

The improvement programme also includes an investment in a new, additional play area at Fisher's Field. This specially designed playground will incorporate an obstacle course that will encourage problem solving, balance and social skills as children explore the course together.

4. Requests for private sector support/involvement

BLACKPOOL: UK CAPITAL OF DANCE

Plans are being explored to establish Blackpool as the UK Capital of Dance.

With the support of Blackpool's Tourism Business Improvement District (TBID), Fylde Coast-based events company, Fit The Bill, is in the development stage of organising a new and exciting, town-wide event for Blackpool called Capital of Dance.

Capital of Dance is intended to be an eclectic mix of all dance genres and will provide open access to all, from dance companies with worldwide reputations to those taking their very first steps. A taster event is planned for June and July next year, with the intention of growing it into an annual event.

As part of the development stage, Martin and Marina Blore from Fit The Bill would like to talk to any Blackpool-based businesses/organisations that can embrace the theme of dance.

They want to programme in all styles of venues and unusual spaces across the resort and they particularly want to support small independents.

Martin and Marina will be attending the BBLG meeting on Friday 29 September if you want to discuss the plans – or, you can contact them at marina@fitthebill.com

INTERNATIONAL MEN'S DAY FYLDE COAST

Businesses are invited to get involved in the annual International Men's Day conference which is being held between 9.30am and 3.30pm on November 17 at Blackpool Football Club.

The event is being staged by a collective group of young people, organisations, businesses, youth groups, schools and colleges. It is intended to promote community engagement and inclusive practice and highlight the work that is taking place on the Fylde Coast to support men and address issues such as gambling, physical health, sexuality, suicide and criminality.

Businesses and organisations are being encouraged to get involved in a number of ways:

- Be a participant on the day and bring your group/pupils/students
- Deliver a workshop
- Take an information stall
- Support planning of the event

To register your interest, please click the link here: [IMD Form](#)

For more information about this event please email admin@uyacic.org

EVENT CONNECT 2024

Winter Gardens Blackpool is planning an inaugural Catering & Hospitality Show next year. Event Connect 2024 will be held in the new Blackpool Conference & Exhibition Centre on Friday 10 May.

It will provide a unique platform designed to bring together businesses, suppliers and experts from the North West's thriving hospitality industry, including hotels, restaurants and supply companies.

To book a stand or find out more, go to this link: [Event Connect 2024: | Winter Gardens Blackpool](#)

Philip Welsh
Head of Tourism & Communications