



Blackpool Business Leadership Group

Business Partnerships Report – November 24, 2023

1. Visitor Economy Update

STRICTLY BLACKPOOL



Blackpool once again took centre-stage as the BBC brought Strictly Come Dancing back to The Tower Ballroom.

The show, aired on prime-time BBC1 on Saturday and Sunday night, usually attracts one of the biggest TV audiences of the entire series.

This year saw TV presenter Angela Rippon return to the ballroom as a celebrity contestant, more than 30 years after she last presented the original Come Dancing programme. Angela hosted the show from the ballroom 17 times between 1988 and 1991.

Her Strictly professional partner, Kai Widdrington, had also previously appeared in Blackpool many times, dancing as a youngster in ballroom dance championships.

Although Angela was eliminated at the end of the Blackpool episode after losing in the dance-off, she spoke about her “magical” experience in the ballroom.

As always, the Blackpool episodes generated a huge amount of positive media coverage for the resort, with several contestants sporting I Heart BPL sweatshirts in the build-up to the show.

RETURN OF CHRISTMAS BY THE SEA

Blackpool's spectacular Christmas By The Sea village has returned to the Promenade - with a sprinkling of Strictly magic in the air!

Two of the BBC show's professional dancers officially opened the village on Friday 17 November – the eve of the Strictly Come Dancing show in The Tower Ballroom.

Lauren Oakley and Graziano Di Prima opened the skating rink accompanied by talented youngsters from two Blackpool-based performance centres.

The opening event, hosted by radio presenter Hayley Kay, featured songs by the young students from Scream Theatre Schools, followed by a skating performance with children from the Blackpool Ice Dome Charities Association (BIDCA) and Lytham-based skating champion, Amelia Kislitsyn.



This year's village includes a thrilling 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). With the free-to-use skating rink as its centrepiece, the village includes festive light installations and projection shows, themed log cabins, artificial snowfalls, Christmas trees and tram rides.

The village also has themed children's attractions including a new 100ft-long snow slide and the return of the Star Flyer, which, at 196ft tall, is one of Europe's tallest swing rides.

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.

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

The village is complemented by a full Illuminations display along the seafront after it was announced earlier this year that they would once again be extended by two months to run from September 1 through to January 1. The annual display includes nightly projection shows on the front of The Blackpool Tower, sponsored by Northern Rail.

Blackpool Council is again offering residents and visitors the opportunity to park for three hours for just a pound on most of its car parks (using the PayByPhone app). The offer runs from November 17 to January 1 to coincide with Christmas By The Sea.

For full details, including opening times of the rink and other attractions go to:
visitblackpool.com/christmas

TOP OF THE WORLD

Blackpool has reinforced its status as one of the UK's most popular destinations in two new surveys.

A report by accommodation search website, Trivago, found people are choosing not to go abroad for their holidays and instead opting for staycations.

Trivago's UK data showed that seven of the top 10 hotel bookings destinations for Christmas 2023 are domestic locations, with Blackpool named as the fourth most popular place to visit in the world for British people, ahead of Benidorm, New York and Amsterdam. It is also the only location on the list not classed as a city.

Britons are also choosing to celebrate the New Year in the UK, with Blackpool, London, and Edinburgh among the top five places to see in the start of 2024.

The company says that the trend is partly due to soaring airfares and other inflationary pressures. The full ranking of the most popular travel destinations among Brits is:

1, London; 2, Edinburgh; 3, Dubai; 4, Blackpool; 5, New York; 6, Benidorm; 7, Amsterdam; 8, Liverpool; 9, Manchester; 10, Dublin.

Meanwhile, another survey carried out by credit card company, Aqua, has crowned Blackpool as the most popular destination for a staycation in the UK, with an average of 135,000 hotel accommodation searches per month on Google, more than 40,000 ahead of second-placed Bournemouth.

The data also placed Blackpool at the top of the list for TikTok views, as well as offering the cheapest accommodation prices of all destinations analysed, with a one-night stay averaging £72.68.

Rank	Location	Avg. monthly Google search volume	Avg. hotel price per night	TikTok hashtag views
1	Blackpool	135,000	£72.68	980,800,000
2	Bournemouth	90,500	£87.52	868,300,000
3	Scarborough	49,500	£94.64	686,400,000
4	Whitby	49,500	£110.36	587,700,000
5	Swansea	27,100	£110.96	622,400,000
6	Sunderland	880	£91.80	672,400,000
7	Poole	14,800	£111.44	421,900,000
8	Weymouth	33,100	£80.12	79,500,000
9	Hastings	27,100	£102.56	109,600,000
=10	Weston-Super-Mare	27,100	£88.68	34,900,000
=10	Eastbourne	27,100	£94.16	58,400,000

Blackpool has repeatedly been ranked as one of the UK's most affordable staycation destinations over the course of this year. A few weeks ago, the resort was 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.

NICK GOES ON A BLACKPOOL ADVENTURE



A new video capturing the excitement of Blackpool's 2023 Illuminations Switch-On event has been released.

The film, hosted by presenters and video bloggers Lee Hinchcliffe and Ellie Hinchcliffe (pictured above), goes behind the scenes of the Nickelodeon Grand Parade, which formed a part of the Golden Mile celebrations on Friday 1 September.

It reveals what it took to create the parade, which featured some of Nickelodeon's favourite characters.

Titled Nickelodeon Goes On An Adventure, the film is being aired across the Nick UK channel between November 20 and 30.



It can also be viewed on the VisitBlackpool YouTube channel at this link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9VSCASocMT4>

LOCAL VISITOR ECONOMY PARTNERSHIP

Marketing Lancashire and VisitBlackpool have announced that a collaborative bid has been awarded Local Visitor Economy Partnership (LVEP) status by VisitEngland, placing them among the country's leading organisations for destination management.

The new Lancashire LVEP is a partnership between Marketing Lancashire and VisitBlackpool with the support of all the county's 15 councils. It will result in closer working on tourism growth plans.

As an LVEP, the Marketing Lancashire and VisitBlackpool partnership will have access to resources and guidance from VisitEngland on product distribution, business support and the opportunity to bid for funding and marketing. The new national portfolio of LVEPs will work in collaboration locally, regionally and nationally on shared priorities and targets to support and grow the visitor economy.

LIGHTPOOL FESTIVAL



The award-winning Lightpool Festival returned for October half-term with an exciting, free-to-see programme of light installations, 3D projection shows, an art trail, and live performance.

The festival, which ran from October 20-28, included world premieres and installations never before seen in the UK, including artworks from Australia, France, the Netherlands and Spain.

The trail featured larger-than-life jellyfish (shown in a five-minute slot on *The One Show* on BBC1 on festival opening night and pictured below); a field of fireflies alongside the Cenotaph; a giant ball of wool made up of neon yarn on the roof of the Blackpool Church; a cube made up of 448 glass jars each containing a miniature tableau; and an exclusive preview of designer Laurence Llewelyn-Bowen's first digital installation.

The Blackpool Tower building saw an alien-like "invasion" with giant tentacles seemingly breaking through the ballroom roof (pictured above) along with newly-commissioned 3D projection shows. The Tower Ballroom also hosted a performance of *Carnival Magic* with giant illuminated puppets.

Lightpool is procured and produced by Festival Artistic Director, Philip Holmes, working in partnership with key sponsors and partners including Arts Council England, Blackpool Tourism BID, The Blackpool Tower, Blackpool Council, Winter Gardens, Blackpool FC Community Trust, LeftCoast, The Grand Theatre, The Old Electric and VisitBlackpool.



The light festival is the only one in the UK to be a part of the Arts Council's National Portfolio, ensuring funding support for the event until 2025.

DESTINATION MARKETING

Only In Blackpool

The main summer holidays saw a repeat of the Only In Blackpool destination marketing campaign developed in partnership with Merlin Entertainments and other resort partners.

It once again featured resort “ambassador” Nigel C Gull (voiced by actor and comedian Johnny Vegas) giving TV viewers a whistle-stop tour of the resort.

The marketing campaign, which ran from June until the end of August, represented a £600k investment by Blackpool Council, Merlin Entertainments and the Tourism Business Improvement District (TBID).

It included mainstream TV and Video On Demand advertising on ITV, Channel 4 and Sky, with targeted coverage in Scotland, the North East and key cities including Leeds, Sheffield, Nottingham, Stoke and Birmingham, along with audio coverage across Heart, Capital and Hits Radio, and digital activity on Meta (Facebook), Pinterest and YouTube.

Interim results show that all of the elements delivered or exceeded the planned reach. Meta performed particularly well, reaching more than 1.7m users.

Merlin has also been undertaking its own customer surveys at its attractions to gauge what influenced their visit. This initial data showed that 46% of their visitors had seen the Only In Blackpool campaign with 70% of those stating that the campaign influenced their visit.



Autumn/Winter Season

Once the Only In Blackpool campaign finished at the end of August, it was followed by a VisitBlackpool campaign aimed at driving visitors to the Illuminations.

This campaign, which included bespoke audio and video ads entitled “*Come For The Lights, Stay For The Night*”, ran across the Bauer radio network in the north of England. The video can be viewed here:



[Come For The Lights, Stay For The Night | Blackpool Illuminations 2023 - VisitBlackpool - YouTube](#)

Earlier this month, Bauer and the voiceover presenter, Jack Oddie, won highly prestigious national VOX awards for the audio version of the ad beating competition from across the UK.

Marketing activity, including radio, out-of-home advertising, Google ads and social media, has now switched to promotion of the Christmas By The Sea event, which runs until January 1, 2024. A TikTok video produced on the opening night of the event on November 17 has already had more than 600,000 views and around 50,000 likes.

HOTEL/ACCOMMODATION UPDATES

BLVD HOTEL

The BLVD (Boulevard) Hotel at Blackpool Pleasure Beach has been declared the best luxury hotel in Northern Europe.

The seafront hotel won the prestigious accolade at the World Luxury Hotel Awards held in Athens.

Nominations are evaluated based on service delivery, luxury and presentation, as well as consistent feedback from guests, before being determined eligible. The awards were voted for by more than 300,000 guests and industry players.

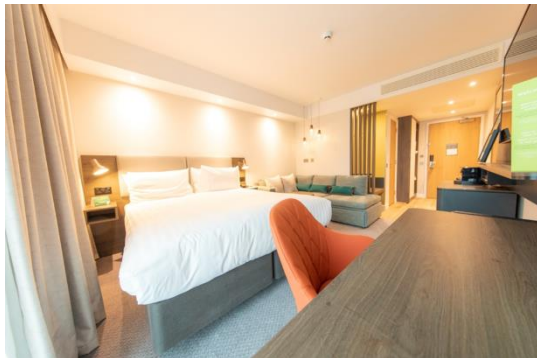


Other UK hotels receiving awards were the Barnsley House Hotel in the Cotswolds for Best Luxury Spa Hotel, The Caledonian in Edinburgh for Best Luxury Historical Hotel, and London's Waldorf Astoria for Best Luxury City Hotel.

The £12m BLVD Hotel opened in 2019 with 120 rooms, all with either coastal vistas or direct views of the attractions and rollercoasters at Blackpool Pleasure Beach.

HOLIDAY INN

New images show the first completed rooms inside the Blackpool Holiday Inn.



The four-star hotel is set to open in spring 2024 and is currently being constructed as part of the town's £350m Talbot Gateway development next to Blackpool North train station.

The four-storey, 144-room hotel will open alongside a Marco Pierre White New York Italian restaurant on the ground floor, and will include business conferencing facilities and a fitness centre for guests.

Bookings for the new hotel are already being taken for June onwards, with earlier dates set to be made available closer to the opening.

An extension to the tramway, which will connect the Talbot Gateway and train station directly with Blackpool Promenade, is also being constructed as part of the development, alongside an underpass allowing pedestrians to access the hotel and tramway directly from the station.

Five additional retail units have been constructed on the ground floor and are available for lease.

The Holiday Inn will be operated by RBH Hospitality Management, one of the UK's leading independent hotel management companies, with hotel manager Mark Winter overseeing the launch and early running of the hotel.

The hotel will create 80 new jobs, from managerial positions through to front of house and cleaning staff.

NEWTON HALL HOLIDAY PARK

The owners of Partington's Holiday Parks have opened a new £1.5m entertainment centre on the outskirts of Blackpool.

Walterz, which is located at Newton Hall Holiday Park, includes ten-pin bowling alleys, karaoke booths, Augmented Reality interactive darts and vintage games ranging from pool to pinball. It also includes a bar and café.

The entertainment hub is now open to the public as well as the site's holiday visitors and owners, seven days a week from 12 noon to 10pm. Entry is free with all games individually priced.

Partington's is a family-owned business based in Blackpool and run by Chief Executive Officers, Rob Kearsley and Andrea Challis.



The brother and sister team are fourth generation family members of the company, which operates sites across the region including Windy Harbour at Singleton, Fleetwood, Hambleton, Skipton and the Lake District.



THE VILLAGE

Blackpool's Village Hotel is offering a dining experience with a twist! The new buffet restaurant, Helter Skelter, offers a range of freshly-prepared family favourites in a funfair-themed setting.

It is part of an extensive programme of improvements at the East Park Drive hotel, which also includes refurbishment of all 175 bedrooms, with completion expected early next year, and the opening of a new beer garden at the Pub & Grill overlooking the golf course.

ESPORTS BLACKPOOL

Blackpool took a giant leap into the world of esports with a highly-successful event at the new Conference & Exhibition Centre in the Winter Gardens.

Working in conjunction with Blackpool Council, VisitBlackpool, the Winter Gardens and Blackpool Pride of Place, the organisers – locally-based creative agency, Jellymedia - attracted 32 teams to the Europa Halo event, making it Halo's biggest European esports event in 13 years.



At the end of the two-day event, Quadrant, the esports organisation set up by Formula One driver, Lando Norris, took the title in a closely-fought final.

The event was intended to be a pilot to demonstrate Blackpool's ability to stage what is one of the fastest-growing game sectors and open the door for more events in future.

INDIA WINS WORLD FIREWORKS CHAMPIONSHIP BLACKPOOL



Photo: Gregg Wolstenholme Photography

A pyrotechnics team from India has been crowned champions of the annual World Fireworks Blackpool competition after staging the country's first ever display in the UK.

The display by the Amir Morani Fireworks (AMFW) team was the first of three spectacular shows staged on the Tower Festival Headland during September and October.

Designed by Azan Morani, who has programmed some of the largest and most complex shows in the world, the winning display was praised for its use of never seen before pyrotechnics and for the diverse selection of music that included a taste of Bollywood. Judges scored them ahead of subsequent displays by Switzerland and Italy, describing the Indian show as "captivating".

The World Fireworks Championship Blackpool is one of the resort's most spectacular events, with the displays, all synchronised to music, being launched from the beach in front of The Blackpool Tower. It is estimated that more than 50,000 people attended each of this year's free events.

DESTINATION GUIDE 2024

The 2024 Blackpool Destination Guide is now nearing completion and will be printed in early December ready for distribution from the start of the New Year – a period when people traditionally start to think about planning trips/holidays for the year ahead.

AIRFIX ILLUMINATION PARTNERSHIP



A unique collector's item based on a spectacular light installation in this year's Blackpool Illuminations is now on sale.

The scale model of a Spitfire, complete with bespoke Blackpool livery on its fuselage, is part of a special collaboration between VisitBlackpool and the internationally-renowned model kit company, Airfix.

It has resulted in the production of 4,000 limited edition Spitfire kits, which are being sold exclusively through the Blackpool Illuminations web-shop and the Promenade-based Tourist Information Centre, at £19.99 (plus postage).

The Airfix model is based on a tribute to one of the world's most iconic fighter aircraft.

Designed by Laurence Llewelyn-Bowen and built by the Blackpool Illuminations team using 3D printing technology for the first time, the Spitfire Island installation is located on Gynn Roundabout in the midst of the six-mile seafront display.



It includes replicas of three Spitfires – Progress I, II and III – which were all based at Blackpool Airport during World War Two, and paid for by local residents.

Airfix, which is part of Hornby Hobbies Limited, is sponsoring Spitfire Island as part of the collaboration.

TIM BURTON JOINS HALLOWEEN CELEBRATIONS!

Hollywood film director Tim Burton, Blackpool Pleasure Beach's "biggest fan", made a surprise return to the park for Halloween.

Known for his unconventional film-making style often incorporating the creepy and macabre, he explored the park's Twisted Tunnels, which were specially dressed for the Journey To Hell Freak Nights. He also took the opportunity to explore the Ghost Train and the River Caves, a dark ride that first opened in 1905.



The director is no stranger to Blackpool. Apart from visits to the Pleasure Beach, he has chosen various locations across the resort for filming activity including a video for The Killers in 2012 and the big budget production of the movie, Miss Peregrine's Home For Peculiar Children in 2015. A year later, he switched on Blackpool Illuminations to coincide with the cinema release of the film.

SANDCASTLE GOLD AWARD

Sandcastle Waterpark has received a coveted VisitEngland Gold Award.

First introduced in 2014, VisitEngland Accolades are given to those businesses that have gone the extra mile in providing a quality visitor experience. The accolades, awarded to 91 attractions across England this year, recognise all aspects of the visitor experience and are awarded in five categories including Hidden Gem, Best Told Story, Quality Food and Drink, Welcome, as well as Gold for all-round top scoring attractions.

Sandcastle Waterpark is one of just two visitor attractions in the North West to receive the Gold Award this year.

SUMMER FESTIVAL UPDATES

British Country Music Festival

The festival has announced the first artists for its 2024 festival in the Winter Gardens from Friday 30 August to Sunday 1 September.

Multi award-winning singer-songwriter Kezia Gill (*pictured right*) has been announced as the Friday night headliner in the Empress Ballroom.



On the Saturday, Twinnie, will appear as a featured artist on the main stage. She first appeared at the festival as a breaking artist in 2019 and has been described by critics as the UK's answer to Shania Twain.

Celebrating its fifth anniversary in 2024, The British Country Music Festival has established itself as a ground-breaking event in the independent festival sector, bringing emerging and established UK singer-songwriters to a new audience. The festival will be announcing more 2024 acts soon.

Lytham Festival

The Courtenears have been revealed as the first headline act at next year's Lytham Festival. They will perform on Lytham Green on Friday 5 July supported by The Kooks and Nieve Ella. The festival runs from July 3-7. More headline announcements will follow in the coming weeks.

2. Town Centre Update

TOWN CENTRE: NEW OPENINGS

Frasers

A new Frasers department store has opened in the Houndshill Shopping Centre.

Opened in partnership with Blackpool Council, owners of the shopping centre, it brings together a range of exciting brands, including Frasers, Flannels, Sports Direct, Game, and Evans Cycles, all under one roof.

Since it acquired the Houndshill in 2019, the Council has been working hard to support the town's post-pandemic recovery and turn the shopping centre into a key driver for the regeneration of the town centre.

Blackpool is undergoing a significant transformation with a £2bn Growth and Prosperity Programme of investment and one of the most crucial developments was the re-letting of the former Debenhams store.

As of July 2023, only 39% of the former Debenhams vacant stores around the country have been successfully re-let, making this partnership a remarkable achievement for Blackpool and a significant milestone at national level.

Abingdon Street Market Retail

The retail offer at Abingdon Street Market has officially opened. The doors that open out on to Abingdon Street itself are once again in full use, allowing customers to enjoy the array of new market stalls open for business.

The popular food hall element of the market has been open since May and has quickly become a key favourite with both residents and visitors of all ages.

With six independent eateries, two bars and an on-site coffee shop, teamed with a host of entertainment and events taking place, the food and drink offer has exceeded expectations in terms of footfall and business projections.

Local operating company, The Little Blackpool Leisure Company, has recruited a number of independent retailers into the new market including a bakery, general store, homeware, gift shops, art, vinyl records, surf shop and shoe cleaning and restoration business.

The retail area also hosts an arcade, a dedicated pop-up from Blackpool libraries and a 'space to create', an area for creative events, workshops and small pop-up markets.

- Attendees at the BBLG meeting on November 24 will hear first-hand about the new openings at the Houndshill Shopping Centre and get an opportunity to see and hear about the re-imagination of Abingdon Street Market.

Saoko Cocktail Club

A new cocktail bar has opened on Clifton Street. Owners Aitor Garcia and Taff Belkida, who are from Gran Canaria, are introducing a range of "Drink The Experience" cocktails, each with its own story and served in glasses that are hand-crafted in Spain.

CIVIL SERVICE HUB TAKES SHAPE

The façade for the new office building on King Street is being lifted into place and it looks spectacular!

The building will have over 250 pre-made panels installed over the next few months, which have been created in an Art Deco style to match the rest of the town's heritage.



Over 3,000 civil servants will move to the new office development when it opens in early 2025, protecting local jobs and creating new ones.

TOWN CENTRE TRAFFIC SCHEME GETS FUNDING BOOST

Blackpool Council has received more than £15m from the Government's Levelling Up Fund to support transport investment in the town centre.

The £15.3m bid was originally unsuccessful in a previous bidding round but, ahead of the Chancellor's Autumn Statement, it was announced that the funding would now be made available. Seven other councils in the North West also received funding for previously unsuccessful bids.

The proposed Town Centre Access Scheme will transform Blackpool town centre's transport network, allowing traffic to flow better with improved pedestrian areas. There will be improvements to walking, cycling and bus access.

The proposed measures are designed to complement Blackpool's other Levelling Up Fund regeneration projects. The scheme also looks to encourage economic growth by reducing travel times into the town centre. Other aims include reducing general congestion, cutting greenhouse gas emissions, and improving safety for those walking and cycling.

WINTER GARDENS COCKTAIL BAR

Winter Gardens Blackpool has unveiled a stunning Art Deco cocktail bar. The bar provides a private hideaway for guests who want to add a luxurious twist to their theatre experience.

It has been reinstated from its original 1939 design with the original banquettes, geometric curves and designs, and wooden friezes.

It is part of an ongoing refurbishment of the Winter Gardens' extraordinary collection of indoor spaces.



TOWN CENTRE OCCUPANCY – NOVEMBER UPDATE

There was a net decrease of seven occupied units in the town centre compared to August 2023, bringing the overall total down to 478 and decreasing the occupancy rate from 78.1% to 77%.

As a result, the vacancy rate increased from 21.9% to 23% over the three-month period. The latest occupancy rate downturn is largely due to a net reduction of five occupied units in the core retail area, with an additional net decrease of two occupied units in the periphery town centre area.

Encouragingly, since August a number of businesses have occupied previously vacant units. These include: Play & Dine Café, Mini Shop, Mr Chips (Talbot Rd) and African Caribbean Takeaway (Topping St).

The newly-vacant units include: Activity Hub (Victoria St); Connexions (Market St); Revelry Bar (Birley St); Bed Time (Talbot Rd); Mamma's Ristorante, Reilly's Smoke & Vape, Melissa Louise (Topping St); Kingswood Office Supplies and Blott Studio (King St).

November 2023: Occupied & Vacant Units

Area	Total Units ¹	Total Units		Rates (%)	
		Occupied	Vacant	Occupancy	Vacancy
Principal Retail Core (Local Plan boundary based around Houndshell, 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)	461	370	91	80.3%	19.7%
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, Caunce St and the new Talbot Gateway area)	621	478	143	77.0%	23.0%
Periphery Town Centre Area (the Town Centre Boundary area excluding the units contained within the Core Retail Area)	160	108	52	67.5%	32.5%

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).

3. General News

CHANCELLOR ANNOUNCES POTENTIAL DEVOLUTION DEAL FOR LANCASHIRE

The Government has announced the potential for a historic devolution deal for Lancashire.

The announcement to offer the deal was made by Chancellor Jeremy Hunt as part of his Autumn Statement this week.

For the past six months, leaders from Lancashire County Council, Blackburn with Darwen Council and Blackpool Council have been working together to progress a devolution deal for the county.

The proposed deal would give local leaders extra powers to tackle key local priorities such as better public transport, boosting economic prosperity and improving employment and skills.

It would also give Lancashire a stronger voice on the regional and national stage, ensuring the county does not miss out on vital funding and opportunities.

While a new Combined County Authority would be created, the deal would not require a change to the established county, borough or district councils across the area. There would be no requirement for an elected mayor, nor the power to precept over and above the normal Council Tax ask.

The proposed deal will now be discussed by members of each constituent council at a series of council meetings.

If all the councils agree, a public consultation will be held so residents and businesses can have their say on the proposal.

Each council will then consider the findings of the consultation before the final proposal is submitted to Government for Parliamentary approval next year.

BE WHO YOU WANT TO BE

A survey has been carried out on plans to develop a village quarter to celebrate Blackpool's LGBTQ+ heritage.

Blackpool Council is working with various community groups and partners including the Blackpool North Shore Business Group; Renaissance; the hoteliers' group BAGS; and Blackpool Pride Festival.

The plans for the Claremont area aim to build on the existing concentration of gay-friendly bars, venues and guesthouses to the north of the town centre, including Queen Street, Springfield Road, High Street and Lord Street, as well as parts of Dickson Road, Talbot Road and Abingdon Street.

There will be no label attached to the proposed area. Instead, it is intended to be an inclusive area based on the mantra "Be Who You Want To Be".

M55 SERVICES

Plans have been submitted to Preston City Council for the development of a service station on the M55 motorway. The application which, has been put forward by Moto, would include a petrol station, shop, café with indoor and outdoor seating, toilets and baby changing facilities, and car parking for HGVs and around 360 cars. It would be sited close to the newly-opened Junction 2.

NEW COURTHOUSE PLANS



The final vision for a new courthouse in Blackpool has been unveiled. A full planning application has been submitted to Blackpool Council for the relocation of Blackpool Magistrates' Court from Chapel Street to the corner of Devonshire Road and Talbot Road.

Artist impressions have been unveiled of the three-storey building, which will house 10 courts and transform the former Devonshire Road Hospital site.

The courthouse will have judicial chambers, custody facilities and public waiting facilities as well as a new pedestrian and vehicular access to Talbot Road. Plans also include car parking for up to 95 vehicles, with disabled parking and cycle parking. The main public entrance will be from Talbot Road with a security checkpoint for all visitors to the courthouse, including airport-style metal detectors.

Proposals to relocate the existing courthouse, which has been closed temporarily after crumbling concrete was found in the building, have been in discussion for several years.

The Government's award of £40m of Levelling Up funding a year ago sealed the relocation, meaning the existing site can be used for future phases of the £300m Blackpool Central leisure development.

The Council has owned the Devonshire Road site since 2020, following the demolition of the former hospital in 2007.

TRAMTOWN MOVING FORWARD

New plans for the proposed Blackpool Tramtown Museum renovation have been approved.

The first phase will see the engineering workshop relocated to space inside the main depot on Rigby Road. The current workshop will be replaced with electric charging points for Blackpool Transport's planned new fleet of electric buses.



The second phase will include exhibition space and the third and final phase will incorporate the visitor centre. The planning application also includes a café and shop.

Earlier this year, Tramtown announced it had secured £800,000 of funding for the first phase of restoration of its building. The initial funding has come from Blackpool Council via the ZEBRA zero emission scheme, as well as from Tramtown visitors and public donations.

BUSINESS ACADEMIES LAUNCHED

Blackpool Council has announced the launch of two new business academies offering tailored advice to new and growing businesses, and practical help to lower carbon emissions.

The Blackpool Growth Business Academy and the Blackpool Net Zero Business Academy are new business support programmes intended to play a crucial role in supporting the growth and sustainability of local firms.

The Blackpool Growth Business Academy will play a pivotal role in fostering entrepreneurial spirit, helping new start businesses to chart their future success. It will also provide advice and mentoring for more established businesses to expand their operations and drive innovation and job creation.

The Blackpool Net Zero Business Academy will help local businesses move towards net zero, assessing their carbon footprint and creating detailed plans to reduce carbon emissions, drive down energy costs and develop sustainable business practices.

The £850k initiative is funded by the UK Government's Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) and is led by the Council's Business Growth Team. It forms part of Blackpool's £5.7m SPF investment programme to March 2025.

The academy programmes will be promoted via the Blackpool Unlimited gateway, the Business Growth Team's website and alert service that has been signposting advice, funding support and regeneration news to local businesses for over 15 years. The Council has secured a wide range of specialist advisors and mentors to help deliver the academy offer.

For further information on how to apply for support, businesses can visit www.blackpoolunlimited.com

NEW 3G PITCH OPENS

A new 3G pitch at Stanley Park in Blackpool has been officially opened.

The facility, which will be managed by Active Blackpool, boasts a state-of-the-art floodlit 3G pitch following a £500k investment by the Premier League, The FA, Government's Football Foundation and Blackpool Council.

It will provide opportunities for people to engage in grassroots sports, offer schools and community sessions, and encourage members of the community to take part in physical activity and develop an active lifestyle.

The pitch was officially opened by two Manchester City Girls' players Emma Siddell and Bethany Strutton, who were also joined by schoolchildren playing in a local schools football festival.



GRANGE PARK HOUSING DEVELOPMENT

Residents are celebrating moving into their new homes at Grange Park estate in Blackpool as part of phase one of the £20m social housing scheme that will ultimately provide 131 new homes.

Seventeen properties were released for occupation in the summer including 12 houses and five adaptable bungalows offering affordable, energy-efficient accommodation for the new residents.

On completion next year, the project will have delivered 96 houses, five bungalows and 30 sheltered apartments, along with enhanced open spaces and improved pedestrian and cycle access.

The new homes are being partially funded by a grant from Homes England and are managed by Blackpool Coastal Housing who manage around 5,000 properties on Blackpool Council's behalf.



SELECTIVE LICENSING CONSULTATION

Blackpool Council is welcoming people's views on proposals for a new selective licensing scheme in eight of the inner wards of Blackpool.

A 10-week public consultation on selective licensing of private housing in the central area of town is now open, covering the eight key wards of Bloomfield, Brunswick, Claremont, Talbot, Tyldesley, Warbreck, Waterloo and Victoria. That totals approximately 11,000 privately rented properties, accounting for around 70 per cent of Blackpool's private rented sector.

Blackpool Council has long recognised the intrinsic link between poor quality private rented accommodation and deprivation. The proposed areas have been selected due to high levels of deprivation combined with a high ratio of privately rented properties.

Under selective licensing, every house, flat or room that is used as private rented accommodation within the designated area would require a licence.

Selective licensing aims to improve standards in the area by addressing the poor management by some private landlords and the sub-standard property conditions that they offer. The scheme would require all landlords within the designated area to adhere to strict guidelines around management of properties, and provide a good standard of living conditions.

Before finalising the scheme, the Council wants to give all tenants, landlords, managing agents and residents in the area the opportunity to comment on the proposal.

Consultation began on October 30 and will run for 10 weeks until January 7, 2024. Following consultation, the selective licensing scheme will also need to go to the Secretary of State for approval.

To give your view on the scheme please go to www.blackpool.gov.uk/consultations

Copies of the proposal are also available to view at Bickerstaffe House and at reception in the Municipal Buildings on Corporation Street.

4. Congratulations to...

BLACKPOOL GRAND THEATRE

The theatre has won the 2023 UK Theatre Award for Excellence In Arts Education in a ceremony held at London's Guildhall.

The award reflects the development and impact of its Story-Led Resilience Programme in the communities of Blackpool and beyond.

The programme has been created and developed by Celine Wyatt and the creative learning and development team at the theatre.



UNITED YOUTH ALLIANCE

A social action youth and community organisation based on the Fylde Coast has been awarded The King's Award for Voluntary Service. This is the highest award a local voluntary group can receive in the UK and is equivalent to an MBE.

The alliance was founded by Deborah Terras in 2018, working alongside the public, private and community sectors to promote social action initiatives that benefit the voluntary, community and civil society organisations.

The King's Award for Voluntary Service aims to recognise outstanding work by local volunteer groups to benefit their communities. It was created in 2002 to celebrate Queen Elizabeth II's Golden Jubilee and, following his accession, His Majesty The King emphasised his desire to continue the award scheme.



The alliance will be presented with the award and certificate by Mrs Amanda Parker, JP, Lord Lieutenant of Lancashire. In addition, representatives of the alliance will attend a garden party at Buckingham Palace in May and June 2024, along with other recipients of this year's award.

JOHN CHILD

The former managing director of Sandcastle Waterpark has been inaugurated into the Waterpark Hall of Fame in America. John left the Sandcastle in 2022 after 25 years.

Philip Welsh
Head of Tourism & Communications