



Blackpool Business Leadership Group

Business Partnerships Report – April 12, 2024

1. Visitor Economy Update

WELCOME TO THE SEASON OF '24!



A spectacular programme of shows, events and new attractions has been unveiled as Blackpool looks to cement its place as the UK's most popular seaside destination.

At its annual season launch, VisitBlackpool, Pleasure Beach Resort and other major players in the tourism economy showcased a huge programme of entertainment lined up for the year ahead.

The launch revealed another two-month extension to the autumn Illuminations season, a return of the hugely successful Christmas By The Sea festival, and millions of pounds of investment in free events and brand new family attractions including an IMAX cinema, an interactive museum of entertainment, an extension to the seafront tramway and a new four-star hotel.

New events for 2024 include an Elmer the elephant art trail, featuring 30 uniquely designed versions of the popular children's book character, and Blackpool Capital of Dance, a month-long festival celebrating the resort's status as the spiritual home of dance.

More details of some of the new attractions and events are included within this report.

ELMER'S BIG PARADE IS COMING TO TOWN



Final preparations are underway for the launch of the biggest public art trail that Blackpool has seen.

Starting on April 13, Elmer and 30 of his uniquely decorated friends will be placed around key landmarks, streets and open spaces across Blackpool to form a free, family-friendly walking trail.

Individually designed by selected artists, including Laurence Llewelyn-Bowen, (pictured above with his Elmer Elaganza design), the sculptures will remain in place until June 9. Later in June, the herd will be reunited for a special fund-raising auction.

The art trail, which is a collaboration between Brian House Children's Hospice, Wild In Art and Andersen Press, brings David McKee's popular children's character Elmer the Patchwork Elephant to life. Each of the large Elmer sculptures is being sponsored by a local business or organisation.

The trail also includes a herd of mini-Elmers designed and painted by local schools and youth organisations.

A full range of merchandise is available at the Elmer HQ and shop on Victoria Street alongside the Houndshell Shopping Centre (pictured right). There are also opportunities for volunteers to support the event by working in the shop or making regular checks on the Elmer sculptures along the trail. Details here:

<https://www.brianhouse.org.uk/elmerblackpool/corporate-trailblazer/>

Note: Details of how to download the bespoke app for Elmer's Big Parade Blackpool will be available at the BBLG meeting on Friday 12 April, along with a trail map showing the location of the sculptures.



CURTAINS UP FOR SHOWTOWN



Showtown, Blackpool's brand new museum of fun and entertainment, which celebrates the resort's glorious history as the UK home of popular entertainment, has opened its doors.

The museum, just off the Golden Mile, includes six interactive galleries featuring seaside, circus, magic, dance, shows, and the world-famous Illuminations.

The opening attracted significant media attention featuring on BBC Breakfast, The One Show, national media and magazines including Time Out and The Spectator.

Within Showtown, visitors can get up close and personal with the entertainers who helped put Blackpool on the map, including the comedians, dancers, acrobats and characters who turned the resort into the home of showbusiness.

Available from the official Showtown website, tickets cost £15 for adults and £11.50 for children. With tickets being valid for a whole year, visitors are welcome to return as many times as they like.

Blackpool residents who pay Council Tax to Blackpool Council will be able to get a free ticket, giving them and their family full access to the museum's exhibitions and events, as well as family-friendly facilities.

Discounted tickets are available for students, and seniors and carers can go free. Showtown is also offering free trips for local schools as part of its wider education and engagement programmes.

RED ARROWS RETURNING TO BLACKPOOL AIR SHOW WEEKEND



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

They will be joined on Saturday 10 and Sunday 11 August by the RAF Typhoon display team and the Battle of Britain Memorial Flight who are also confirmed for both days of the free event.

Last year, the Air Show was one of the region's biggest events, attracting an estimated 350,000 people to the Promenade over the two days.

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

To mark their 60th season, the team are returning to their trademark "Diamond Nine" formation with new manoeuvres and shapes.

The weekend show will also feature a whole host of aircraft with the full programme of civil and military aircraft to be confirmed in coming weeks.

To complement the aerial programme, there will be plenty to see and do on the ground with a wide range of stalls, attractions and food concessions in the Air Show Village between Central Pier and The Tower Festival Headland.

BLACKPOOL CAPITAL OF DANCE



Blackpool Tourism BID
Blackpool Tourism Business Improvement District



14 June - 14 July 2024

The world's first fringe festival dedicated to dance and movement

This brand new event will see the creation of the world's first fringe festival dedicated to dance and movement.

In this inaugural year, the event, which has been supported by Blackpool's Tourism Business Improvement District and numerous resort partners, will feature a month-long programme of live shows starting in June. It will include street performances, workshops and social dance ranging from ballroom through to ice dance, contemporary and hip-hop.

The ambition in future years is to create an event on the scale of the Edinburgh Festival, attracting a national and international audience to a place already recognised as the spiritual home of ballroom dancing through its unique association with Strictly Come Dancing.

NEW EVENT GUIDE

A new pocketsize Events Guide has been produced to mark the start of the 2024 tourism season in Blackpool.

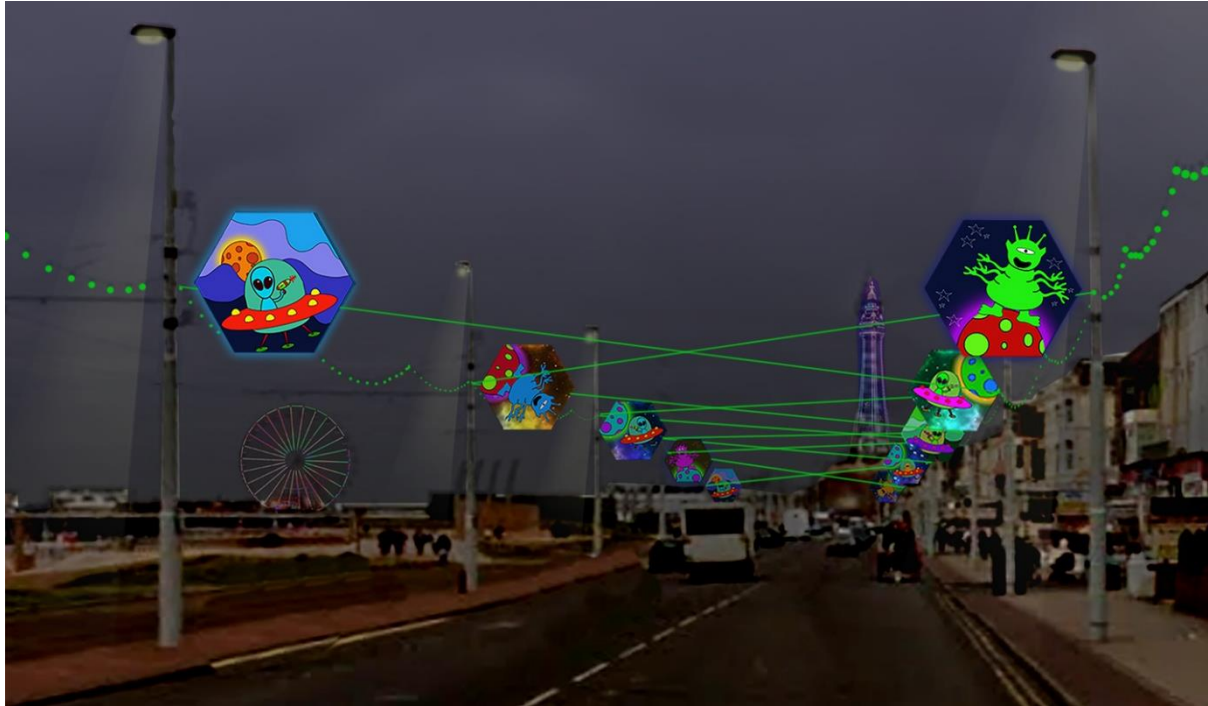
The guide, which covers April to December, is packed with hundreds of event listings ranging from West End musicals, pop concerts, dramas, pantos and variety shows at numerous venues including the Opera House, Grand Theatre, Viva, Funny Girls and the resort's three piers.

Copies of the guide can be picked up at the Tourist Information Centre on Central Promenade or it can be viewed online here:

https://issuu.com/visitblackpool/docs/blackpool_events_guide_2024



ILLUMINATIONS 2024



Blackpool Illuminations will shine from Friday 30 August 2024 until Sunday 5 January 2025 as the resort prepares for another two-month extension to the autumn and winter season.

The Illuminations extension will once again be complemented by the hugely successful Christmas By The Sea festival, which has dramatically increased visitor numbers since it was first introduced in 2021.

The Illuminations team are currently designing three new installations including one that makes a nod to the famous Aliens feature that adorned the Promenade a few years ago (see artist impression above).

One of this year's guest designers is Leigh Francis, better known as the comedian Keith Lemon, but who is also a very talented artist. He is currently working on potential designs for a new tableau.

The Switch-On event, which last year attracted a record crowd on the Promenade to watch Sophie Ellis-Bextor turn on the Illuminations, will be staged on the night of Friday 30 August and will once again be free to access.

NATIONAL AWARD NOMINATION

Blackpool Illuminations has been shortlisted as one of only six finalists in a category of the Group Travel & Leisure Awards for 2024.

The annual display is in the running to win the Best Event For Groups category. Winners will be announced at a ceremony in London at the end of June.

Readers of Group Travel & Leisure are being invited to vote for the overall winner and have until Sunday 21 April. If any BBLG members are involved in organising group travel or have contacts who do, please cast your vote or encourage others to do so! The voting link is here:

www.groupleisureandtravel.com/awards/vote

BLACKPOOL NAMED UK'S MOST POPULAR AND AFFORDABLE DESTINATION...

Blackpool has been crowned the most popular destination for a staycation in the UK this spring.

The national study, carried out by credit card brand, Aqua, looked at the average monthly number of Google searches for 50 towns and villages across the country, as well as the price of hotels and how popular each destination is on TikTok.

Blackpool topped the table with an average of 135,000 monthly Google searches with Bournemouth in second place with 90,500 and Scarborough in third with 49,500 searches.

Blackpool also generated almost a billion views on the TikTok platform, with Bournemouth again pushed into second place with 868m.

With an average hotel stay of £72.68 per night, Blackpool was the second cheapest in the study, beaten only by Paignton in Devon with an average price of £72.16.

The survey flagged up the numerous places where families could find affordable entertainment as well as highlighting Merlin's Big Ticket (now operating as Pick'n'Mix Pass) as a way of saving on attractions.

...AND ALSO THE FRIENDLIEST!

Blackpool has been named the friendliest large destination in the UK, according to a new study.

The town was ranked alongside other destinations - all of them cities - which are popular with visitors and compared with them from the viewpoint of people actually living in the place.

The survey was carried out by train company LNER, using the latest ONS (Office for National Statistics) data.

The survey found that Blackpool residents report high levels of life satisfaction, happiness and a sense of purpose in life.

It also revealed that Blackpool boasts the highest number of five-star rated restaurants and hotels, with 143.3 per 100,000 people.

The research analysed ONS data on the personal well-being of residents, and TripAdvisor's data on the level of hospitality in the 50 biggest towns and cities in the UK.

When all the stats were added up, Blackpool came top, with a score of 79.9 out of 100.

The table showed:

1. Blackpool (79.9/100)
2. Brighton (75)
3. York (71)
4. Newcastle (70)
5. Edinburgh (69.5)
6. Bath (68.8)
7. Chester (68.6)
8. St Albans (68.2)
9. Colchester (68.1)
10. Chelmsford (67.7)

NEW HOTELS

HOLIDAY INN OPENING DATE



Blackpool's new Holiday Inn and Marco's New York Italian restaurant will open to the public on May 1, it has been confirmed.

Situated opposite Blackpool North Station in the Talbot Gateway development, the four-star hotel is the latest in a series of "next generation" hotels to open in the resort.

Images released by RBH Hospitality Management give guests a glimpse of what they can expect when they come to stay or dine in the hotel. The hotel lobby is pictured right.



The ground floor restaurant is inspired by Marco Pierre White's Italian heritage and his love for New York, serving a mixture of Italian-inspired dishes and American classics including fresh pasta, handmade pizza and steaks.

The tramway extension, which will see trams move inland off the seafront for the first time in 60 years, is expected to be up and running by June. A newly-built subway, constructed beneath the hotel, will enable passengers to walk a short distance to and from the mainline railway station.

NEW PLANS FOR ST CHADS REPLACEMENT



New designs have been revealed for a £30m hotel on Blackpool Promenade.

The Singapore-based Fragrance Group wants to develop the hotel on the site of the former St Chads Hotel, which did not reopen post-COVID and was subsequently demolished last year.

The hotel - which would be located on a site between The Promenade, Woodfield Street, St Chad's Road and Bolton Street next door to the existing Lyndene Hotel would feature 143 bedrooms.

NEW DESIGNS FOR CONFERENCE CENTRE HOTEL



Updated plans have also been submitted for a potential new hotel opposite the Conference & Exhibition Centre. Outline planning permission was granted in June 2021 for the Alfred Street site, which is currently being used as a surface car park.

The plans include an enclosed bridge linking the proposed 160-room hotel to the conference centre.

The land is owned by Blackpool Council.

SOUTH SHORE HOLIDAY APARTMENTS PLAN



Revised plans have been put forward to convert a derelict building in South Shore into holiday apartments and shops (*artist impression of the proposed new development pictured above*).

Developers are seeking planning permission to demolish the former Hartes store on the corner of Bond Street and Waterloo Road and replace it with a block of 23 holiday apartments, with retail units on the ground floor and parking for 30 cars.

The building, which was also once a Woolworths store and is locally listed, has become increasingly run down following the closure of Hartes in 2019. A planning application to replace it with a car park was refused by Blackpool Council and turned down on appeal in 2022.

An independent planning inspector ruled a car park was not the right development, but said demolition was the only option for the building.

MERLIN PICK'N'MIX PASS

Merlin Blackpool has launched a new Pick'n'Mix pass offering savings of up to £57 per person across its range of visitor attractions.

The pass covers Merlin's eight attractions in the resort - Blackpool Tower Eye, Madame Tussauds Blackpool, Gruffalo & Friends Clubhouse, SEA LIFE Blackpool, The Circus, Blackpool Ballroom, Blackpool Dungeon, and Peter Rabbit Explore & Play



Visitors can select from three pass options - one day, two days or seven days. During their trip, they can visit all eight attractions as many times as they wish over their designated time period.

Adult prices start at £35 for a one-day pass up to £55 for a seven-day pass.

NEW NATIONAL ACCREDITATION SCHEME

The AA and VisitEngland have teamed up to modernise their assessment schemes and launch a new, free Visitor Ready scheme for the accommodation sector and the wider hospitality industry

The revised scheme is intended to futureproof the hospitality industry by simplifying the current quality standards.

The Visitor Ready scheme enables businesses in the UK hospitality, leisure, and tourism sectors to demonstrate their commitment to operating safely within current industry standards and legislation. It has been created to make compliance accessible for all.

The baseline accreditation helps businesses to know the key safety and cleanliness requirements that today's visitor expects. Businesses can check eligibility at [VisitorReady.com](https://www.visitorready.com), upload evidence, confirm key requirements and finish the application in just 20 minutes.

Approved businesses benefit from a secure wallet for key documents, automatic reminders when documents need to be renewed, and a digital badge for their marketing channels.

In addition, the AA and VisitEngland have streamlined their quality standards into three distinct categories: **Visitor Ready**, **Quality Assessed**, and **Quality Star Rated** (3 to 5 stars).

This simplification aims to provide enhanced clarity and understanding for businesses when deciding to be assessed, and for consumers to make an informed decision when choosing their next place to stay. To learn how your business can futureproof through the Visitor Ready Scheme, sign up at www.visitorready.com

For more information on the revision of the assessment schemes go to: www.ratedtrips.com/modernisation

Note: The Blackpool Approved visitor accommodation scheme, which is approved by VisitEngland and run by StayBlackpool and VisitBlackpool will continue to offer entry level accreditation to visitor accommodation businesses.

SIR DAVID ATTENBOROUGH GETS PLACE OF HONOUR

Beloved national treasure, biologist and broadcaster, Sir David Attenborough, has been immortalised in wax at Madame Tussauds Blackpool.

In recognition of the 97-year-old's on-screen animal-antics, Sir David's brand-new lifelike figure was joined by a Burmese python, tegu lizard, geckos, and tarantula, as it was unveiled at the Golden Mile attraction.

The new figure of Sir David, who is known for creating and narrating award-winning BBC wildlife films, Life On Earth, Planet Earth and Frozen Planet, is sporting the classic Attenborough look - a blue short-sleeved shirt, chinos, brown shoes and a watch.



Sir David's double can be viewed by visitors in a brand new area created by Madame Tussauds Blackpool especially for the figure.

SHANIA JOINS LYTHAM FESTIVAL LINE-UP



Global superstar, celebrated songwriter and the best-selling female country pop artist of all time **Shania Twain** is the fifth and final headliner to be revealed for TK Maxx Presents Lytham Festival 2024.

The five-time GRAMMY Award winner will head to the North West's largest music festival on **Thursday July 4**, days after performing in the Legends slot at Glastonbury.

She will be supported at Lytham by triple BRIT and Ivor Novello Award winner **Rag'n'Bone Man**. They join the already announced headliners:

Hozier (Wednesday 3 July); Courteeners (Friday 5 July); Madness (Saturday 6 July) and James (Sunday 7 July), along with special guests and support artists including US rock star **Brittany Howard**, pop icon **Rick Astley**, British music legend **Johnny Marr** and English pop-rock outfit **The Kooks**.

A GRAND LINE-UP!

Blackpool Grand Theatre has unveiled a spectacular line-up of shows and entertainment for the months ahead.

The programme includes productions of the outrageous musical parody **Unfortunate: The Untold Story of Ursula The Sea Witch**; the highly-acclaimed supernatural phenomenon, **2:22 A Ghost Story**; **Twelve Angry Men** and **The Boy At The Back Of The Class**.

The Grand has also announced that **Here You Come Again – The New Dolly Parton Musical** will play at the Grand Theatre from November 26-30 ahead of moving into London's West End and the multi award-winning musical **Dear Evan Hansen** will be staged in May next year as part of its first UK tour.



BLACKPOOL CUP

More than 400 youth football teams and over 12,500 attendees are taking part in this year's Blackpool Cup tournaments over the Easter and May Day bank holiday weekends.

Blackpool Council's Leisure Services team and VisitBlackpool are hosting the events in partnership with Euro-Sporting, Europe's largest international youth football tournament organiser.

The tournaments bring a major boost to the local economy, with around 10,000 bed nights booked in holiday accommodation over the Easter weekend alone.

Rated among the best in Europe, the Blackpool Cup tournaments showcase Blackpool's credentials as a family-friendly resort, capable of hosting major International sporting events.

Teams from eight countries across Europe, including Netherlands, France, Poland, Ireland and the four home nations together with more than 70 local teams are taking part in the tournaments with many of the matches played at the Common Edge Community Sports Village.

This year the Blackpool Cup is again supporting the NHS Blue Skies Hospital Funds.

VisitBlackpool and Blackpool Council have secured the Blackpool Cup tournaments until 2029, with a third tournament to be played over the late May bank holiday commencing in 2026.

NEW WELLBEING FESTIVAL

Winter Gardens Blackpool has launched its first-ever Wellbeing Festival.

The event will take place on Saturday 29 and Sunday 30 June in the Blackpool Conference & Exhibition Centre.

Over the two days, the centre will be dedicated to promoting health, wellness and lifestyle changes, with workshops and presentations by experts in the field as well as local businesses.

There will be various zones including fitness, nutrition and activities such as yoga, meditation and exercise sessions for all levels. Guest speakers include Blackpool's own champion boxer, Brian Rose.

Yoga, fitness, mindfulness, nutrition and relaxation techniques will be covered in a range of activities, workshops, and presentations.

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The Wellbeing Festival is a collaboration between the Winter Gardens Blackpool, Meet Blackpool, and Get Vocal, which provides a safe space for men to come together and talk in a non-judgmental environment.

POWER PLAYS WRITING FESTIVAL

A new writing festival has been launched by The Old Electric, Blackpool's newest theatre venue and will see an extensive programme of workshops, talks and performances throughout April, May, June and July.

Supported by Arts Council England funding, this festival is aimed at creating new writing for the stage and will add another dimension to what is a flourishing cultural offer across the resort.

Note: The Power Plays Writing Festival organisers will be unveiling their programme of activities at the BBLG meeting on Friday 12 April.

RETURN OF BLACKPOOL COMEDY FESTIVAL



Winter Gardens Blackpool has announced the return of the Blackpool Comedy Festival in association with several resort partners including Showtown and the Comedy Station.

Running from July 8-14, the festival promises a packed programme featuring some of the funniest comedians on the circuit.

The festival is a celebration of the rich cultural history of Blackpool's legacy of entertaining the masses in the golden age of variety through to providing a platform for today's stand-up superstars.

The programme includes afternoon and evening comedy shows, talks about some of the legendary stars of yesteryear, Q&A sessions, photographic exhibitions, storytelling and fun family workshops.

Comic legends such as Freddie Davies, whose career has spanned 50 years in showbusiness, is already confirmed alongside a host of award-winning comedians, including Gavin Webster, for a programme of short shows at the Old Electric theatre.

The programme features over 33 events taking place across Blackpool town centre, from intimate bars to the grandeur of the Winter Gardens. Headline acts will be announced shortly.

PLEASURE BEACH EUROVISION FAN ZONE

Pleasure Beach Resort is bringing a live Eurovision fan zone to Blackpool where UK's entrant, Olly Alexander, spent his childhood years.

Living behind the Pleasure Beach and visiting most days, the now actor, singer and activist is representing the country in the 2024 Eurovision Song Contest. Euro-enthusiasts and music lovers alike can cheer on Olly in the very place where it all began.

Shown live from Sweden on the big screens, the event kicks off at 7pm on Saturday May 11 and for £20 per person, guests can expect to experience, a larger-than-life host, a drag show and of course, watch the main event itself - all in the Paradise Room in the Casino Building.

After the Eurovision winners take their crowns, the Paradise Room will continue the party with a DJ and late night dancing until 1am. Tickets can be purchased through the [website](#).

CORAL ISLAND TRAM WRAP



Family entertainment centre, Coral Island, has unveiled a newly-wrapped tram.

The tram, with striking yellow livery and emblazoned with the Coral Island logo, was launched just ahead of the Easter holidays.

Over the next 12 months, it will primarily be used to promote Coral Island's Kids Eat Free offer.

The centre has also opened its new Coral Harbour Kitchen & Bar for the 2024 season, a pirate-themed food hall and street food market with a selection of cuisines from around the world.

BRITISH COUNTRY MUSIC FESTIVAL

Two-time Grammy award-winner Beth Nielsen Chapman, fellow American Randall King and the UK's Kezia Gill are the headlining singer-songwriters at this year's British Country Music Festival, at the Winter Gardens in Blackpool from August 30 to September 1. There will be over 100 artists on four different stages throughout the weekend.

The British Country Music Festival started in 2019, and was ground breaking as it broke with convention by launching to provide a platform primarily for established, emerging and grass roots UK singer-songwriters of contemporary country, Americana and roots music. This year, it will be the first country music festival that has placed a UK headliner alongside American performers.



Check out the festival website for updates to the line-up: www.britishcountrymusicfestival.com

BLACKPOOL ZOO AT THE DOUBLE

The results of the latest round of super-sized pregnancy testing at Blackpool Zoo has revealed that two elephants are expecting (big) little bundles of joy.



Mother and daughter duo, Noorjahan and Esha, are both due to give birth to the hugely anticipated babies in late 2024. The announcement by the zoo went viral on social media and was viewed by almost 10 million people!

The calves will be the first to be born at Blackpool Zoo in its 52-year history and, with the Asian elephant listed as endangered and numbers declining in the wild, the news is a massive boost for all involved in the European Ex Situ Programme (EEP) for the management of this endangered species.

Elephants have the longest gestation period of any mammal and Asian elephants are pregnant for 18-22 months. Newborn Asian elephant calves weigh approximately 100kg and are able to stand and walk within their first hour.

The journey towards Blackpool Zoo's momentous announcement started over a decade ago, when zoo management first looked at where a new elephant facility could be created within the zoo, to enable the team to provide the best possible care.

Following two years of discussions and preparations, plans were submitted to the local council in 2016 and ground broke on what was to become Project Elephant Base Camp six months later.

In autumn 2017 Kate the Asian elephant, who was one of the first animals to arrive at the zoo before it opened in 1972, moved into her new home. Tara arrived in February, followed by Minbu in March and then Noorjahan and Esha in September. Just over a year later, Emmett, the first male elephant ever to reside at Blackpool Zoo, made the journey from ZSL Whipsnade Zoo to complete the herd.

Project Elephant underpins Blackpool Zoo's ongoing commitment to the endangered Asian elephant. It focuses on a multi-faceted approach to the continuous long-term management, breeding and welfare needs of the zoo's elephants, with special focus on their physiological and psychological wellbeing. Base Camp represents the zoo's largest single investment.

2. Town Centre Update

OPENING OF BACKLOT CINEMA



The brand new Backlot Cinema & Diner has opened its doors, offering Lancashire's only **IMAX®** screen as part of a spectacular new cinematic experience.

Located alongside Houndshell Shopping Centre in the heart of Blackpool, the multi-screen cinema complex will play a pivotal role in the ongoing regeneration of the town centre.

The Backlot opened its doors ahead of the Easter holidays with an exciting line-up of new blockbuster releases including *Dune: Part Two*, *Ghostbusters: Frozen Empire* and *Bob Marley: One Love*.

As well as showing the latest releases, Backlot will also offer a diverse selection of films from arthouse titles, family favourites and timeless silver screen classics.

The cinema's state-of-the-art IMAX with Laser screen is one of the largest in the North West, standing at a gigantic 10.85m tall and 19.87m wide.



Designed to be a vibrant arts and entertainment hub, The Backlot is equipped with cutting-edge audio technology to host live gaming tournaments and corporate conferences. The cinema is complemented by a 100-seat bar and restaurant, offering an American-style diner experience.

The venue will stage other events, such as comedy nights, film festivals, diner and movie packages, and local community meetings

Note: There will be an opportunity for attendees at the BBLG meeting on April 12 to take a brief tour of the Backlot after the meeting ends.

TOWN CENTRE RETAIL SURVEY

The number of occupied units in Blackpool town centre remained at 478 in the latest survey carried out in February, whilst the total number of vacant units increased by three to 146 since last November. This increase in the overall number of ground floor units was a result of the partitioning of two units in the town centre since the previous survey.

Consequently, the occupancy rate decreased from 77% to 76.7%, whereas the vacancy rate increased from 23% to 23.4% over the three-month period. Another key reason for the latest occupancy rate downturn is a net reduction of two occupied units in the periphery town centre area.

Encouragingly since November, a number of businesses have occupied previously vacant units. These include: Frasers & Sports Direct, MooBoo (Houndshell); Assessment Centre (Albert Rd); Shickers Tavern (Birley St); SOAKO Cocktail Club, VAPE Joint (Clifton St); HAIFA (Talbot Rd) and San Marco's (Topping St).

The newly vacant units include: Tessuti and Scott's (Houndshell); Sports Direct (Bank Hey St); Fino (Church St); Bentley's Jewellers (Coronation St); Vegas Diner (Promenade) and Lohori (Church St).

February 2024: Occupied & Vacant Units

Area	Total Units ¹	Total Units		Rates (%)	
		Occupied	Vacant	Occupancy	Vacancy
Primary Shopping Area (Local Plan boundary based around Houndshell, Victoria St, Bank Hey St, Church St, Corporation St and Adelaide St West)	158	137	21	86.7%	13.3%
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)	464	372	92	80.2%	19.8%
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, Caunce St and the new Talbot Gateway area)	624	478	146	76.6%	23.4%
Periphery Town Centre Area (the Town Centre Boundary area excluding the units contained within the Core Retail Area)	160	106	54	66.3%	33.8%

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).

ST JOHNS SQUARE CONSULTATION

Following the implementation in June 2023 of the ongoing Experimental Traffic Regulation Order (ETRO) currently in place in St John's Square and the surrounding area, Blackpool Council is asking local residents and businesses for their opinion on closing this area to all traffic.

Under the existing ETRO, traffic has been restricted to enable this area to become a pedestrian-friendly zone.

Only buses, taxis and other authorised vehicles (such as emergency services) can access this area, with delivery vehicles also permitted between 6pm and 10:30am only.



The ETRO applies to the roads surrounding St John's Square including Cedar Square, Birley Street, Adelphi Street, Carter Street, part of Church Street (from St John's Square to Corporation Street) and part of Abingdon Street (from Church Street to Cheapside).

After extensive engagement with the local community between June 2023 and December 2023, Blackpool Council has reviewed the feedback, which showed a relatively high percentage of respondents would feel safer if this area was closed to all traffic, including taxis and buses.

The consultation period was subsequently extended until Tuesday 30 April to carry out further engagement, with particular focus on whether St John's Square and the surrounding area should be closed to all traffic outside of servicing hours.

If a traffic-free zone were implemented, the area would be closed to all vehicles (with the exception of authorised vehicles such as emergency services). Barriers and bollards would be locked between 10.30am and 6pm to prevent access.

Members of the public, businesses and all interested parties are invited to provide feedback and share their views, helping to ensure the future use of this area meets the needs of the town.

Focused engagement efforts will also continue with low-vision and other disability groups to ensure their experiences of accessing the area are fully considered.

Further details of the ETRO and how to be involved in the consultation process can be found at www.blackpool.gov.uk/StJohnsTraffic

Hard copies of the plans can be found in Blackpool's Family Hubs and libraries.

The current ETRO restrictions will remain in place and enforceable while further engagement with businesses and the community is carried out.

BE WHO YOU WANT TO BE



The first step in a number of planned improvements to develop a Be Who You Want To Be area in Blackpool town centre is underway.

Dickson Road has seen a colourful transformation, with two zebra crossings upgraded to include a multi-coloured rainbow design graphic underneath the traditional white stripes.

The junction of Dickson Road and Springfield Road has also seen a vibrant makeover, with rainbow crossings installed on the road at the four-way junction.

The crossing areas on the road are adorned with rainbow designs to help guide pedestrians safely across the busy road junction, along with the use of existing safety measures including tactile paving surfaces, crossing control push buttons and tactile cones on the crossing control boxes.

The colours in the crossings are those of the Progress Pride flag, which celebrates inclusivity for the LGBTQ+ community.

The new road markings form part of the Be Who You Want To Be action plan, which was launched in October last year by Blackpool Council and its partners including Blackpool North Shore Business Group, Renaissance Charity, LGBTQ+ Facebook Friends, hoteliers' group BAGS and Pride Blackpool.

This area is particularly important to the Council in terms of supporting equality, inclusion and celebrating diversity

Other themes within the action plan include safety and security, culture and heritage, young people, business community and health and wellbeing.

TRILOGY NIGHT CLUB AWARD



A town centre nightclub has become the first venue in Blackpool to receive a policing award.

Trilogy in Talbot Square was also given a five-star rating for its commitment to improving safety and security in the night-time economy.

It was assessed and accredited by the Licensing Security and Vulnerability Initiative (Licensing SAVI), which was developed at the request of the Home Office to support hospitality venues in providing safer and more secure venues, as well as preventing and reducing crime and demand on emergency services.

NEW TOWN CENTRE COFFEE SHOP AND BAR

Blackpool is set to get a new coffee and craft beer bar operated by the same company that runs the Shipwreck Brewhouse in neighbouring Cleveleys.

A new branch of the independent micropub is set to open in Talbot Road after an eight-year lease was agreed to take over empty premises on the ground floor of the Blackpool Council offices in Bickerstaffe Square.

It will offer barista coffee and food during the day and early evening, and then serve craft beers, wine, prosecco, cocktails and snacks during the evening. There will also be a craft beer bottle shop with beer supplied by a microbrewery based in Poulton.

An outside seating area will be created while the internal refit will include seating in the style of railway carriage booths.

3. General News

£90m HOUSING INTERVENTION

Blackpool is to receive £90m of funding to help turbocharge the work that has already been done to overhaul the town's housing market.

The funding from Homes England's Brownfield Infrastructure Land Fund programme will catalyse vital regeneration projects in some of the most deprived areas of inner Blackpool.

This new landmark investment, which forms part of a Levelling Up commitment to the town, will be used over the coming years to start to acquire property, facilitate masterplanning of key areas, develop further funding bids and help prepare for the development of new housing in Blackpool.

In March 2022, Blackpool was selected as one of 20 Levelling Up pilot areas in the country.

Blackpool Council initially received monies to scale up local enforcement teams to tackle rogue landlords and improve housing standards in Blackpool. At the same time, Homes England was supported to work with the Council and partners to prepare a business case for funding of a first phase of physical intervention to improve housing in the central area of Blackpool.

This allocation of £90m of Brownfield Infrastructure Land Funding has been secured following the completion and approval of that business plan.

A full public consultation will be launched later this year.

YOUTH SCHEME FUNDING SUCCESS

The Rank Foundation is celebrating with partners after being awarded £400,000 in National Lottery funding to help unemployed 18 to 25-year-olds in Blackpool to secure education, training or employment opportunities.

The partnership, including Freestyle Urban Soccer, Empowerment, Streetlife, Blackpool Football Club Community Trust, Groundwork, and Blackpool Coastal Housing will use the money to expand on successful work with young people in Claremont to three other inner Blackpool wards – Bloomfield, Talbot and Brunswick. The programme of support will also continue in Claremont.

The partnership supports young people aged 18 to 25, classed as economically inactive, to move towards work, education or training. To date they have reached 278 young people.

The varied support on offer through the partnership includes access to health & fitness services, referrals into college, help to find better accommodation, mental health support and suicide prevention.

Claremont was chosen because our research revealed there were over 400 unemployed young people concentrated in just 10 streets between Westminster Road and Dickson Road.

BLACKPOOL CENTRAL CAR PARK NEARS COMPLETION



The new Blackpool Central multi-storey car park is nearing completion in time for a pre-summer opening.

The seven-storey, 1300-space car park is the enabling phase of a planned £300m leisure development on the former Central Station site.

It will be operated by Blackpool Council and will include 25 electric car charging points, CCTV, and bicycle storage.

BLACKPOOL TO GET A SHARE OF HS2 REALLOCATION

Blackpool is to receive a £1.7m share as part of a major reallocation of funding from the cancelled northern legs of the HS2 rail line.

Around £4.7 billion from cancelling the high-speed routes is due to be handed to councils outside big cities in the Midlands and northern England, with councils responsible for allocating funds to specific projects.

From 2025, the Local Transport Fund (LTF) will finance a wide range of projects to improve the local transport connections that people rely on every day, particularly across towns, villages, and rural areas.

Over the next seven years from April 2025, local transport authorities (LTAs) in the North will receive £2.5 billion and those in the Midlands will receive £2.2 billion.

NEW EDITION OF PRIDE OF PLACE PROSPECTUS



The Blackpool Pride of Place Partnership, part of Business in the Community (BITC), The Prince's Responsible Business Network, has released the fourth edition of its Blackpool Town Prospectus to help respond to the current and future needs of the town.

The Blackpool Pride of Place Partnership, founded in 2017 by BITC, is a partnership of the private, public, and voluntary sectors working together to create long-term transformational change.

The prospectus, entitled *2030 Agenda for Action*, is a long-term strategic vision for Blackpool, which aims to position the town as the UK's 'Silicon Sands' with a thriving digital economy.

The new edition, which can be viewed at this link: bitc-place-blackpool-town-prospectus-mar2024.pdf was launched at a special event in the Tower Ballroom.

HELP TO GROW

UCLAN is launching a new wave of its Help To Grow programme for local businesses.

The Help to Grow programme is aimed at businesses ranging from between five and 249 employees, from any sector. The business must have been trading for over 12 months and the participant must be part of the Leadership team. A total of 90% of the course fee is funded by the Government, meaning businesses pay just £750 per person

The first cohort of local businesses has just completed the 12-week course that includes online and face-to-face sessions, 10 hours of one-to-one mentoring with industry experts as well as peer-to-peer sessions.

UCLAN has now announced it is welcoming another group of leaders from businesses with 5+ employees and registrations are now open. The course will run from April 15 to July 17, again with a mix of online and in-person sessions at UCLAN's Preston campus.

To find out more, email: helptogrow@uclan.ac.uk or use this link to: [book your place](#).

AIRPORT ENTERPRISE ZONE UPDATES

NEW ROAD AT BLACKPOOL BUSINESS PARK

Work towards building a new road at Blackpool Enterprise Zone will begin in April.

The new road will connect Common Edge Road with Blackpool Business Park on Amy Johnson Way, as well as widening Common Edge Road and improving the junction at School Road.

The £18.5m project will reduce traffic congestion on the business park, as well as providing a new access for residents to reach Squires Gate Lane. It will also create 10.5 hectares of land for new businesses to move onto once complete.

George Cox & Sons will undertake the pre-construction works from April, including converting the former Jepson Way changing rooms to be used as a site compound. This work will take place off the main road and won't need any additional traffic management.

Construction of the new road is expected to follow shortly after. This will include additional lanes created on Common Edge to maintain two-way traffic while the new road and junction are built.

Given the nature of the road and other highways projects at Clifton Drive North and the new M55 link road, Blackpool Council is working alongside Fylde Council and Lancashire County Council will limit disruption where possible by conducting most of the works without the need for additional traffic lights.

Support to build the new access road at the Enterprise Zone has been provided through a £7.5m grant from HM Government Town Fund, which must be spent by March 2026.

The new link road would include active and green travel routes, along with sustainable drainage to improve biodiversity in the area.

For more information on the Blackpool Airport Enterprise Zone and to stay up to date with the programme, visit www.blackpoolez.com.

NEW RUGBY PITCH

A new community rugby pitch has officially opened in Blackpool.

The floodlit rugby pitch and training area at Common Edge Community Sports Village completes the £6m investment in the new facility.

To celebrate the launch of the new pitch, Wigan Warriors brought the Super League trophy to a training session of Blackpool Scorpions, to help inspire the next generation of rugby players.

As well as being available to hire by the community, the pitch will provide a new home for Blackpool Scorpions Rugby League team for the new season in North West Men's League Division Three, with the pitch and changing rooms being used by the men's, women's and junior teams for training and matches.

As well as the rugby pitch and training area, Common Edge Community Sports Village includes 14 new grass football pitches, along with a full sized 3G football pitch and sports pavilion. 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 and new access road to the sports village has also been completed as part of the works.

The pitches and changing rooms are now available to hire via www.activeblackpool.com.

PRESTON NEW ROAD IMPROVEMENT SCHEME



As part of the ongoing efforts to upkeep the local road networks, Blackpool Council has carried out essential road improvement works on a section of Preston New Road.

Using the latest technology, the road improvements are part of the Council's Project Amber scheme, which uses innovative methods to fix local roads in a faster way whilst also giving longer-lasting results.

Project Amber aims to repair the roads at a preventative stage so action can be taken ahead of further deterioration, lowering overall repair costs and minimising disruption to residents by reducing repair time.

To minimise disruption to local road users, the road between Clifton Road and the M55 junction roundabout was resurfaced over a series of overnight works by contractor Multipave.

Works were completed on both the north and southbound carriageways and included a full replacement of the aged and dilapidated road surface, as well as localised areas of deeper repairs around the Clifton Road junction.

TINA REDFORD SAYS FAREWELL TO LEFTCOAST

Tina Redford is stepping down as Artistic Director of LeftCoast.

Tina has been part of the LeftCoast team for more than seven years, delivering a range of ground-breaking arts and cultural projects across Blackpool and steering the company through COVID and the changing social and cultural landscape that followed.

To ensure the ongoing ambition, quality and creativity of LeftCoast's work, team members Helen Jones and Laura Jamieson will lead the company through its current Arts Council England funding phases (from April 2024 to March 2026) as joint directors. Helen will step into the role of Operations Director and Laura will become Artistic Director.

4. Congratulations to...

OUR LANCASHIRE TOURISM AWARD WINNERS

Blackpool had a strong representation in the Lancashire Tourism Awards, securing wins in four categories.

The event, staged by Marketing Lancashire at the King George's Hall in Blackburn, saw these local winners honoured:

Tourism & Hospitality Student Of The Year:

Kirsty Helme, a FDQ L3 Diploma in Professional Bakery student from Blackpool and the Fylde College.

Business Events Venue

Winter Gardens Blackpool

Resilience & Innovation

Blackpool Transport Service Ltd

The Judges' Award (*selected from all of this year's finalists for special recognition*)

Hotel Sheraton, Blackpool

Philip Welsh
Head of Tourism & Communications