



Blackpool Business Leadership Group

Business Partnerships Report – May 31, 2024

1. Visitor Economy Update

SWITCH-ON 2024

VisitBlackpool has joined forces with one of the UK's largest media companies to deliver this year's Illuminations Switch-On event.

The free event on the night of Friday 30 August will be staged in association with Hits Radio, one of the leading networks owned by Bauer Media.

The celebration, which will be held on the Tower Festival Headland, will once again be freely accessible to the public with no tickets required.

Last year's event, which marked a return to the outdoors after three years of being staged indoors due to pandemic restrictions, attracted a record crowd of 80,000 on to the seafront to watch Sophie Ellis-Bextor pull the famous switch.

This year's show will start with a Blackpool Introduces session featuring some of the best of Blackpool's local music talent.

That will be followed by the main event, a two-hour show hosted by Hits Radio Breakfast Show presenters, Leanne and Joel (pictured right) and featuring a line-up of some top music talent.

The show will culminate in the iconic Switch-On moment when a celebrity will pull the switch to trigger four months of Illuminations.

More details on the live entertainment programme and, of course, the identity of who will switch on this year's Illuminations will be revealed in the coming weeks.

Earlier this year, it was announced that the Illuminations would once again be extended by two months, running nightly until January 5, 2025.



BLACKPOOL DANCE FESTIVAL BACK IN TOWN

Around 25,000 visitors have descended on Blackpool for the annual international dance festival.

Held at the town's iconic Winter Gardens and in its 98th year, the festival welcomes over 24,000 audience members watching the 2,000 official competitors.

With 3000 dances performed over 13 days, more than 50 countries are represented in the categories of Ballroom and Latin American dancing.

It is estimated that the festival generates around £6m of economic impact for the town.

The Winter Gardens Empress Ballroom is the largest in the UK and since 2023 an exact replica of the ballroom's dancefloor (34m x 14m) has been temporarily erected within the Winter Garden complex for practice use ahead of the competitive performances.

To mark the start of this year's Dance Festival BBC North West Tonight reported on the economic benefits it brings to Blackpool.



BLACKPOOL CENTRAL CAR PARK OPENS

The new Blackpool Central multi-storey car park has opened its doors ahead of the late May school holidays.

The lower floors of the car park were opened up initially to allow for testing of a new ticketing system which works via Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR).

All of the floors should be operational by mid-June.

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



The car park is being operated by Blackpool Council and includes 25 electric car charging points, CCTV, and bicycle storage.

HOTEL UPDATES

PLANS FOR ST CHADS REPLACEMENT APPROVED



A proposed £30m hotel on Blackpool Promenade has been given the go-ahead by town hall planners with developers pledging to start work as soon as possible.

The application by Singapore-based Fragrance Group for a 143-bedroom hotel was unanimously approved by Blackpool Council's planning committee.

It is set to be built between Woodfield Road, St Chad's Road and Bolton Street.

The site currently lies empty after the original St Chad's Hotel was demolished in May last year.

Fragrance Group, which already operates Blackpool's Imperial and Lyndene hotels, has recently invested about £70m opening a Mercure Hotel and an Ibis Styles Hotel in Paignton, Devon.

TOP ACCOLADE FOR PLEASURE BEACH HOTELS

Two Blackpool hotels have been named among the best in the world in the TripAdvisor Travellers' Choice Awards 2024.

Both The Boulevard and Big Blue Hotel at Pleasure Beach Resort achieved a ranking of being in the top 10 per cent of listings on the travel review site.

The awards celebrate the highest-rated hotels in the world and are based on feedback from anyone who has visited the hotels and left an authentic, first-hand review on TripAdvisor over a 12-month period.



Last year, The Boulevard (pictured here) was named the Best Luxury Hotel in Northern Europe.

HOLIDAY INN OPEN FOR BUSINESS



The Holiday Inn Blackpool has opened up to its first guests - and Coronation Street star Jack P Shepherd was the first to walk through the doors

Jack, who has been coming to Blackpool since he was a child, was there to cut the official ribbon to signal the opening of the new 144-bedroom hotel and Marco's New York Italian restaurant in Talbot Gateway.

Jack joined staff from the hotel in the ribbon-cutting ceremony, including General Manager, Mark Winter.

The hotel and restaurant received almost 4,000 applications for the 70 roles available, with 97% of the jobs taken up by local people.

The hotel, managed by RBH Hospitality Management, is owned by Blackpool Council and forms part of the wider Talbot Gateway scheme.

APARTMENTS PLAN FOR HOTEL BLOCK



Blackpool Council has approved a pair of planning applications for apartments at either end of a crescent of buildings in the South Shore area.

The designs have been drawn up by David Cox Architects working with Smith & Love Planning Consultants and will be delivered by Coastway Ltd and Headlands Ltd.

At the northern end of the site, the first development will provide 49 apartments replacing the vacant Skye and Colwyn hotels on the corner of New South Promenade and Burlington Road West.

At the southern end of the crescent, the second development will replace the Headlands Hotel, providing 40 apartments on the corner of Harrowside West and New South Promenade.

The new one, two and three-bedroom living spaces form the next phase of the crescent's regeneration, following the creation of the Hampton By Hilton in 2016.

Designed with curved frontages, the proposed buildings on both sites provide a nod to the crescent, which dates back to 1926. Each apartment incorporates outside space either by a balcony or terrace, with penthouse living on the top floors.

SEASIDE AWARDS FOR BLACKPOOL BEACHES

Three of Blackpool's best-loved beaches have once again been granted Seaside Awards

The national awards, announced by Keep Britain Tidy, have rewarded Blackpool South, Blackpool Central, and Bispham beaches for their high standards of beach management, as well as their nearby facilities and water quality.

Blackpool has more than 1000 litter bins, including 250 large capacity bins on the Promenade alone. They are emptied daily under normal conditions, and collections are increased whenever there is good weather and high visitor numbers. Reminders are in place to prompt everyone to get rid of their rubbish in the nearest available bin or take it home with them.

Seaside Awards are aimed at improving the quality of England's coastline and promoting the country's best beaches.



SEA LIFE BEACH CLEAN

Around 350 volunteers turned up to support SEA LIFE Blackpool's biggest ever beach clean and helped remove more than 148 kilos of litter.

In just one hour, people attending the SEA LIFE Big Blackpool Beach Clean 2024 collected more rubbish from the 2.7 mile coastline than SEA LIFE Blackpool removed throughout 2023.

Local businesses and organisations across the resort lent their support to the initiative including the newly-opened Holiday Inn Blackpool, Hampton by Hilton, Blackpool Transport, Blackpool and The Fylde College, and Notarianni Ices.



SEA LIFE Blackpool is looking to create a lasting mural showcasing the waste which was collected on the beach.

IT'S SHOWTIME!

BETTY LEGS – NEW SHOW, NEW VENUE



Betty Legs Diamond has announced a brand new stage show for 2024.

Blackpool's leading lady is taking up a residency at Pleasure Beach Resort as she celebrates 30 years in showbiz.

Betty Legs Diamond will be hosting evenings of comedy, dance, and performance at the Paradise Room this summer, celebrating her glittering career as one of the UK's most iconic drag queens.

Joined on stage by a larger-than-life ensemble and Blackpool-based drag stars Nikky Rush and Angel Falls, The Betty Legs Diamond Show will take audiences on a journey through her 30-year career, as well as showcasing some never-before-seen numbers and skits.

Previously, Betty Legs Diamond was the headline star of Blackpool's famous drag show bar, Funny Girls, and remained so for the majority of her career. The character was created by Blackpool's Simon Green in between performing in shows at the Palace Theatre, London, while starring in the musical On Your Toes.

The new shows at Pleasure Beach will run on selected dates from May 25 to July 27.

ROCKY HORROR REVIVAL FOR JASON

Australian superstar Jason Donovan is heading to Blackpool in Richard O'Brien's legendary rock 'n' roll musical, The Rocky Horror Show, this November as part of a new world tour.

The legendary performer reprises his iconic role as the captivating Frank-n-Furter across the UK, following a sold-out Australian Tour in 2024. He will appear in a week-long run at the Winter Gardens from November 18-23.



Following the success of the inaugural Blackpool Comedy Festival in 2019, it is to return to Blackpool this summer.

Hosted by some of the best-known faces from the UK comedy circuit, the festival is a collaboration between Jason Manford's Comedy Club, the Winter Gardens and Blackpool's new museum of popular entertainment, Showtown.

A full programme of shows and comedy entertainment will be staged at various venues across the resort from July 8-14.

One of the highlights will be a show at the Winter Gardens by Manford and friends on Saturday 13 July when he will be joined by Paul Sinha, Dara O'Briain and Kiri Pritchard-McLean.

The second festival planned for the summer of 2020 was stopped in its tracks when the COVID pandemic hit and it had to be cancelled as the country went into lockdown.

Now that it's firmly back on the map, the festival is planned to become a regular fixture on the Blackpool calendar. The full line-up of events at the Blackpool Comedy Festival can be found at bplcomedyfest.co.uk

HEADING TO BLACKPOOL IN 2025

The celebrated production of C.S. Lewis' *The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe* is coming to Blackpool in 2025 as part of a major UK tour. It will be at the Winter Gardens from July 29 to August 2.

C.S. Lewis' book was first published in October 1950. Since then, over 85 million copies in 60 languages have been sold. It is one of the top ten best-selling books of all time. The stage adaptation of Lewis' iconic book enjoyed a hugely successful, critically-acclaimed London run in 2022/3.



PLEASURE BEACH PANTO NOMINATION

The UK Pantomime Association (UKPA) has announced that Pleasure Beach Resort has been nominated for the Best Ensemble category at the 2024 awards, for their performance of *Beauty & The Beast* at the park's own theatre, The Globe, last Christmas.

The 11-strong team is hoping to scoop the award at this year's ceremony, which will take place on Tuesday 18 June in Guildford.

This year's production of *Aladdin* will see the talented ensemble return to the stage between November 23 and December 24.

ALISON COMES FACE TO FACE WITH ALISON!



TV presenter Alison Hammond was left astounded when she came face-to-face, live on air, with her new Madame Tussauds Blackpool wax figure as she presented an episode of This Morning alongside co-host Dermot O'Leary.

Alison's new figure came to fruition after Merlin Blackpool's Kyle Woodcock asked the presenter live on This Morning whether she would like to be immortalised in wax.

Fans have the opportunity to get up close and personal with Alison's wax figure now it has taken up residence at Madame Tussauds Blackpool.

A WELCOME CONTRIBUTION!

A Blackpool businessman has made a £2,000 donation to the Illuminations in recognition of the positive economic impact that the annual event brings to the resort each year.

Steve Hoddy, Managing Director of Bispham and Cleveleys Kitchens Ltd, visited Lightworks, the Illuminations' manufacturing facility at Blackpool Airport, to hand over the donation.



Steve (pictured right with Illuminations Manager Richard Williams), runs his main business at the northern gateway to the annual display. He urged other businesses to follow suit so that the two-month extension to the Illuminations season, which was introduced post-COVID, could remain in future. Online contributions to the Blackpool Illuminations can be made [here](#).

2. Town Centre Update

TALBOT GATEWAY REGENERATION UPDATES

TRAMWAY EXTENSION



After a £23m investment, Blackpool's new extended tramway is only weeks away from taking its first passengers.

On Wednesday June 12, the first passenger tram will travel from Blackpool Transport's Starr Gate tram depot at Squires Gate to the new terminus adjacent to Blackpool North Train Station.

Fylde Coast residents have been invited to enter a draw to be in with a chance of travelling on the first tram along the new tram track extension. It will be the first passenger tram to go along Talbot Road since 1963.

The first regular trams taking fare-paying passengers will start on Sunday 16 June with details of routes and timings available nearer the time. There will also be limited tickets available on special tram tours on the 13, 14 and 15 June. Visit www.blackpooltransport.com for more information.

Investment in the tramway extension has been made possible with funding from Lancashire's Growth Deal funding and Blackpool Council.

MULTIVERSITY PLANS APPROVED



Planners have approved a new £65m education campus in the heart of Blackpool.

Aimed at plugging the town's skills and productivity gap, the 350,000 sq ft Multiversity would offer courses in a range of emerging disciplines including automation, Artificial Intelligence, and sustainability.

It will be built off Cookson Street close to Blackpool North train station as part of the wider £350m Talbot Gateway regeneration scheme.

Council planners approved an application for the clearance of an area involving 59 homes and an outline application for three buildings on the site.

The campus will be built in two phases, with the first phase being a three to five-storey block to be occupied by Blackpool and the Fylde College in collaboration with Lancaster University.



Phase Two comprises two buildings that could also be used by the College, or used as office space.

The Council has received £9m from the Town Deal towards assembling the site, and £40m from the Government's Levelling Up fund towards the building of the campus, which is expected to be leased to the College from mid-2026, bringing up to 3,000 students into the area.

NEW HOME FOR THEATRE COLLECTIVE

A former dessert parlour in Blackpool town centre looks set for a new lease of life as a base for drama students as part of continuing regeneration in Talbot Gateway.

Blackpool Council has agreed a 10-year lease with the Blackpool Theatre Collective Ltd to take over ground floor space in its Bickerstaffe House offices. The unit has been empty since January 2023 and had previously operated as Sprinkles, a dessert parlour serving refreshments including pancakes and ice cream.

The new occupant will use the space in Bickerstaffe Square to operate an independent, Government-funded BTEC qualification for 16 to 19-year-old students in musical theatre.

The operators have over 20 years of experience teaching and examining for the International Dance Teachers Association.

Prospective students audition for a place and it is hoped to attract between 15 and 20 students in the first year of operation (due to start in September), and 30 students in the second year.

£500k BOOST FOR TOWN CENTRE STREETS

Blackpool has been awarded £500k from the High Street Accelerator pilot fund.

The money has been awarded to Blackpool Council to develop an outdoor, accessible green space around the periphery of Central Library and the Grundy Art Gallery on the junction of Queen Street and Abingdon Street.

The western part of Queen Street has a boulevard-like streetscape, but focuses on the night-time economy. With this in mind, proposals for this part of the street would include planting above ground level, to allow for them to be more secure, and to be maintained more easily.

The engagement of businesses within the High Street Accelerator pilot will provide an opportunity for business owners and managers to support the improvements to greening in the area, and take ownership of some elements.

The plan also looks to create green infrastructure that is mobile and can be 'adopted' by businesses, who will provide the day-to-day maintenance of the planting, as well as moving the planters indoors outside business hours for security, and also to provide protection from adverse weather conditions when required.

Where possible, planting will be refreshed using existing planters that will also be added to within the area. How the area is used, both during the daytime and at night, as well as weather conditions, will be considered before any planting is carried out.

ABINGDON ST MARKET 1ST BIRTHDAY



Abingdon Street Market's Food Hall has reached its first year of trading.

Since it opened in May 2023, the food hall has made a significant impact on the town centre, with six eateries, two bars and an on-site coffee shop all under one roof.

Blackpool Council used £3.6m from the Getting Building Fund to purchase the historic market building, carrying out a full internal refurbishment prior to its opening last year.

The opening of the food hall and retail area, the latter of which launched in November 2023, forms part of a much wider plan to regenerate Blackpool town centre, with aims to boost the economy, create jobs and provide more things to see and do.

The team behind the operations of the market, The Little Blackpool Leisure Company, have worked hard to produce a successful venue with a wide-ranging offer.

Delivering a diverse and successful events programme - with over 300 having taken place in the first year alone, including a range of craft and skill workshops, live music and DJ events, makers markets and themed fairs – the market has fast become a popular venue on the Blackpool map.

The food and beverage offer has seen great success, with an impressive 730,000 food orders made across the dining options since the launch.

If you are interested in learning more about trading/general opportunities available at Abingdon Street Market, please contact Little Blackpool Leisure Limited via this link:

www.abingdonstreet.market

EMPRESS BALLROOM RESTORATION



The Winter Gardens' iconic Empress Ballroom reached a significant milestone when the final two chandeliers were winched back into place ahead of this year's Dance Festival.

This restoration effort has been a testament to the craftsmanship of the Blackpool-based Chelsom Lighting team, who meticulously stripped, cleaned, and re-wired each of the chandeliers.

The project cost over £34,000 and involved a detailed renovation process. Each crystal was stripped and rebuilt before the chandeliers were installed with new winches in the ballroom roof void.

This is the first time since 2017 that all 12 chandeliers in the ballroom have been restored to their original grandeur and made fully operational to once again illuminate the magnificent space.

The chandeliers, which date back to the period between the first and second world wars, replaced the original three enormous 'bag' chandeliers.

The original fixtures were likely removed to adapt the ballroom for wartime efforts, when the room served as a space for assembling and testing gas bags for airships.

TOWN CENTRE OCCUPANCY RATES

The number of occupied units in the town centre increased by six to 484 in the latest survey, whilst the total number of vacant units has decreased by one to 145 since February 2024.

As a result, the survey, carried out in May, showed the occupancy rate increased from 76.6% to 76.9%, whereas the vacancy rate decreased from 23.4% to 23.1% over the three-month period.

Encouragingly since February, a number of businesses have occupied previously vacant units. These include: Elmer HQ (Victoria St); Blackpool Souvenir King (Bank Hey St); Joe Barlow, Jawa Unique Toys (Birley St); Nook Wine Room & Terrace (Cheapside); Menkind United (Abingdon St); Ocean King (Talbot Rd); H2O (Talbot Sq); Pickwick Café (Deansgate); Last Light (Edward St); Philly's, Mama L's (Church St); The Tramway Bakery, Blackpool Discount Furniture & Beds, Selenite Gifts & Crystals, Jeananns' Bags n Gifts and Claytons (Topping St).

The newly-vacant units include: Leading Labels, Lids (Houndshill); The Body Shop, Hays Travel (Victoria St); Joe Barlow (Corporation St); Persian International Food (Abingdon St); Jawa Unique Toys, Marigolds, Jim's Vinyls, Think Big, Lingerie Lounge and Jadore Hair Salon (Church St); Pickwick Café (Deansgate) and Pastaways (Topping St).

Pickwick Café and Joe Barlow have relocated to alternative units in the town centre over the last three months.

May 2024: Occupied & Vacant Units

Area	Total Units ¹	Total Units		Rates (%)	
		Occupied	Vacant	Occupancy	Vacancy
Primary Shopping Area (Local Plan boundary based around Houndshill, Victoria St, Bank Hey St, Church St, Corporation St and Adelaide St West)	162	137	25	84.6%	15.4%
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)	470	385	85	81.9%	18.1%
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)	629	484	145	76.9%	23.1%
Periphery Town Centre Area (the Town Centre Boundary area excluding the units contained within the Core Retail Area)	159	99	60	62.3%	37.7%

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).

GRAND THEATRE £450k AWARD

Blackpool Grand Theatre is to benefit from a share of £24.2m through Arts Council England's Capital Investment Programme.

The Grand has been awarded £450,000 from the Arts Council to repair the Grade II* listed building's stonework, replace and repoint damaged brickwork, restore the Victorian iron rainwater goods, and replace large areas of slate and lead on the two acres of roof.

This will ensure the safety of the building and allow audiences and visitors to access parts of the theatre that have previously been inaccessible for some years.

This marks the first phase of funding towards a £15m Capital Development Plan that will futureproof the theatre, enrich Church Street and improve the experience of customers and visiting companies alike.



..AND ANOTHER ACCOLADE FOR THE GRAND TEAM

The Grand Theatre team is celebrating after winning the Hearts & Minds Award at the Northern Cultural Education Awards.

The awards, hosted by Curious Minds, celebrate arts, culture, and creativity for young people, in and out of school.

This particular award recognised Blackpool Grand's continuing success in delivering transformational opportunities for children, families, and young people through the delivery of the nationally recognised Story-Led Resilience programme.

Nominations were received from across the north of England, with over 160 submissions received across eight award categories.

3. General News

ELMER'S FAREWELL WEEKEND



Photo by Claire Griffiths Photography

Tickets to see all of the sculptures in Elmer's Big Parade Blackpool in one place are now on sale.

Brian House Children's Hospice – the charity behind Elmer's Big Parade Blackpool – is hosting a Farewell Weekend for the art trail, bringing the whole herd of large and Young Elmers together for just two days.

The event will take place at Blackpool Tower's Fifth Floor venue on June 22 and 23 and tickets are now on sale online and in the Elmer HQ & Shop on Victoria Street, Blackpool.

It's the last time the public will see the 33 large sculptures inspired by David McKee's popular children's character, Elmer the Patchwork Elephant, as well as the 37 Young Elmer sculptures designed and painted by children at local schools and youth organisations.

Just days later, the large sculptures will be sold at auction, raising vital money for Brian House – the Fylde Coast's only children's hospice. All Young Elmers will be returned to their school or youth organisation as a lasting legacy of their involvement in what is Blackpool's first public art trail.

Tickets for the Farewell Weekend are available in the Elmer HQ & Shop and online at www.elmerblackpool.co.uk/events/farewell-event-2024

Elmer's Big Parade Blackpool runs until June 9.

NOTE: The Elmer team will give a detailed update on the success of the trail at the BBLG meeting on Friday 31 May.

AIRPORT EZ UPDATES

SILICON SANDS



A plan to make Blackpool the new home for a high-performance data centre campus has been launched at a major investment conference (*artist impression of the scheme above*)

Silicon Sands at Blackpool Airport Enterprise Zone was launched at UK REiF (UK's Real Estate Investment & Infrastructure Forum), which attracts over 11,000 property-related professionals, to a series of potential data centre developers and investors.

A combination of internet connectivity, renewable power supplies and available land should make Silicon Sands an attractive proposition for inward investment in the whole Fylde Coast.

Blackpool is home to the Celtix-Connect2 internet cable, connecting the town to New York, Dublin and northern Europe as part of the North Atlantic Loop, which carries up to one-third of the world's internet traffic.

Similar to how data centre clusters have been developed in Dublin and New York, Blackpool's access to the cable could create significant inward investment on the Fylde Coast, particularly given its low latency connectivity to the rest of Lancashire.

Across a 40-acre site north of Blackpool Airport, Silicon Sands will be anchored by renewably powered high performance data centres, while also offering development land for businesses which could benefit from direct access to a data centre, including high performance sectors such as Artificial Intelligence, telehealth, advanced manufacturing and gaming.

Feasibility studies are taking place to connect Silicon Sands to a district heat network, with waste heat from the data centres being re-used to heat the surrounding new businesses.

A first data centre is set to start construction next year on a cleared area of land and Blackpool Council is hosting an expression of interest for data centre developers and operators to build and run the site, which would also include a research and office facility on upper floors.

To develop the Silicon Sands site, work is progressing to relocate and rebuild old hangars and administration buildings at Blackpool Airport closer to the main runway.

NOTE: A presentation on the Silicon Sands project will be made at the BBLG meeting on May 31

DEVELOPER SOUGHT FOR AIRPORT SITE



Blackpool Council is seeking a development partner for 30,000 sqm of land at Blackpool Airport Enterprise Zone.

Work to build an £18m road to access the development plots has started and is expected to complete in late 2025, with the land released slightly earlier for construction.

Once the road is open, the site will be accessible by car and HGV just five minutes off the M55 motorway. It also sits next to Blackpool Airport, which services chartered and business jets.

The development plots, which could cater for units ranging from 15,000 sq ft to 75,000 sq ft, will be available from summer 2025 and will be targeted for industrial and warehouse use, specifically aimed at advanced manufacturing, energy, food and drink production and digital technology sectors.

Plots on the Eastern Gateway will be provided with bell mouths off the highway, landscaping and access to individual secondary substations, while the wider site offers sustainable cycleways and transport routes, as well as green drainage and landscaping.

Support to build the new access road at the Enterprise Zone has been provided through a £7.5m grant from HM Government Town Fund, while architectural support has been provided by Cassidy & Ashton and Wildes Consulting. The highway is being constructed by George Cox & Sons Ltd.

For more information on the Blackpool Airport Enterprise Zone, visit www.blackpoolez.com.

HOUSING REGENERATION

The first phase of a 20-year vision to transform housing in Blackpool's inner areas that will see massive regeneration of deprived neighbourhoods is underway.

Blackpool Council has agreed the first steps of the scheme after £90m of Government Levelling Up funding was announced in March this year.

A report to the Council Executive set out key activity that will take place over the next three years and the longer-term principles that will see transformational housing regeneration in the inner parts of Blackpool, providing residents with good quality, modern homes in desirable neighbourhoods.

It outlined an area of regeneration to the south of the town centre broadly between Chapel Street and Rigby Road, and the Promenade and Central Drive corridor.

These have been identified as the initial areas of focus for detailed scheme development, community engagement and property acquisitions in preparation for future development.

The report suggests that Blackpool Housing Company (BHC) should be the delivery partner for this housing regeneration work being the Council's wholly-owned housing regeneration organisation.

The report also acknowledges that although housing regeneration could commence in almost any part of the inner area of Blackpool, the initial focus would be within the central intervention area.

The next steps include:

- Undertaking detailed master-planning;
- Preparing for and commencing a programme of community engagement and consultation outlining the extent of the proposed work including details of a proposed first phase. It is anticipated that a first round of public consultation will take place later this year.
- Updating proposals for consideration and approval by the Council prior to lodging one or more planning applications

The report also suggests that further masterplanning and scheme preparation take place in the South Shore and Claremont areas in anticipation of further capital funding.

NEW YOUTH HUB

Plans for a £1.7m investment in new youth facilities in a deprived area of Blackpool have been approved.

A state-of-the-art centre for Blackpool Boys and Girls Club will be built on Gorton Street just outside the town centre.

Following the demolition of the existing sports barn, it will mean a much larger facility for young people, with an activity hall, canteen, shower and laundry room.

The scheme is being funded from a £1.7m grant from the Government's Youth Investment Fund.



D-DAY COMMEMORATION

The 80th anniversary of D-Day will be commemorated in Blackpool on Thursday 6 June.

Local residents and visitors are invited to take part in a series of events as the town comes together to honour the remarkable bravery and sacrifices of those who played a crucial role in the historic Allied invasion of Normandy during World War II.

The June 6 commemoration includes:



D-Day Service of Reflection

The Fylde Memorial Arboretum will host a special service of reflection commemorating the anniversary focusing on the historic events of that pivotal day. Arrivals at 10:15am for an 11am start at the Arboretum located on Moor Park Avenue.

Bells Across Blackpool

At 6.30pm, the chimes of local church and town bells will resound in remembrance as part of the 'Ringing out for Peace' initiative, to unite the nation in honouring the spirit of unity and peace.

"Shadows in the Sand" Art Event

The evening begins at 6.30pm with "Shadows in the Sand", a touching tribute to the heroes of World War II. Sand art stencils will be used to portray life-sized soldiers on the beach below the Tower Festival Headland. The images will gradually fade with the tide.

"Seaside Reflection" Mile-Walk

After "Shadows in the Sand," everyone is invited to join cadets and veterans for a one-mile walk of "Seaside Reflection". Starting at the Tower Festival Headland around 7pm, the walk will take place on the beach, heading to Central Pier, turning round and walking towards North Pier, and returning to the Headland for the Beacon Lighting ceremony. A piper will lead the walk, evoking memories of William (Bill) Millin's historic march during the D Day landings in Normandy 80 years ago.

Beacon of Peace

The commemorative event reaches its pinnacle at 9pm on the Tower Festival Headland when the International Tribute is read before the "Lighting of the Beacon of Peace" ceremony. A special guest will have the honour of lighting Blackpool Tower in red, white, and blue, while the Beacon of Peace – a powerful beam of light – will shine over the Irish Sea, symbolising the emergence of peace from the darkness of war.

For more information visit – www.visitblackpool.com/dday

SWEET BLACKPOOL!



Members of the Blackpool and Fylde Branch of the British Sugarcraft Guild (BSG) took the honours with a unique display based on Blackpool's iconic attractions.

Entitled "Wish You Were Here – A Postcard Map Of Glorious Blackpool", the display was awarded both Gold and Best In Class at the Sugarcraft North competition.

The display (*pictured above*), took three months to complete and included replicas of some of Blackpool's famous saucy postcards, The Blackpool Tower, Pleasure Beach, Winter Gardens, a heritage tram and a beach scene – all made from sugar in various forms.

It is estimated that more than 500 hours of work went into the project with Blackpool & The Fylde College allowing the use of one of its kitchens to help the team complete the project.

Philip Welsh
Head of Tourism & Communications