

Blackpool's Be Who you Want to Be

Chris Taylor-Hone

What is it?

A celebration of Blackpool's history, culture, people, businesses, and thriving LGBTQ+ community, Be Who You Want To Be embraces individuality and unique experiences. It recognises the people and businesses that make the area, while reminding its audience that Blackpool has long been ahead of the curve, with nods to the trailblazers and wayward spirits that came before them.

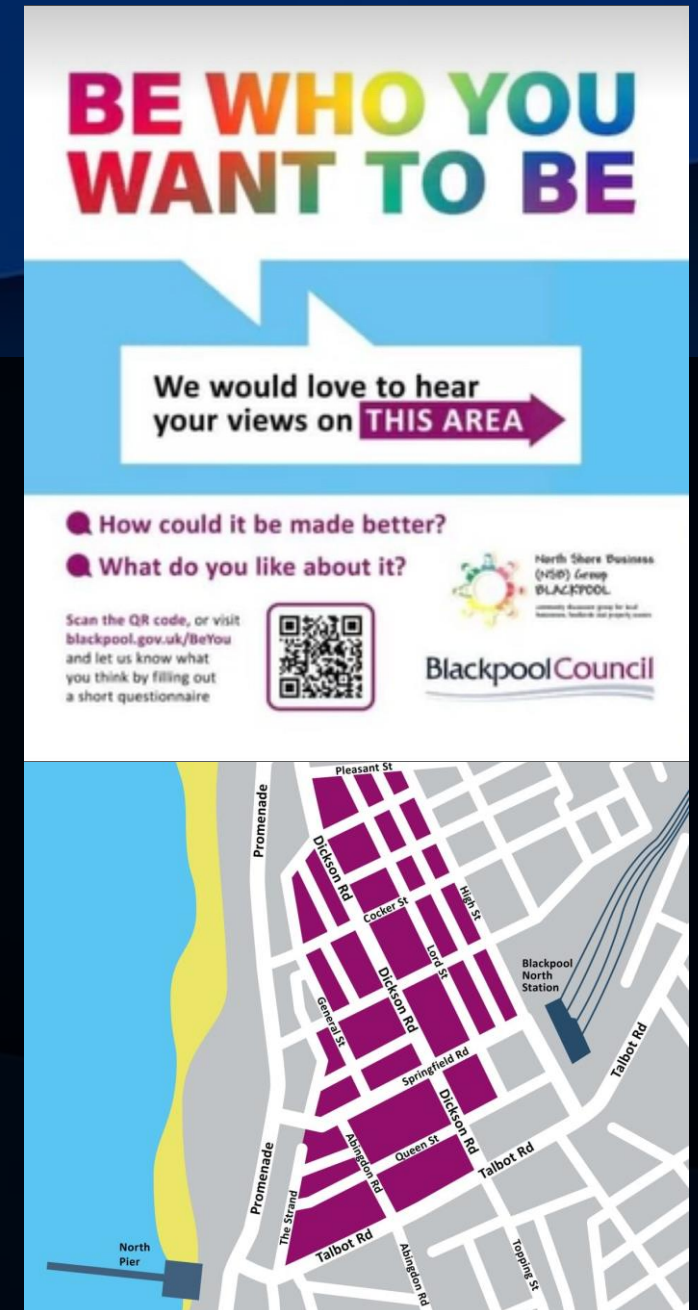
Timeline

We are on a long journey, which started officially in 2022, but in reality, the Blackpool LGBTQIA+ community have been on this journey since the early 1990s.



Public Consultation

- Strong response rate, with 269 responses.
- Around half of which are residents, others work in or visit area.
- 181 identified as members of the LGBTQIA+ community.
- 22 are business owners.
- Over 3000 comments submitted across several questions.
- Responses can be categorised into key themes: -
 - Safety concerns, particularly around the night time economy
 - A lacking 'sense of place'
 - Cultural development opportunities
 - Health & wellbeing
 - Young People
- 4• All of the above were taken into account when forming our Action Plan.



Action plan

Public Realm

Giving the area an identity.

Safety & Security

Making the area safer by a joint approach with police BID, Pubwatch and others.

Health & Wellbeing

Working with Public Health, NHS, Renaissance and various community wellbeing groups.

Culture, Arts, History & Heritage

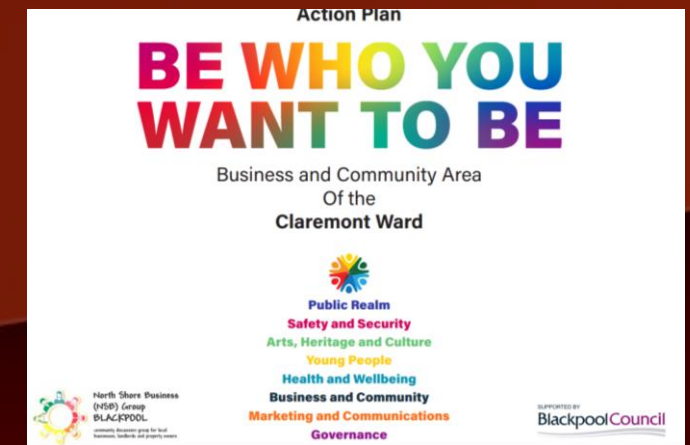
Working with many groups in Blackpool including Hive, the Grundy, House of Wingz, Old Electric, Aunty Social and several others. We are working with Hive in mounting a significant LGBTQ+ exhibition in June.

Young People

Working through the Council's Youth Service and its Partnership.

Investment

Underpins the entire project as the area has to attract a far wider range of investors if it is to be successful in the longer term.



Launch Events

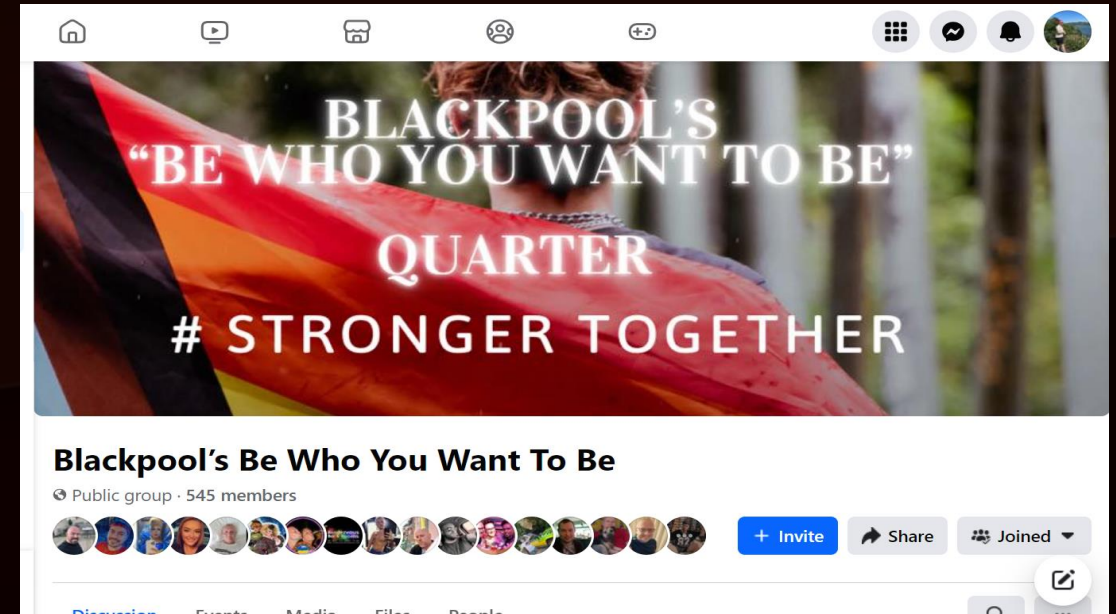


- Two events held at the Central Library and the Flying Handbag and attended by many members of the LGBTQ+ community along with press (television, radio & newspaper). This put the initiative into the public eye.



Community Involvement & Cohesion

- We have two Facebook pages, Blackpool Be Who You Want To Be with over 500 members for information and community events and Blackpool's Rainbow Quarter where businesses and venues can advertise.
- Two community events have been held so far, an introductory presentation followed by a less formal social.
- Charity afternoon scheduled for 6th June to raise money for our 2024 charity 'Fighting with Pride'.
- The initiative is community driven, supported by the Council and Police.
- It is a long term project and must have a gradual, but significant impact in the area to have full meaning and give the community confidence.



LGBTQ+ Identity and Equality (Public Realm)

- A large part of this is about inclusion and diversity and the acceptance of different lifestyles.
- Rainbow lights have been installed around lamp posts which promote this and also make the area safer. Many more are planned.
- Rainbow crossings have been laid, causing a significant backlash on Facebook, showing there is a lot more to do for before we can honestly say we have LGBTQ+ acceptance. The road markings were vandalised within 24 hours, which shows there is still a level of prejudice that is unacceptable.



Next Steps

- Action Plan leaders to work with their community groups, the council and supporting organisations to drive the plan forward, with appropriate pace.
- Continued community engagement.
- Branding launch in the coming weeks.
- A joint approach to make the night time economy safer.
- Increased support to make the community healthier, especially in terms of sexual health, mental health and isolation.

What can the BBLG Do to Help?

- We need active support from all in the room in helping us to promote LGBTQ+ equality. Many of you already do some great work, but we need to develop your efforts into a cohesive and joined up strategy.

Summary

The initiative is long term, possibly ongoing. Change must happen to the area, but it will need the support of everyone and commitment by the authorities.

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