



# Blackpool Business Leadership Group

Business Partnerships Report – September 27, 2024

## 1. Visitor Economy Update

### MEL B LIGHTS UP BLACKPOOL

Blackpool got an injection of Girl Power as Spice Girl Mel B pulled the switch to trigger four months of Illuminations.

The singer made a nostalgic return to the place where her career first started to light up the seafront at the end of a spectacular show, delivered in association with Hits Radio, and featuring Ella Henderson, the former Pussycat Doll, Kimberly Wyatt, Massaoke by Rock Weekend and Britain's Got Talent winner, Sydnie Christmas.



Around 60,000 people packed on to the Tower Festival Headland to watch Mel step on to the stage to pull the switch and join a star-studded list of national and international celebrities who have turned on the Illuminations down the years.

As a million lights lit up the six-mile display, a burst of fireworks exploded above The Blackpool Tower, accompanied by lasers and a projection show set to Mel's solo single, For Once In My Life.

Mel started her career as a 16-year-old dancer in the Mystique show at Blackpool Pleasure Beach before rising to fame as a member of the Spice Girls in which she was nicknamed Scary Spice. With more than 100 million records sold worldwide, they became the best-selling female group in history.

Earlier this year, she received an honorary doctorate from Leeds Beckett University, which recognised the star for her work with domestic abuse victims and her global influence as "a music icon". Mel – who is patron of Women's Aid – was made an MBE in the 2022 New Year Honours list for her charitable work.

The Switch-On celebrations started with some of Blackpool's brightest young musicians taking to the stage with a non-stop series of performances. The Upbeat Rock Academy, which organises rock music tuition for more than 300 students from across the Fylde Coast, presented Blackpool Introduces, a 90-minute showcase of local talent. They were joined by House of Wingz.

## NEW ILLUMINATIONS SEASON



This year's Illuminations display, which runs until January 5, features new designs by Laurence Llewelyn-Bowen, Leigh Francis (aka TV personality Keith Lemon) and students from Blackpool Sixth.

Entitled Disco Donkey Cavalcade, Laurence's installation (*pictured right*) is a celebration of one of Blackpool's iconic beach attractions, with 12 donkeys dressed in 70s-inspired swimwear parading on a 16ft high platform, beneath a giant ice cream topped with a disco ball!

Leigh Francis has designed a wildly imaginative and colourful tableau incorporating a 12ft tall dinosaur, space ship, astronaut, an airborne BMX bike, and Leigh himself flying through the skies towards The Blackpool Tower. The tableau (*pictured above*), which is the second to be created for the "Light Around The World" section at the northern end of the display, is based on his childhood memories.



Illuminations images by Sean Conboy

The Blackpool Sixth contribution is a new overhead roadway section that pays homage to the hugely popular Aliens feature that graced the Illuminations display several years ago. The new section has been designed by students and includes 10 individual illustrations of Alien life.

The display also includes a larger-than-life Buzz Wire arcade game in which visitors can test their skill and nerve on a specially designed installation reflecting Blackpool's famous skyline. Created by the Illuminations' Lightworks team, it is located on the Golden Mile.

New features in this year's display have been funded by UK Government via Blackpool's Town Deal.

## AIR SHOW WEEKEND



The annual Air Show Weekend once again attracted a huge crowd across both days.

Around 350,000 people visited to provide a major economic boost to the resort's tourism industry.

The Red Arrows display team opened the programme on the Saturday with a majestic entrance over The Blackpool Tower and then provided a spectacular closing finale to the programme on Sunday.

They were joined on both days by the RAF Typhoon display team, the Battle of Britain Memorial Flight, Wingwalkers and some of the world's most impressive civil and military aircraft.

The Red Arrows, who are celebrating their 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary year, also provided a replica jet within the Air Show village, giving members of the public a chance to sit in the cockpit.

The new Blackpool Central Multi-Storey Car Park was at full capacity on both days of the Air Show and total patronage on our car parks was 20 per cent higher than the corresponding weekend in 2023.

The Air Show for 2025 is provisionally scheduled to take place on Saturday 9 and Sunday 10 August.

## WORLD FIREWORKS



Credit: Gregg Wolstenholme Photography

The first two World Fireworks events have brought record crowds to the Tower Festival Headland.

The first event, on Saturday 7 September, saw the opening display by the team from Nakaja Art in Poland (*pictured above*).

Week two of the competition, on Saturday 21 September, saw the team from Pyroman Finland Ltd display their artistry. The company, established 20 years ago, is Finland's leading supplier of pyrotechnics and special effects.

The final event will take place on Saturday 5 October with a display by world-renowned Great Lakes Fireworks team from Michigan in the USA.

## PHOTOGRAPHER GREGG NOMINATED FOR TOP AWARD



Local photographer Gregg Wolstenholme, who captures many of Blackpool's major events through his remarkable drone photography, has been nominated for another national award.

This time it is for the image he took last year (*above*), which showed the enormous crowds that turned up for the 2023 Switch-On parade and show between Central and North Pier.

Gregg has been nominated in the Drone category in the British Photography Awards. You can vote for him using the following link:

[https://www.britishphotographyawards.org/2024-shortlist/shortlist/drone/switched-on/2ddc984a-d90e-44ca-bb75-cc9439040585?fbclid=IwY2xjawFXn5tleHRuA2FlbQlXMAABHb5in5QYnpHtr5CYsskTKISNbWdSEawR9Krpx7Kpgkp4smkSn369Q- bw\\_aem\\_09EzM6II4momZ86KnH1uSA](https://www.britishphotographyawards.org/2024-shortlist/shortlist/drone/switched-on/2ddc984a-d90e-44ca-bb75-cc9439040585?fbclid=IwY2xjawFXn5tleHRuA2FlbQlXMAABHb5in5QYnpHtr5CYsskTKISNbWdSEawR9Krpx7Kpgkp4smkSn369Q- bw_aem_09EzM6II4momZ86KnH1uSA)

The image was viewed by millions of people across social media and was featured by several national media organisations.

## PICTURE THAT!



Blackpool has been named as one of the top five Instagrammable beaches in the UK.

The survey, carried out by the NoDepositRewards guide, looked at 50 of the most popular beaches based on photos uploaded on to the Instagram social media site coupled with the number of posts with hashtags.

Durdle Door in Dorset took the top spot, with Blackpool in fourth place with more than 120,000 hashtagged posts.

## SUPER MOON

Earlier this month, another talented local photographer, Dave Nelson, captured this remarkable shot of a rare harvest supermoon rising above The Blackpool Tower.

A supermoon happens when the moon inches closer to Earth than usual, so it appears larger in the sky.

The moon appears to have an orange glow because of the effect of moonlight shining through the atmosphere.



Picture: Dave Nelson Photography

## LIGHTPOOL FESTIVAL



Blackpool is preparing to showcase another extraordinary festival of light over October half-term.

With the Illuminations season in full swing, the nine days between Friday 18 and Saturday 26 October, will see the addition of light installations from the UK, France, Finland and Spain as part of the highly-acclaimed Lightpool Festival.

The festival, supported by Arts Council England, will see the premiere of at least 15 new artworks never seen before in the UK as well as spellbinding projection shows and live performance including the return of the hugely popular Carnival Magic in the iconic Tower Ballroom.

Lightpool, which is free to attend, will see some of Blackpool's most iconic buildings and outdoor spaces transformed during a festival that has grown into one of the UK's biggest and best. Among this year's myriad of installations are:

### **Light Sphere** (*pictured above*)

A sculpture created by the super talented team at Studio Vertigo takes the form of a geodesic sphere measuring approximately 4m in diameter and constructed from 240 blown stainless steel triangular forms.

### **A Kind Of Magic**

Created by artist Severi Haapala from Finland, A Kind of Magic plays with optical illusion. It's a modern version of the 19th-century Pepper's Ghost illusion, a technique used in theatre, cinema, amusement parks and concerts, in which an object off-stage is projected so that it appears to be in front of the audience.

### **Warren Street**

This animation brings the magic of nature into unexpected places. Hundreds of light painting exposures are used to create a playful and lively piece where colourful rabbits move across the space and interact with each other.

**Note:** Festival Director Phil Holmes will give a detailed presentation at the September 27 meeting.

## HALLOWEEN MONSTER HUNT

28 October – 3 November 2024

# MONSTER HUNT

## BLACKPOOL

The monsters are coming!  
A giant inflatable trail is  
taking over Blackpool



[visitblackpool.com/monsterhunt](https://visitblackpool.com/monsterhunt)



 Funded by  
UK Government VISITBLACKPOOL

A collection of giant inflatable monsters is to take over Blackpool's rooftops this autumn.

The Monster Hunt between October 28 and November 3 will be one of the big attractions in the resort's extensive Halloween By The Sea celebrations.

The monsters will form a spectacular, family-friendly trail between the Golden Mile and nearby town centre throughout the day and during the evening when they will be illuminated to glow in the dark.

The monsters have been created by the renowned inflatable design company, Designs In Air, who have worked for major clients including Glastonbury, Cirque du Soleil and New York Aquarium.

Visitors will be able to download a Monster Hunt map or collect one at the Tourist Information Centre opposite The Blackpool Tower.

The event is fully funded and supported by the UK Government through the Shared Prosperity Fund.

Monster Hunt, which is a free event with no tickets required, is just one of the resort-wide Halloween activities scheduled in Blackpool. The Halloween By The Sea programme also includes:

Journey to Hell at Pleasure Beach Resort; Pumpkin Festival at Ridgeway Farm; Halloween Tails at Peter Rabbit Explore & Play; Circus of Horrors at The Globe; Sweeney Todd at the Winter Gardens; a spooky Halloween projection on the Tower building; and many more activities that will be revealed over the coming weeks.

## LYTHAM FESTIVAL 2025



Lytham Festival has announced its first three headline acts for the 2025 summer event.

Canadian/American singer, songwriter and musician, Alanis Morissette, a seven-time Grammy Award winner (*pictured above*), will perform on Friday 4 July, followed by global superstar Justin Timberlake on Saturday July 5 and a double headline bill on Sunday 6 July with rock icons Simple Minds and Texas.

Timberlake's show is only one of four outdoor concerts on his 2025 tour.

Details of the two remaining headliners on Wednesday 2 and Thursday 3 July will be revealed soon along with support acts. Individual tickets for Friday to Sunday go on sale at 8am Friday 27 September from [lythamfestival.com](https://lythamfestival.com) Five-day passes are on sale now.

### WINTER GARDENS SUMMER FESTIVALS

The Winter Gardens hosted several major events during the summer, each bringing significant economic impact to the visitor economy:

Rebellion, the quintessential punk and alternative music festival, drew a crowd of 34,000 attendees from across the world over four days. The annual event showcased more than 200 bands across six stages and also included panel discussions, film screenings and art exhibitions.

The UDO World Street Dance Championships marked its 19<sup>th</sup> year with 4,400 dancers from over 30 countries competing for world titles. The five-day event not only highlights competitive dance but also fosters cultural exchange and celebrates the diverse world of street dance, reinforcing Winter Gardens Blackpool's role as a central hub for international dance events.

### STAYBLACKPOOL OPEN DAY

StayBlackpool has announced that its annual Open Day will take place on Tuesday 8 April, 2025.

The event, which is a curtain-raiser for the new tourism season, is aimed at the accommodation and hospitality sectors across the Fylde Coast. Bookings are now being accepted for this event with a new book online facility: For more details, go to: [StayBlackpool Trade Show & Open Day](https://stayblackpooltradeandopenaday.co.uk) ([visitfyldecoast.info](https://visitfyldecoast.info))

## PLEASURE BEACH AWARD



Blackpool's Pleasure Beach Resort is ending its 2024 summer season on a high after scooping three awards at the UK Theme Park Awards.

The accolades included a Gold award in the Best Seaside Park category.

It was also presented with two Bronze awards in the Best Theme Park for Thrills category, and Best Ride Storytelling for Valhalla.

The awards were organised by ThemeParks-UK.com, an independent consumer guide to UK theme parks. The British public were able to vote for their favourite theme parks and the best rides and attractions, shows and events.

## SHOWTOWN ON SEASIDE BUCKET AND SPADE LIST

Blackpool's new museum of entertainment has won a place on this year's Seaside Heritage Network Bucket And Spade List.

The museum, which opened its doors earlier this year and which has just welcomed its 50,000<sup>th</sup> visitor, was one of 10 UK places and experiences chosen by a public vote.

Showtown's six galleries highlight the best of seaside, magic, circus, Illuminations, shows and dance drawing from Blackpool's unique history as the home of popular entertainment.



## **BRITAIN'S GOT TALENT HEADS TO BLACKPOOL**

The stars of tomorrow have the chance for TV fame when Britain's Got Talent auditions come to Blackpool in October.

The ITV talent show is coming to the Winter Gardens to search for acts for its next series. Successful acts will go on to audition in front of judges Simon Cowell, Amanda Holden, Alesha Dixon and Bruno Tonioli.

The last series of BGT saw Sydnie Christmas crowned the winner. The singer (*pictured right*) scooped the £250,000 prize, as well as a spot on the bill at the Royal Variety Performance. A few weeks ago, she appeared in the Blackpool Illuminations Switch-On concert in front of 60,000 people.

Performers wishing to follow in her footsteps can show off their talent at the Blackpool auditions between Tuesday, October 15, and Thursday, October 17.



## **BLACKPOOL CUP TOPS THE LEAGUE**

The Blackpool Cup Youth Soccer Tournaments have again been rated the best in Europe, outscoring almost 70 other tournaments.

Around 5,000 players representing 400 youth football teams took part in this year's Blackpool Cup tournaments over the Easter and May Day bank holiday weekends, staged in association with international tournament operators, Euro Sporting.

Participants are asked to rate everything from communication, to accommodation, resort offer, transport, playing venue, match schedule, and overall experience!

The Blackpool tournaments, sponsored by VisitBlackpool and Blackpool Council, received an overall rating of 94%.

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

The tournaments bring a major boost to the local economy, with family and friends swelling the overall numbers to around 12,500. That resulted in more than 36,000 bed nights booked in local holiday accommodation over the two weekends.

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

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.

## 2. Town Centre Update

### SECOND TOWN CENTRE OFFICE BLOCK APPROVED



Blackpool Council has approved plans for another office block in Talbot Gateway.

The six-storey development will be constructed on the site of the former Apollo 2000 store adjacent to Blackpool North railway station.

Expected to be home to more than 400 civil servants once completed, the 53,000 sq ft Blackpool office will be the second civil service hub built in the town.

Work on a 215,000 sq ft office on nearby King Street, which will be occupied by up to 3,000 civil servants, is nearing completion. Both offices were designed by Make Architects and form part of Blackpool Council's Talbot Gateway masterplan, which is being delivered by Muse.

A report to Blackpool's planning committee, which approved the scheme, stated that the latest office development "would deliver clear economic and social benefits by bringing approximately 410 workers into the town centre who would support local shops and services".

The site of the development, located close to Blackpool North train station within the Talbot Gateway regeneration zone, has been clear for several years following the demolition of the Apollo 2000 store.

Re-form is advising on landscape and Arup is the structural engineer.

## TOWN CENTRE OCCUPANCY

The August survey revealed a net increase of seven occupied units in Blackpool town centre compared to May 2024, bringing the overall total up to 490 and increasing the occupancy rate from 76.9% to 78.1%.

Conversely, the vacancy rate decreased from 23.1% to 21.9% over the three-month period. The latest occupancy rate upturn is largely due to a net increase of four occupied units in the primary shopping area, with an additional net increase of three occupied units in the outer core retail area.

Encouragingly since May, a number of businesses have occupied previously vacant units. These include: Mobiles and Vapes (Victoria St); Ramsdens (Corporation St); Eat Indian, Blackpool Bargains Discount Store, Vapedrop Convenience Store (Church St); ALT 3, Horizons Homecare (Birley St); The Reel Vegas (Bank Hey St); Coffee Americano, Little Gem Book Shack (Abingdon St); Jim's Vinyls and Sneaker Cleaner Blackpool (Topping St).

The newly vacant units include: Elmer HQ (Victoria St); John Anthoney, Amplifon (Clifton St); Zara Barbershop, Stolen Ragz (Abingdon St); Jessie's Ice Cream (Promenade) and Preloved Baby Shop (Topping St).

### August 2024: Occupied & Vacant Units

| Area                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | Total Units <sup>1</sup> | Total Units |        | Rates (%) |         |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|-------------|--------|-----------|---------|
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |                          | Occupied    | Vacant | Occupancy | Vacancy |
| <b>Primary Shopping Area</b> (Local Plan boundary based around Houndshell, Victoria St, Bank Hey St, Church St, Corporation St and Adelaide St West)                                                                                                                                      | 161                      | 140         | 21     | 87.0%     | 13.0%   |
| <b>Core Retail Area</b> (as above but also including Topping St, Queen St, Clifton St, Birley St, Market St, Talbot Rd, Abingdon St and Cedar Sq)                                                                                                                                         | 469                      | 391         | 78     | 83.4%     | 16.6%   |
| <b>Town Centre Boundary</b> – this relates to the Core Strategy found in the Local Plan but it excludes the Central Station site and Coral Island (as above but also including the Promenade, Springfield Rd, Dickson Rd, King St, Cookson St, Counce St and the new Talbot Gateway area) | 627                      | 490         | 137    | 78.1%     | 21.9%   |
| <b>Periphery Town Centre Area</b> (the Town Centre Boundary area excluding the units contained within the Core Retail Area)                                                                                                                                                               | 158                      | 99          | 59     | 62.7%     | 37.3%   |

<sup>1</sup> 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).

## COYOTE UGLY OPENING

A new bar is opening next month, bringing an established national operator into the night-time economy.

Coyote Ugly will replace Revolution, which closed its doors on Central Promenade in August as part of a rationalisation by the owners of the chain. In its place, comes a version of the New York saloon bar that inspired the hit 2000 film, Coyote Ugly.

It will be the eighth Coyote Ugly bar to open in the UK, with branches already operating in London, Liverpool, Bristol, Cardiff, Swansea and Birmingham.

## ST JOHN'S SQUARE



Traffic restrictions in St John's Square in Blackpool are to be made permanent following a successful trial.

It means private vehicles will continue to be banned from using the square with only buses, taxis and other authorised vehicles such as emergency vehicles allowed to travel through.

Blackpool Council says cameras could be introduced in the future to carry out enforcement of the rules. The restrictions are intended to make the square more pedestrian-friendly and encourage more events to be held there.

When the square opened in 2010 following a £4.7m investment, it was designed to be mainly traffic-free and a venue to hold outdoor events in.

### **GRUNDY AUTUMN PROGRAMME**

Blackpool's Grundy Art Gallery has announced a new autumn season with a programme of exhibitions and events that explore light and the moving image.

The programme, which opens on Saturday 28 September and runs until December 14, includes the prestigious exhibition Stim Cinema as part of its national tour, as well as celebrating works by Blackpool-based artists.

Among the local artists showing their work are Tony Heaton OBE, a disability rights artist and activist, and Garth Gratrix, whose neon work, Mummy's Boy, will remain over the entrance door of the gallery until the end of the autumn season.

The Grundy programme is focusing on the subject of light to align with both the extended Illuminations season and Lightpool Festival.

### 3. General News

#### DEVOLUTION DEAL FOR LANCASHIRE



Proposals to create a Combined County Authority (CCA) for Lancashire have passed a crucial stage after the Government signalled it was happy to proceed with the plan.

Jim McMahon OBE MP, Minister of State for Local Government and English Devolution, told the leaders of Lancashire County Council, Blackburn with Darwen Council and Blackpool Council, that the statutory tests to implement the proposal had been met. The Government now intends to bring the matter before Parliament in the coming weeks.

The Lancashire CCA aims to help address years of historically low investment in the area and provide a platform for accelerated growth.

It will provide a single body for the whole of Lancashire to champion its interests, deliver on local priorities and provide greater local accountability and decision-making powers.

In partnership with business and public service providers, including district councils, it aims to give Lancashire a stronger voice on the regional and national stage, ensuring greater benefit from funding and other opportunities.

The regulations will see the CCA receive powers to improve the integration of local transport and control of local transport functions, and the ability to exercise compulsory purchase powers to help drive regeneration.

The Combined County Authority will also receive the fully devolved Adult Education Budget from academic year 2026/2027, subject to readiness conditions.

When Parliamentary approval is secured, an initial £20m capital funding will be unlocked to support innovation-led growth and net zero ambitions across Lancashire, along with further powers and funding for adult education, transport, employment and skills.

An eight-week public consultation showed the majority of respondents supported the creation of the Lancashire CCA.

Whilst this Lancashire agreement does not include an elected mayor to lead the authority, the Government has advised it sees this as “the first step in Lancashire’s devolution journey” and it will seek further talks next autumn to explore next steps relating to governance and wider devolution.

## **ELMER RAISES £200,000**



Blackpool's first ever art trail has raised more than £200,000 for Brian House Children's Hospice.

Elmer's Big Parade, which featured 33 large sculptures inspired by David McKee's popular children's character, Elmer The Patchwork Elephant, attracted tens of thousands of people over several weeks earlier this year.

After the trail ended, the individually designed elephants were sold at auction. A herd of 37 smaller Elmers were returned to the schools and youth organisations that helped design them.

The Brian House charity, which organised the trail, estimates that the trail delivered around £14m of impact to Blackpool's economy.

## **FISHING SUSPENDED AT STANLEY PARK LAKE**

Fishing has been suspended at Stanley Park Lake with effect from Sunday 1 September.

The move follows growing concerns from park staff, Friends of Stanley Park and wildlife charities about the management of fishing on the lake, in particular instances of wildlife being entangled and harmed.

The temporary ban of fishing will be for a six-month period, in order to allow time for a comprehensive review of fishing on the lake to take place.

## GRANGE PARK SCHEME COMPLETED



Construction of 133 homes at Grange Park has been completed.

The development comprises 96 houses, seven bungalows, and 30 sheltered apartments.

In addition to the properties, the council estate has improved pedestrian and cycle access, as well as a children's playground.

The project, costing £20m, has been partially funded by Homes England and every property has been fitted with solar panels to improve the site's sustainability credentials.

Blackpool-based RP Tyson Construction was the contractor while the architect was Preston-based Cassidy + Ashton.

Air source heat pumps have also been installed in 30 of the homes with funding from the European Regional Development Fund.

Blackpool Coastal, a local housing association, manages around 5,000 properties in the area. Grange Park is the largest council estate in Blackpool, with homes mostly built in the 1940s and 1970s.

## BLACKPOOL AIRPORT & ENTERPRISE ZONE UPDATES



### AIRPORT DEVELOPMENT PLANS

Plans for a new office, security and small passenger handling building for Blackpool Airport have been submitted to Fylde Council.

The new offices would be built immediately behind the current buildings at the entrance to the airport off Squires Gate Lane.

The plans are part of Blackpool Council and Blackpool Airport's strategy to rebuild old airport infrastructure to make the airport more commercially successful and create new jobs on the Fylde Coast.

The current administration and security buildings are both well over 20 years old and are in need of modernising. The proposed new buildings would allow a combined service offering enhanced arrivals and departures area, as well as a larger security checkpoint to host new X-ray and scanning equipment recently purchased by the airport.

The passenger facility would allow the airport to grow the number of corporate aircraft, executive and charter flights as it can handle up to 45 passengers at a time.

Within the same building would be three offices and a meeting room for the airport senior leadership team.

Once demolished, the land on which the current administration building sits will combine with the recently demolished fire station and engineering yard to form the site of a first data centre demonstrator building as part of the Silicon Sands development.

Around 39,000 flights took off and landed at Blackpool Airport in 2023.

## **SOLAR FARM PLAN**

Initial proposals for a solar farm on land south of Blackpool Airport's main runway have also been submitted to Fylde Council.

The proposed 20MVA solar farm would allow the airport to generate its own renewable electricity, reducing energy bills and its carbon footprint, while also enabling Blackpool Council to reduce its overall net electricity consumption by up to 75%.

Additional renewable energy would also support plans for Silicon Sands, a high-performance data centre campus north of the current airfield.

Silicon Sands aims to create a series of renewably powered data centres to create quality jobs on the Fylde Coast. The development would also aim to promote carbon-friendly data centre practice, through use of liquid immersion cooling and reusing the waste energy in a district heat network.

The power generated from the solar farm will also help equip Blackpool Airport to support the next generation of sustainable hybrid/electric battery-powered aircraft.

A screening application for the solar farm has been submitted to Fylde Council, which could lead to it being operational by the latter end of the decade. That submission is the first stage of the planning process to determine whether an Environmental Impact Assessment is required. Residents living near the proposed development will be invited to see the plans in more detail in the coming weeks.

If approved, the solar farm would also support Blackpool Airport's plans to reduce its energy bills and make best use of unused and areas of land that are expensive to maintain.

This would mean the closure of the smaller 13/31 crosswind runway. Currently, that runway costs significantly more money to maintain than it generates in aeronautical and commercial revenue, with only 4% of flights using it in 2023.

A buffer zone of trees and landscaping would be designed around the southern edge of the solar farm where it meets properties around Leach Lane in St Annes.

Blackpool Airport is wholly owned by Blackpool Council, which purchased it in 2017, while the land sits within Fylde Council's boundary for planning purposes

## **NEW ROAD TAKES SHAPE**

The route of a new road on the Airport Enterprise Zone is now visible.

George Cox & Sons are building the road, which will connect Amy Johnson Way with Common Edge Road. It is due to open next year.

Current work has involved installing drainage either side of the current road and clearing land at the corner of School Road to create a widened junction. Traffic along Common Edge Road remains open in both directions.



## **HARTE'S BUILDING DEMOLITION**

The former Harte's store in Blackpool's South Shore is being demolished.

The former landmark building on the corner of Bond Street and Waterloo Road had become derelict since the store closed in 2019. A structural survey subsequently showed that it needed to be knocked down.

It originally opened in 1928 as Blackpool's second Woolworth's store before closing in 1994, with Harte's then occupying it for 25 years, incorporating their famous Christmas shop.

Plans have been put forward to develop a block of 23 holiday apartments on the site with retail on the ground floor and parking for up to 30 cars.

## **ARMED FORCES AWARD**

Blackpool Council has received the highest badge of honour in the Ministry of Defence's Employer Recognition Scheme Gold Award 2024.

The Council is one of 193 organisations recognised nationally by the UK Government for their support towards the armed forces community.

The Defence Employer Recognition Scheme Gold Award acknowledges the positive role that employers play in supporting defence and inspiring others to do the same. To win a gold, an organisation must demonstrate exceptional commitment to the armed forces community.

Blackpool Council has introduced and implemented a number of HR policies and other initiatives to be deemed an armed force friendly organisation.

These include the adoption of a policy to allow staff to take paid leave in order to fulfil their role as a reservist or adult cadet volunteer.

It has also signed up for the Pride In Veterans Standard, a set of guidelines established by Fighting with Pride, to ensure that veteran-focused organisations treat the entire veteran community with dignity, respect, and understanding when accessing services and support.

## **PRIDE OF PLACE EVENT**

Blackpool Pride of Place Partnership is holding a community engagement event at the Blackpool Tower Fifth Floor venue on Wednesday 30 October.

The event is to share the work that is underway to improve the town and will specifically target local residents from the communities of Blackpool.

Organisers say the key objective of the event is to:

- Change the local narrative of Blackpool as a failing seaside town with increasing deprivation, to one of a regenerating, can-do area, which understands its problems and knows how to fix them.
- Empower people to talk the town up and believe real change is happening.

There will be three sessions on the day: 7.30am-8.30am; 1pm-2pm; and 5.30pm-6.30pm.

To register a free place, email [laura.james@bitc.org.uk](mailto:laura.james@bitc.org.uk) or call 07955 299487

## **YOUNG CITIZEN AWARD 2025**

Nominations for the High Sheriff of Lancashire's Young Citizen Award are now being invited.

The competition is open to anyone aged 19 or under who has helped their local neighbourhood, an individual, family member or a local organisation over the last 12 months.

To nominate a candidate, go to [www.lanpac.co.uk](http://www.lanpac.co.uk) The winner will received £300 with two runner-up prizes of £100 each. Entries close on January 24, 2025.

## **YOUNG MEN'S CONFERENCE**

The United Youth Alliance is staging a special conference in November aimed at developing a strategy to support young men on the Fylde Coast.

"What About The Boys" will bring together frontline workers, youth workers, communities, teachers, health workers, police, other allied workforce practitioners and businesses.

The conference will examine the rise in extremism, increases in vaping and substance misuse, the impact of knife crime, as well as young men's mental health and well-being.

The programme includes:

- Keynote speakers from academia, research, community, health and sport
- Access to four workshops with practitioners providing training and access to resources and session plans
- Access to national and international resources
- Round table/world cafe discussions
- Market place of organisations and businesses
- Refreshments including lunch

Cost is £175 per delegate, £50 for charities and voluntary sector.

For further details, email [admin@uyacic.org](mailto:admin@uyacic.org)

**Philip Welsh**  
**Head of Tourism & Communications**