



Blackpool Business Leadership Group

Business Partnerships Report – November 29, 2024

1. Visitor Economy Update

2024 IS GOING OUT WITH A BANG!



Blackpool is preparing to bid a fond farewell to one of the most successful events seasons on record with a free family celebration on New Year's Eve. It will take place within the Christmas By The Sea village on the Tower Festival Headland between 3pm and 6pm on December 31.

The outdoor celebrations will include a Bavarian-style oompah band and other entertainment for children and parents, culminating in a synchronised fireworks and projection show set to music.

The celebration marks the end of a year that has seen record crowds turning out to VisitBlackpool's free events, including Air Show Weekend, Illuminations Switch-On night, World Fireworks, Lightpool Festival and the new Halloween Monster Hunt.

Christmas By The Sea, which again features a free-to-use skating rink, was opened by Strictly Come Dancing professionals, Carlos Gu, Kai Widdrington, Nancy Xu and Neil Jones (*pictured right*). It is open daily from noon until 9pm (bar Christmas Day) until the end of the extended Illuminations season on January 5. On New Year's Eve, the Illuminations will shine until 1am. Blackpool Council is offering parking for four hours for just £2 on most of its car parks for the duration of the Christmas By The Sea event.



LAUNCH OF CHRISTMAS EXPRESS

A new attraction is being lined up by resort partners in the run-up to Christmas.

Blackpool Transport, Holiday Inn, Showtown and Visit Blackpool, are working in partnership to create a magical train ride on the Illuminated Western Train.

The journey begins at the Holiday Inn, North Station where guests will step into a Winter Wonderland-themed departure lounge, where hot chocolate, biscuits, and festive cheer await.

With arrival from 4pm, the festivities begin with a pre-show performance. Then, at 5pm, the Illuminated Western Train departs, taking guests on a trip through the world-famous Blackpool Illuminations.

Each traveller will receive a golden ticket with exclusive perks, including free tram travel back to the Holiday Inn, 15% off food at Marco's, 50% off tickets to Showtown, Blackpool's Museum of Fun, one free ride per ticket at Christmas By The Sea and more!

Actors from Showtown will join the train, bringing the magic to life with stories, songs, and festive surprises.

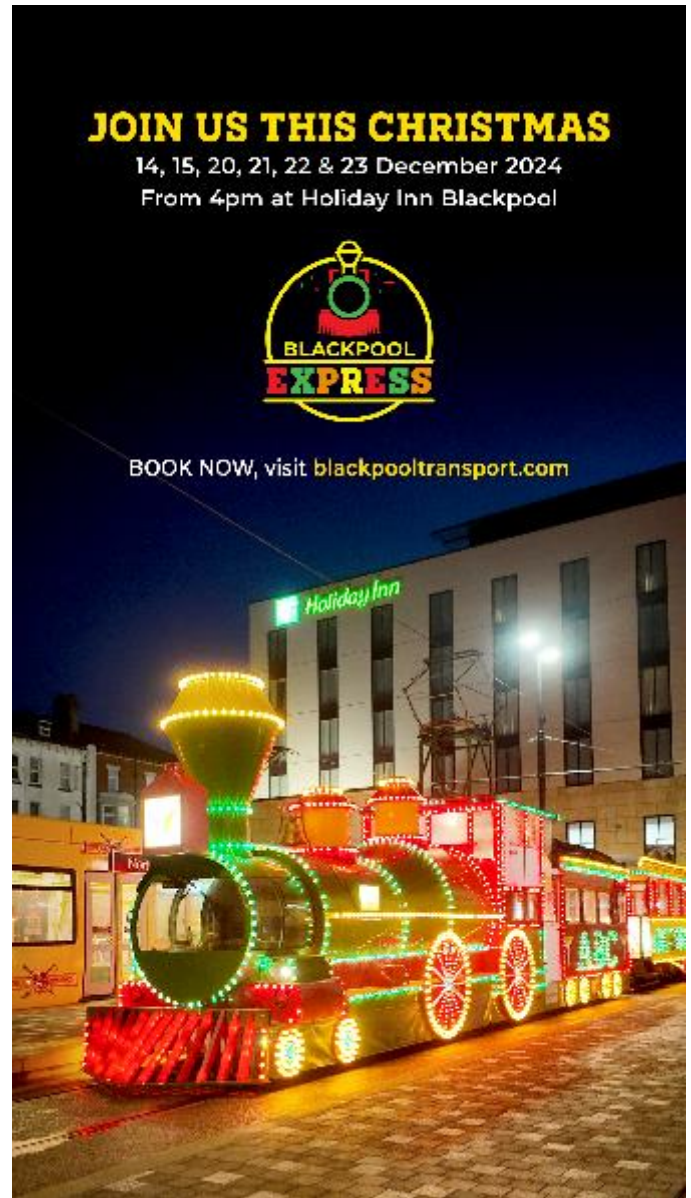
The train will travel from the Holiday Inn to Bispham, taking in the tableaux display and finish at North Pier where there will be a photo opportunity alongside the illuminated train.

From there, guests can enjoy the nearby Christmas By The Sea village.

The Blackpool Express will be running on December 14, 15, 20, 21, 22 and 23.

Tickets are priced at £20 for adults, £15 for children (aged 3-16) and free for under-3s when seated on a parent's lap.

Tickets go on sale at 10am on December 2 at blackpooltransport.com



RECORD AUDIENCE FOR STRICTLY BLACKPOOL



The Blackpool episode of the BBC's Strictly Come Dancing staged earlier this month attracted a series best of 7.6m viewers.

It is estimated that around half of households in the North West tuned in to watch the spectacular show, which was broadcast over the weekend of November 16 and 17.

All other Strictly episodes are filmed at Elstree Film and TV studios in Hertfordshire but, for one unforgettable week, the show brings its sparkle, magic and energy to the legendary Blackpool Tower Ballroom.

On the Thursday night, November 14, there was a special celebration of Strictly's 20th anniversary with a stunning takeover of The Blackpool Tower, with a customised light display created by the Blackpool Illuminations team.

The Strictly Blackpool logo was projected on to the bottom of the Tower and the rest of the building was lit up in blue, purple and gold, perfectly timed with an Illuminated tram passing in the foreground.

Strictly first came to Blackpool in 2004 for the third episode of the series. The following year, the final was held at The Tower Ballroom.

Blackpool week has been a regular series highlight for viewers and contestants alike, and it brings a huge amount of money-can't-buy publicity for the resort on prime time television over several days.

COYOTE UGLY OPENS ITS DOORS

The new Coyote Ugly saloon bar has opened its doors after taking over the town centre premises formerly occupied by Revolution.

The bar chain was founded in New York in 1993 and quickly gained a reputation for its bold décor, high-energy bartenders and an immersive nightlife experience.

It gained an international reputation after the release of the film, Coyote Ugly, in 2000, which introduced the concept to a global audience and extended the franchise into the UK where there are now six saloons, including Blackpool.

The bar is open seven days a week, from noon to 3am.



ILLUMINATIONS TEAM LIGHT UP LONDON'S WEST END



The team that create the world-famous Blackpool Illuminations have made a dazzling contribution to one of London's most iconic entertainment districts.

The Lightworks team, based near Blackpool Airport, produced eight spectacular neon pieces in collaboration with internationally-renowned artist, Chila Kumari Singh Burman MBE to create an illuminated art trail in Leicester Square Gardens.

Chila, who has already designed a tableau for the Blackpool Illuminations display, invited the team to produce the neon works after she was commissioned by the Art Of London event to feature in the annual Art After Dark programme.

The three-day event used 16 national institutions and art galleries including the Royal Academy of Arts, the National Gallery and the National Portrait Gallery.

On opening night, Chila unveiled 14 glowing artworks, including the eight new commissions produced by Lightworks. Entitled *There Is No Darkness In The Garden Of Light*, the installation towered nearly 10 feet high.

It was designed to reflect Chila's Indian heritage and was inspired by London's diverse communities. Her creations included representations of Indian deities, a whimsical underwater scene with fish and seashells, as well as icons of South Asian femininity and a magical Barbie-inspired figure.

Last year, in another collaboration with the Lightworks team, Chila unveiled a spectacular tableau entitled *Lollies In Love With Light* as part of a four-month Illuminations display. It remains on display in the tableaux section within the Blackpool Illuminations, which this year will shine until January 5, 2025.

LIGHTPOOL FESTIVAL 2024

The London event featuring the work of Chila Burman took place just a few days ahead of Blackpool opening its own award-winning light festival, Lightpool.

The free-to-see programme, supported by Arts Council England, included light installations, 3D projection shows, an art trail, and stunning live performances over nine nights during the first week of October half-term.

This year saw the addition of light installations from the UK, France, Finland and Spain as part of the highly-acclaimed festival.

The art trail saw some of Blackpool's most iconic buildings and outdoor spaces transformed during an event that has grown into one of the UK's biggest and best.

One of the spectacular installations, Supernova, created by Studio Vertigo, took pride of place in St John's Square (*pictured above right*).



MONSTER HUNT

The second week of October half-term saw a brand new VisitBlackpool event – a Monster Hunt designed to coincide with the annual Halloween celebrations.

It featured 10 giant inflatable monsters on the rooftops around the Golden Mile and town centre (*one of the monsters named Sick Jagger is pictured right on the roof of the Winter Gardens*).

With the monsters clearly visible during the day and night (when they were illuminated), the trail created another spectacular free event for visitors and residents.

Monster Hunt, which was funded by the Government's Shared Prosperity Fund, generated significant publicity for Blackpool including regional TV coverage.



PADDY AND PATCH HIT THE GOLDEN MILE



BBC Radio 2 presenter Paddy McGuinness got a warm Blackpool welcome as he arrived in Blackpool as part of his 300-mile cycling challenge on a Raleigh Chopper bike.

Paddy rode into the resort on the second day of a five-day journey from Wrexham to Glasgow on a customised 1970s children's bike, called Patch.

The ultra-endurance ride, which saw him travel through three nations and eight counties, raised more than £10m for the BBC's annual Children In Need Appeal.

POLAND TAKE THE FIREWORKS HONOURS

A pyrotechnics team from Poland have been crowned champions of Blackpool's annual World Fireworks competition after wowing record crowds.

The display by the team from Nakaja Art set the bar high when they performed what they described as a "pyromusical" in the first of three spectacular shows staged on the Tower Festival Headland during September and October.

The judges, who scored them ahead of subsequent performances by Finland and the USA, described the display as "fabulous" and praised the synchronisation to the music and the use of Poland's national colours.

The Polish team have had significant experience of staging firework displays across Europe and Central America, and they were responsible for the biggest fireworks spectacle in their home country, for a Jean Michel Jarre concert in Krakow.

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

SHOWTOWN ACQUIRES CHARLIE CAIROLI COLLECTION

Showtown and Blackpool Council have announced the acquisition of the Charlie Cairoli Collection, a remarkable treasure trove celebrating one of the 20th century's most beloved clowns.

This extraordinary collection shines a spotlight on Blackpool's rich cultural history and its pivotal role in shaping British entertainment.

Thanks to support from Arts Council England/V&A Purchase Grant Fund; the national charity, Art Fund; and Friends of the National Libraries, the collection is now secured for future generations.

The collection will be carefully preserved and made accessible through various venues across Blackpool, allowing everyone to experience the legacy of laughter that Charlie Cairoli left behind after 40 seasons performing at The Blackpool Tower Circus.



BOULEVARD TRIPLE HONOURS



The Boulevard Hotel at Pleasure Beach Resort has won three awards at the 2024 World Luxury Hotel Awards ceremony.

The wins included Best Luxury Lifestyle Hotel (United Kingdom), Best General Manager (Northern Europe) and, for the second year running, Best Luxury Hotel (Northern Europe).

The awards are based on service delivery, luxury and presentation, as well as consistent feedback from guests. Now in their 18th year, the awards are then voted for by more than 300,000 guests and industry players. Other UK hotels featured in the awards include The Ritz Hotel, London, The Caledonian, Edinburgh, and The Chelsea Harbour Hotel & Spa.

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

PARTINGTON'S 80TH BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS

Lancashire-based company Partington's is celebrating its 80th anniversary.

The family-owned business based near Blackpool, owns and operates holiday parks across Lancashire, the Lake District and the Yorkshire Dales, offering seaside locations and rural retreats with a focus on family entertainment.

Founding family members John William Partington, Mary Partington, Frank Partington and George Partington, officially opened the gates to their first holiday centre at Newton Hall in Staining on November 13, 1944.

It was followed by other holiday parks including Windy Harbour on the outskirts of Blackpool, Broadwater in Fleetwood, Black Beck in the Lake District and Wardley's Creek at Hambleton.

Partington's 80th anniversary year has seen the announcement of a new leisure development at Windy Harbour, which represents a £75m investment.

It will sit within the expansive 166-acre natural site, which currently surrounds the 64-acre Windy Harbour Holiday Park on the banks of the River Wyre. This new development will feature holiday lodges, a luxury spa and lifestyle complex, and full leisure facilities.

BLACKPOOL CENTRAL DEVELOPMENT

Blackpool Council is to seek a new developer early next year after the company due to deliver plans for a £300m leisure scheme in the heart of Blackpool filed for administration.

Developer Nikal had been working with the Council since 2016 to bring indoor entertainment centres, hotels and restaurants to the former Central Station site, once the busiest railway station in the world.

In October it was revealed Nikal had appointed administrators. As a result, a Land Sale Agreement, signed between Nikal and the Council in January 2020 will be terminated, with a recommendation due to go before a meeting of the Executive in December.

The first enabling stage of the Blackpool Central development was completed earlier this year, with the opening of a 1,306 space multi-storey car park (*pictured right*).

The old police station, municipal courts and supplementary buildings are expected to be demolished early next year creating a 17-acre development site.

Blackpool Council has reiterated that it is committed to delivering the scheme.



DESTINATION GUIDE 2025

VisitBlackpool is preparing to launch its new Destination Guide for 2025 at the start of December.

The cover of the new 88-page guide features a colourful, heart-shaped montage of the characters, attractions and events that help maintain Blackpool's status as the UK's most popular seaside destination.

The artwork has been designed by Gemma Alderson, VisitBlackpool's Creative Lead and Studio Designer. In addition to featuring on the front of the guide, it will also be adapted for an extensive poster and social media campaign in the New Year.

Illustrated with stunning new photography, the guide contains extensive coverage of VisitBlackpool's major events programme and a detailed timeline of Switch-On stars down the years.



BLACKPOOL LEADS THE WAY FOR OVERNIGHT STAYS...

Blackpool has been ranked the highest destination in the UK for attracting spending by overnight visitors.

Analysis by the Centre For Cities, based on millions of card transactions, showed that staying visitors accounted for 12.8% of spending within Blackpool, out-performing the likes of York, Edinburgh, Brighton and Bournemouth.

The data showed that in Blackpool's case, overnight stays are almost four times as lucrative as day trips (£128 and £38 respectively). The highest proportion of spend by overnight visitors is on food and drink.

The Centre For Cities report showed that the likes of Edinburgh and Blackpool are pulling in significantly more visitor spending than other towns and cities of their size, each taking a similar share of the UK's total overnight domestic visitor spending to Glasgow – more than four times Blackpool's size and roughly twice the size of Edinburgh.

...AND ATTRACTING COACH TRIPS

A new national report has revealed the huge benefit that Blackpool gets each year from attracting coach operators into the resort.

The KPMG research, which was launched in the resort, estimated that around 90 coaches can arrive in Blackpool on a typical day, capable of delivering 4,500 tourists spending around £200,000.

The launch of the research study coincided with Blackpool being granted CPT (Confederation of Passenger Transport) Coach Friendly status in recognition of Blackpool Council's efforts to encourage coach travel.

During the COVID pandemic, the Council waived parking fees for coaches to help the industry survive the impact and has continued to make the free offer ever since.

2. Town Centre Update

MULTIVERSITY PLANS SUBMITTED FOR FINAL APPROVAL



Plans for a new state of the art education campus in Blackpool have been submitted for final approval.

The Multiversity campus will provide a new home for Blackpool and The Fylde College, bringing up to 3,000 students and staff into the town centre.

The 115,000 sq ft building will include five floors of education space to deliver more than 70 individual courses and enhance the college's existing higher education provision, which is directly linked to local employment needs. It would also support a wide range of qualifications, from further education, through to higher education and adult learning.

The campus building will include a high-glossed terracotta tiled facade, along with floor to ceiling glass, while the surrounding area will also be greened up through landscaping and planting to create a public square.

The building itself is expected to be carbon neutral in operation, with solar panels on the roof of the building, and heated by sustainable air source heat pumps. A green roof terrace at the south of the building will also allow students to both study and relax in a landscaped environment.

Land assembly for the site of the Multiversity is still under way. A public local inquiry into the Council's Compulsory Purchase Order opened in Blackpool for two days in November and will resume in the first week of December.

CIVIL SERVICE OFFICES NEAR COMPLETION

Planting has started to green up the area around Deansgate and Cookson Street in the town centre, ahead of the opening of the new offices for the Department for Work and Pensions.

In total, 39 trees and hundreds of plants and shrubs are being planted around the building.

When it opens next year, the new office will bring over 3,000 workers into the Talbot Gateway to boost the local town centre economy.

Future phases of the Talbot Gateway regeneration scheme include a new office development off Talbot Road and a new multi-storey car park off Church Street.



ABINGDON ST RETAIL MARKET 1st BIRTHDAY

Abingdon Street Market's retail area has reached one year of trading.

The retail side of the market - with 10 independent vendors, along with the dedicated food hall - has made a significant impact on the town centre since it opened in November 2023.

Blackpool Council used £3.6m of funding from Getting Building Fund to purchase the historic market building, carrying out a full internal refurbishment prior to its opening in May 2023.

The opening of the food hall and retail area at the new-look Abingdon Street Market was an element 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 to produce a successful venue with a wide-ranging offer. The current retail vendors include:

- ❖ The Crypt: Horror themed shop, offering clothing, make up, jewellery and shoes
- ❖ Funky Global: Ethically sourced home decor, tables, mirrors, mosaics, pottery
- ❖ General Store: Cheese, fresh fruit and veg, craft beers, soaps, candles, ambient items, greetings cards
- ❖ Happi Place: Fun, alternative pop culture and nostalgic themed paper goods, jewellery, pins, cards and prints from UK based makers
- ❖ Her Brand: Offering eyebrows and lash treatments as well as make up and tooth gem applications
- ❖ Inertial: Vinyl records, music merchandise, prints, CDs, cassettes, turntables
- ❖ Kel'made: Custom wooden and acrylic pieces made with a laser and made to order gifts
- ❖ Oisin Vintage: Vintage clothing, crochet clothing, jewellery, wedding dresses, accessories and shoes
- ❖ Peppermint Jones: Home accessories, artwork, candles, soft furnishings, interior accessories
- ❖ The Strand Collective: Art supplies, books, cameras, film camera repairs and servicing, camera loans

The team is looking to expand the selection of events held in the retail side of the market next year.

GRUNDY EXTENSION APPROVED



A planned new £10m culture hub in the heart of Blackpool has been given the go-ahead by councillors.

The project, which still needs to attract funding, would see a two-storey extension on the side of the Grundy Art Gallery using part of the car park on Queen Street. A second, single-storey extension would create a gallery and shop.



Image: Ellis Williams Architects

The project also provides a new link into the adjoining Grade II listed Central Library. It is envisaged that lost parking spaces would be replaced by new bays in the town centre.

The feasibility study for the project was carried out using money from the Shared Prosperity Fund.

3. General News

DEVOLUTION DEAL FOR LANCASHIRE



The formation of the new Lancashire Combined County Authority (CCA) has taken a major step forward.

The Statutory Instrument that will enable the formation of the new body was laid in Parliament earlier this week.

The first shadow meeting of the organisation was also held at County Hall in Preston, in preparation for the first full meeting of the authority in the New Year.

The two major developments were announced at a reception attended by businesses and major stakeholders on the eve of Lancashire Day, November 27.

The Government has already released £20million of funding agreed as part of the devolution deal to create the new CCA, which was signed last November and confirmed in September.

The money will fund a number of projects supporting place-based economic regeneration, innovation-led growth and net zero ambitions.

For Blackpool, it means £2m towards the proposed low carbon data centre at Silicon Sands on the Airport Enterprise Zone, and £4m towards the new town centre offices for the Department for Work and Pensions.

A further £2m has been awarded towards the Cosy Homes In Lancashire project - a £41m energy efficiency home upgrade grant scheme which benefits all areas of the county.

Further powers and funding for adult education, transport, employment and skills will also be unlocked when the new authority comes into being.

It does not require any changes to the established county, borough, or district councils across the area, who will continue to deliver local services.

ANCHORSHOLME SEA DEFENCE CONSULTATION



Blackpool Council has launched a consultation into its multi-million pound plans to extend sea defence works in Anchorsholme.

The proposed works will see the construction of a rock revetment on top of the existing defence structure, and the construction of five Y-shaped rock groynes on the beach (*as shown above*).

The consultation runs from November 5 to 29. Residents are being encouraged to give their views on the scheme, which they can do online or by visiting Brew Cafe at Anchorsholme Park and completing a paper feedback form. Online comments can be made here: [feedback form online](#)

The existing coastal defences at Anchorsholme opened in 2017. Following a storm, a defect was identified which the contractor agreed to address, at their expense, by providing rock armour along the revetment wall. Over the last two years, exploratory works have been carried out to inform the business case for coast protection and beach management along the coastline.

These investigations have identified accelerated beach lowering in Anchorsholme. In order to retain the beach and sand, it is proposed that rock groynes are installed during the construction period of the rock armour works to the revetment wall.

The Council has been allocated funding from the Environment Agency for the construction of the rock groynes. Construction work is likely to start in summer 2025 and continue until 2027.

BLACKPOOL TOPS NEW BUSINESS START UP LIST

Blackpool has been named as the best town in the UK to start a new business, offering unique opportunities for entrepreneurs.

IT service software_InvGate analysed data from the Office for National Statistics to find the number of registered businesses in UK towns and cities in 2022 and 2023. The final ranking was determined by the areas with the greatest percentage increase of new businesses from 2022 to 2023.

Blackpool topped the ranking, with a 7.24% increase in new businesses between 2022 and 2023. It grew from 3,870 businesses in 2022 to 4,150 in 2023, for a total increase of 280 establishments.

The analysis showed 125 of those newly registered businesses were in the transport and storage sector, and 110 were in the business administration and support services sector

TOWN CENTRE ACCESS FUNDING GOES AHEAD

Plans to tackle congestion in Blackpool town centre have been given the go-ahead by the Government.

The £17m Town Centre Access Scheme had been thrown into doubt despite being allocated £15m of funding from the previous Government as part of its Levelling Up programme.

Now Alex Norris, Minister for Local Growth, has confirmed that the money has been included in the autumn Budget.

Detailed plans for the scheme have yet to be drawn up, but it is expected to include improving key road junctions to prevent congestion, and encouraging more environmentally-friendly travel such as using buses, footpaths and cycleways.

It will also support town centre regeneration, including the new DWP civil service offices, due to open in early 2025, a further planned office development on Talbot Road, and the proposed Multiversity education campus on Cookson Street. Blackpool Council is contributing £1.7m to the project.

SUPPORT FOR WHITE RIBBON

Blackpool is once again proud to support White Ribbon Day and the Green Dot campaign by hosting a range of events across the town over 16 days in November and December.

National White Ribbon Day, which falls on November 25 every year, is an initiative established by men who wanted to stand up against violence towards women and girls after the horrific shooting of 14 female students at Montreal University, Canada, 1989.

White Ribbon UK works to prevent violence against women and girls by addressing its root causes. It works with men and boys to change long-established, and harmful, attitudes, systems and behaviours around rigid gender norms and masculinity that perpetuate inequality and violence. The campaign aims to engage more men and boys to be a part of the solution.

White Ribbon supporters are encouraged to make the White Ribbon Promise to never use, excuse or remain silent about men's violence towards women.

The Green Dot campaign is a primary prevention strategy that supports Blackpool's #ItStopsHere movement, which aims to keep our streets safe from sexual assault and violence.

The Blackpool Tower and Winter Gardens was lit in white on November 25 to mark National White Ribbon Day and will be lit again on 11 December to mark the end of the 16 days of action. The Winter Gardens will be lit up throughout.

There will be a White Ribbon and a Green Dot information stall at Houndshell Shopping Centre on December 11. The stall will raise awareness and recruit White Ribbon Ambassadors and Champions.

During the 16 days of action, a White Ribbon flag will fly above the Town Hall and the message, 'Blackpool Council supports White Ribbon', will flash every 15 seconds on both the approach and exit Illumination arches on the Promenade as a symbol of solidarity.

A White Ribbon illuminated tableau has been placed prominently within the central area of the promenade and will continue to shine for the rest of the season until January 5.

SELECTIVE LICENSING SCHEME APPROVED

A new selective licensing scheme to tackle the poor conditions of some privately rented properties in the inner area of Blackpool has been given the go-ahead.

The scheme has received approval from the Secretary of State following a 10-week consultation with a range of stakeholders across the town including tenants and landlords, where 61.2% of tenants and 18.8% of landlords were in favour of the proposal.

The selective licensing scheme includes the eight inner area wards of Bloomfield, Brunswick, Claremont, Talbot, Tyldesley, Warbreck, Waterloo and Victoria, and covers approximately 11,000 privately rented properties.

Selective licensing aims to improve housing standards in the area by addressing poor management practices being offered by some private landlords.

Under the scheme, all landlords within the designated area will be required to adhere to a number of licence conditions around property management, tenancy management and fire safety.

Every house, flat or room that is used as private rented accommodation within the designated area is required to apply for a licence, subject to the relevant exemptions, when the scheme begins on April 1, 2025.

The standard licence fee for a single dwelling starts from £347 for the full five-year period of the scheme, equivalent to £69.40 per year for a single dwelling.

Discounts are included in this fee for landlords meeting the Blackpool standard and those applying early, within the first three months of the scheme starting.

The licence fee for a single dwelling increases to £772 for landlords not meeting the Blackpool standard or eligible for any of the other discounts.

FEBRUARY JOBSFAIR

A Jobsfair event is being jointly hosted by the DWP and Chris Webb, MP for Blackpool South, at the Winter Gardens Blackpool between 10am and 4pm on Thursday 27 February, 2025.

If you are an employer with vacancies to fill and promote please contact Karen.Jones16@dwp.gov.uk Disability Employment Lead or alternatively contact Julie.Casson@dwp.gov.uk as Partnership Manager for Coastal Jobcentres.

Jobcentre Plus offers a range of recruitment services that can help you as an employer. You can contact the Employer Services Line using the [online enquiry form](#) or by phone 0800 169 0178, Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm.

BOATHOUSE YOUTH AWARD

The Centre for Social Justice Foundation has recognised the outstanding work of Blackpool's Boathouse Youth with a prestigious award.

The Boathouse Youth is a charity, based on Lytham Road, which provides positive recreational and educational activities for children and young people, aged five to 17.

The CSJ Foundation named it as one of four winners of its CSJ Awards, presented each year to charities and social enterprises that show remarkable efforts in tackling a range of challenging social issues. Each of the winners receives a £20,000 cash award.

NATIONAL RECOGNITION FOR AUNTY SOCIAL



The Aunty Social community arts organisation in Blackpool has been named as one of the nation's 100 most impressive small firms by the Small Business Saturday UK campaign.

Aunty Social Community Interest Company (CIC) gives people opportunities to develop their creativity, learn new skills and connect with others through positive art activities. It was founded in 2011 by a group of friends looking for fun, social and affordable creative events to attend in their home town.

In 2022, they opened their town centre premises on Topping Street, Blackpool, now home to a vibrant retail space, showcasing products from over 60 local artists, makers and designers (*pictured above*).

Following a nationwide search by the Small Business Saturday UK campaign, the Blackpool business was selected as part of this year's SmallBiz100 line-up, which highlights 100 of the most impressive independent businesses from across the nation as part of the countdown to Small Business Saturday on December 7.

Running in the UK for over a decade, Small Business Saturday is the UK's most successful small business campaign, taking place each year on the first weekend in December. It celebrates small businesses, encouraging consumers to shop local and to support businesses in their communities.

UCLAN APPRENTICESHIPS

The University of Central Lancashire is offering businesses the opportunity to upskill their workforce or fast-track their own career in leadership and management.

UCLAN is offering the Chartered Manager Degree Apprenticeship and Senior Leader Apprenticeship programmes, which combine academic excellence with practical workplace learning.

Employers can use their Apprenticeship Levy to fund the course, and small or medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), can benefit from 95% Government funding, making their contribution as low as a one-off payment of £1,350. Places are available for January 2025.

For more details, contact business@uclan.ac.uk or call **01772 895500**

4. And finally....

IT'S GOODBYE FROM ME!

After much consideration, I have decided to leave Blackpool Council at the end of this year.

I have enjoyed a long and very rewarding career, first in the regional newspaper industry and latterly here at Blackpool Council.

I have had 18 fruitful years with the Council, not least in being able to reimagine our tourism economy and work closely with the private sector to build the Blackpool Business Leadership Group into an inclusive partnership of more than 650 local businesses and associations.

I leave behind a tourism offer that is in great shape with a year-round events programme that now includes the hugely successful Christmas By The Sea event and an extended Illuminations season.

It therefore feels like an opportune moment to take time out to explore other avenues and, most importantly, enjoy some quality time away from work.

I have had a life-long association with Blackpool. It is the place where I grew up and where I have spent so much of my working life.

It has been a real privilege working alongside all of you who share my ambition to see this great place thrive and prosper in the years ahead.

I am delighted to say that the BBLG is in safe hands. Martin Long will continue to chair the group and will be supported in future by Adam Ogden, the Projects and Communications Manager for Blackpool Council.

Thank you for your support.

Philip Welsh
Head of Tourism & Communications