



Blackpool Business Leadership Group

Business Partnerships Report – 31 January 2025

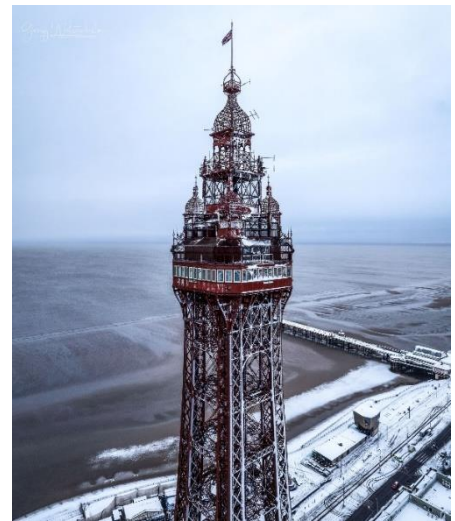
Welcome

After a fantastic 2024, we were greeted by a very wintery approach into the New Year.

This picture from Blackpool photographer Gregg Wolstenholme shows the icy morning we woke up to on 5 January.

It's very fitting, given Blackpool was recently named as the second best place in the UK for Christmas breaks.

Despite the weather, business in Blackpool goes on and 2025 has plenty in store.



Top News

ABINGDON STREET POST OFFICE HOTEL TAKES STEP FORWARD

Plans to turn Abingdon Street Post Office into a 150-bedroom Indigo Hotel have taken a step forward.

Ashall Hospitality will start site investigations into the building this year, to check whether the original scheme is still viable.

The hotel has planning permission to be turned into a branded hotel and was awarded £8m towards the £26m scheme from the UK Government in 2023.



CENTRAL HOUSING UPDATE

A framework designed to make central Blackpool a more desirable place to live has been submitted.

Blackpool Council was awarded £90m back in March this year from central government via Homes England, aimed at tackling housing issues in the inner areas of Blackpool.

The first phase of this housing regeneration work will likely focus on the area south of the town centre, between Chapel Street and Rigby Road to Park Road, and the Promenade and Central Drive corridor. The exact area isn't confirmed yet.

Nearly 3,000 homes have been visited and asked to fill out a questionnaire and share their views on regenerating housing. Housing regeneration is a long-term plan and will take at least 15 years to complete, but is aimed at making Blackpool a better place to live and work in.



DEMOLITION WORK STARTS ON OLD POLICE STATION AND COURTS

Work has started to demolish the old Bonny St police station, former law courts and other buildings at Blackpool Central on Chapel Street and Central Drive.

Removal of fixtures and fittings is under way now, with the structural demolition expected this spring.

Blackpool Council is also seeking new investors for the Blackpool Central site.

New commercial marketing agents will be appointed early this year to promote the site to international leisure investors.



The first stage of the Blackpool Central development completed earlier this year, with the opening of a 1,306 space multi-storey car park.

CONFERENCE CENTRE ADDS £14M TO LOCAL BUSINESS TOURISM ECONOMY

Blackpool's new Conference Centre has already led to a £14m economic impact from business tourism.

The Winter Gardens £30m Conference and Exhibition Centre opened in 2022 and has attracted new conferences to the resort including the annual conference of National Association of Retired Police Officers and Fellowship of Independent Evangelical Churches.

The GMB Union is booked in for its annual conference in 2026, while the Local Government



Association has booked its 2027 annual conference too. It has also allowed for expansion of events such as Rebellion Festival.

We'll be visiting the Conference Centre for our next BBLG meeting on 4 April.

NEW AIRPORT OFFICE BUILDING WORK STARTS NEXT MONTH

Work to build a new office, security and small executive terminal for up to 45 passengers at Blackpool Airport will start in February and is expected to be finished this summer.

The £620,000 modular building project will be constructed by Spacebuilder Ltd, which has experience constructing within airports at Liverpool John Lennon, Exeter and Bournemouth.



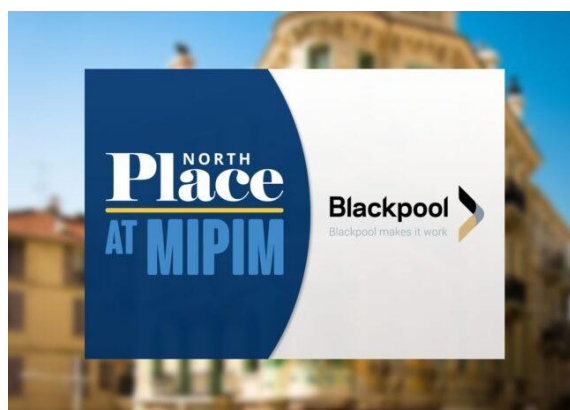
Once the new building is open, work will take place to demolish the old offices and prepare the land for a new data centre, marking the start of plans to develop Silicon Sands - a low carbon data centre campus, creating high tech jobs.

INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITIES TO BE PROMOTED AT PROPERTY CONFERENCE MIPIM

Blackpool Council will be showcasing opportunities for investment in the town at MIPIM in March, to around 30,000 delegates from across the world.

Blackpool Council will join media publication Place North's delegation of northern towns at the internal property conference.

The Blackpool delegation will aim to promote the town as a whole, as well as promoting major development opportunities at Blackpool Central and Silicon Sands on Blackpool Airport Enterprise Zone.



In May, Blackpool Council will also promote investment opportunities at the main UK Real Estate and Inward Investment Forum (UKREiF) to circa 15,000 delegates.

BUSINESS EVENTS FOR YOUR DIARY

Blackpool Unlimited is hosting a series of business events in the next few months, listed below. More information on these events can be found at www.blackpoolunlimited.com

January	February
28 th - Introduction to basic accountancy and cashflow	5 th – How to use QuickBooks
28 th – AI Masterclass with the Blackpool Growth Business Academy	12 th – Women's Coaching Masterclass – Make More Money
29 th – Intro to Procurement	12 th – Build a Better Website

	25 th – Sustainable Business Network
	27 th – Leadership and Management for Growth

Visitor Economy Updates



SHOWZAM! RETURNS FOR FEBRUARY HALF-TERM

This February half-term, Blackpool kicks off the tourism season with [Showzam!](#), a festival of circus, magic, live entertainment and fun for all the family.

From 14 February to 22 February, Blackpool will host a festival of free show-stopping performances, enchanting entertainment, dazzling street shows, and incredible illusions as the resort welcomes visitors to a magical spectacle like no other.

The return of Showzam! marks the first dedicated February half-term event programme in Blackpool post-COVID and is being supported by the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, and proudly delivered by the Blackpool Tourism Business Improvement District (TBID).

2025 EVENTS LISTINGS NOW LIVE

VisitBlackpool has launched its new Destination Guide for 2025 showcasing everything the resort has to offer.

It also features a comprehensive guide to food, drink and accommodation, as well as key dates for your diary, including:

- 14-22 February - Showzam!
- 21-27 April – Blackpool Junior Dance Festival
- 17-30 May - Blackpool Dance Festival
- 6-8 June – Blackpool Pride
- 9-10 August – Blackpool Air Show
- 26 August – Ride The Lights
- 29 August – Illuminations Switch On
- 13 & 27 September, 11 October – World Fireworks Championships Blackpool
- 17-25 October – Lightpool Festival
- 14 Nov – 4 Jan – Christmas By The Sea



The full Destination Guide and full events listing can be found at www.visitblackpool.com

PLEASURE BEACH ANNOUNCES NEW RIDE, EARLIER OPENING AND NAMED WORLD'S BEST

Pleasure Beach Resort has announced that a re-imagined ride, Launch Pad, will open in 2025.

New for the 2025 season, the former Ice-Blast ride has received a brand new pressure cylinder which will transform the current ride experience, and thrust riders with more force than they've experienced in recent years.

It comes as Pleasure Beach Resort is opening Nickelodeon Land early this year in time for February half term – one of the first theme parks in the country to do so.

From Saturday February 15 to Sunday February 23, guests can grab themselves tickets for the Nickelodeon themed area of the park as well as Wallace & Gromit's Thrill-O-Matic ride. It'll cost guests a special price of £25.00 per person, which is half of the normal gate price.

Last month, Pleasure Beach Resort was also named on a prestigious list of the best family-owned theme parks in the world – and was the only UK attraction to make the cut.

Industry resource Bloolooop.com featured Pleasure Beach first on its list of the world's best, alongside renowned international theme parks including Europa-Park and Phantasialand in Germany, Siam Park in Tenerife, and IMG Worlds of Adventure in Dubai.

BODYGUARD AND SIX MUSICALS RETURN TO WINTER GARDENS

Two popular musicals are returning to the Winter Gardens this year.

The Bodyguard will arrive October 1st – October 4th 2025. Based on the 1992 Oscar nominated movie starring Whitney Houston and Kevin Costner, the show returns after two sell-out UK and Ireland tours in 2018 and 2023.



Another well-loved musical, SIX, has also announced its royal return to the Winter Gardens Blackpool as part of its UK tour on Monday 22nd December 2025 – Sunday 04 January 2026!

Following its three previous sell-out runs at the Winter Gardens, SIX follows the six wives of Henry VIII as they take to the mic to tell their own personal tales, remixing five hundred years of historical heartbreak into an 80-minute celebration of 21st century girl power.

Tickets for both shows and more are available at www.wintergardensblackpool.co.uk

ABINGDON STREET MARKET OPENING TIMES

Abingdon Street Market has changed its opening hours slightly for January and February.

The food hall (Edward Street entrance) will be closed on Mondays, and will be open Tuesday - Sunday, 10am - 10pm. It remains the only food hall in the North West to be open six days a week, 10am-10pm.

The retail units will be open Wednesday - Sunday, 10am - 5pm.

The market was refurbished by Blackpool Council with a £4m grant from the UK Government. The food hall opened in May 2023 with the retail units opening in November 2023.



HERITAGE TRAMS UPDATE

Blackpool Transport's heritage trams are expected to return to service later this year.

The tram service is currently paused while a number of complex operational issues are addressed.

The suspension of tram tours does not affect plans for the Rigby Road tram shed and plans for a Tramtown museum.

Volunteers are hoping to submit a bid for National Lottery funding to support the vision to preserve the resort's heritage fleet and create a new visitor centre and attraction and will continue to hold Tramtown workshops this year.

To find out more visit www.blackpoolheritage.com



HOUNDSHILL OPENING CREATES ROUTE TO BACKLOT CINEMA

Houndshell Shopping Centre will now remain open daily until 11pm, connecting Adelaide Street West through to Coronation Street, creating a direct route from the town centre through to The Backlot Cinema and Diner 7 days a week. Shops within Houndshell will still close at normal time.



Houndshill Parking is also still open for our customers that enjoy a late night screening. Take advantage of our £1 for 3 Hours parking offer and redeem your discount at The Backlot.

The cinema has also launched [Screenwave](#), an app where you can choose what is shown on the big screen. The app allows you to suggest and vote for films or screenings that you want to see at the cinema and if there are enough people interested, then a screening is scheduled and tickets are released.

GRUNDY ART GALLERY LAUNCHES ITS WINTER PROGRAMME

Grundy Art Gallery welcomes 2025 with a programme of exciting, inter-generational exhibitions and events with a local flavour.

The winter programme runs from 18 January to 8 March and will see the Grundy continuing to show works from the collection in new and surprising ways and see the gallery continue its professional development support of artists based locally and elsewhere, through the Turning Point exhibition programme.



BRITAIN'S GOT TALENT RETURNS TO TOWN

The cast of Britain's Got Talent returned to Blackpool in January for the latest auditions.

Ant & Dec, joined judges Simon Cowell, Amanda Holden, Alesha Dixon and Bruno Tonioli at the Winter Gardens. The auditions were rescheduled after being postponed in October following the death of Liam Payne.

The episodes are set to be aired this spring.



STAYBLACKPOOL OPEN DAY

StayBlackpool's open day is taking place on Tuesday 8 April, 2025.

The event, is a curtain-raiser for the new tourism season, aimed at the accommodation and hospitality sectors across the Fylde Coast. Bookings are now being accepted for any business wishing to take a stall for this event with a new book online facility available via the QR code on the right.

Free parking will again be available.



Regeneration Updates

WORK STARTS ON NEW BUSINESS UNITS AT ENTERPRISE ZONE

Work has started to build 11 new business units at Blackpool Airport Enterprise Zone.

Prospect Development NW has started construction at Plot 109, between Lancaster House and Lockheed Court on Amy Johnson Way.

Once complete, the 1.8 acre site will include warehousing and office space, ranging from 190 sqm to 400 sqm.

Construction of the land is set to complete in autumn next year.

The development is the latest in a line of private and public sector developments on the business park since it was granted [Enterprise Zone](#) status in 2016.

Over 200,000 sqft of new accommodation has been developed since 2016, with another 176,500 sqft refurbished. In total the Enterprise Zone is home to over 200 companies and around 4,000 jobs.

A new £18.5m road is expected to open in 2025, creating additional land for commercial development, as well as providing a second access road.



MORGAN SINDALL EVENTS EYES LOCAL SUPPLIERS FOR MULTIVERSITY

Morgan Sindall, in collaboration with Blackpool Council and Blackpool & The Fylde College, hosted a Getting Connected event in January to help build meaningful connections with local subcontractors, suppliers, and social enterprises.

Approximately 200 people attended the event, which was organised by Morgan Sindall to support its work on the upcoming Multiversity project—a new home for Blackpool & The Fylde College that will bring up to 3,000 students and staff into Blackpool town centre.



WINTER GARDENS HOTEL GAINS PLANNING PERMISSION

Plans to build a five-storey hotel next to the Blackpool Conference and Exhibition Centre have been approved.

The 266-bedroom hotel will be built next to the Winter Gardens on the land of Alfred Street car park and is hoped to bring a "global hotel brand" to the resort, according to developers, C1 Capital Partners Ltd and Mottram Estates.



It would operate under two brands, catering for business guests and visitors to the resort.

RETAIL UNITS LET AT BLACKPOOL NORTH TRAM STOP

Three new retail units are expected to open before Easter around the new tram stop at Blackpool North.

It means four of the five units would be let by Easter after Greggs opened last year. The final 1,800 sqft unit is still available by the underpass connecting the new tram stop and Blackpool North train station.

Work to build a temporary car park on the other side of the site is also expected to be completed in time for Easter. The temporary car park would improve parking around the Talbot Gateway ahead of 3,000 DWP staff moving to the area this spring, while the site is marketed for a future development.



Business Successes

CONGRATULATIONS TO BLACKPOOL BUSINESSES

We'd like to say congratulations to all the Blackpool businesses named as finalists for the Lancashire Red Rose Awards 2025!

These awards, hosted by Lancashire Business View, represent the best of Lancashire's key sectors, from built environment to tourism, while others highlight specific achievements, such as scaling up, and transformation.



The ceremony will be hosted at Blackpool's very own Winter Gardens & Blackpool Conference and Exhibition Centre. Congratulations to Thompsons, Blackpool and The Fylde College, Dennis Eagle UK, RKMS Group, Complete.Online, MC Dental Ltd & MC Repairs Ltd, Woodhouse Opticians, North West Air Ambulance Charity, and Blackpool FC Community Trust.

MORE AWARDS NOW OPEN

Coastal Radio's Local Business Awards are also now open for nominations until Sunday, 23rd February.

Six shortlisted companies will then be nominated across the 25 categories ahead of eight weeks of public voting with the black tie gala dinner & awards ceremony held on 22 May in The Blackpool Tower Ballroom.



Last year over 4400 nominations were received and over 36,600 votes were cast! [Enter here](#)

Nominations for the BIBA awards also opens this month. Businesses can submit an entry from 28 January until 31 March. [The BIBAS are led by the North & Western Lancashire Chamber of Commerce](#), representing excellence and achievement.

The finalist are then announced on 19 September at Blackpool Tower Ballroom.

BLACKPOOL BANK NAMED ONE OF FASTEST GROWING TECH COMPANIES IN THE UK

Tandem Bank has been ranked as one of the 100 fastest growing tech companies in the country by [The Sunday Times](#).

Ranking at number 27, Tandem Bank is headquartered at Blackpool Airport Enterprise Zone with supplementary offices in London, Cardiff and Durham.

The company is a leading app-based bank, hiring over 250 local staff and managing a savings portfolio worth over £3.5bn and with over 300,000 customers.



BLACKPOOL MANUFACTURER GRANTED £5M TO INCREASE PRODUCTION

Cylinder manufacturer Gledhill has been awarded £5.2m by the Government to increase production of heat pumps.

The government funding and a further £6.8m investment by Ideal Heating and Gledhill will enable the production of 120,000 pre-plumbed hot water cylinders every year at the Gledhill site. The largest business on Blackpool Enterprise Zone, the French-owned company hires around 300 from its production site off Squires Gate Lane.



NEW FOOD OUTLETS OPEN IN TOWN CENTRE

Two new food outlets have added to the town centre's offer.

Starbucks has opened a new store on Talbot Road in the Forshaws Hotel, while Umami World Kitchen has opened on Church Street.

Equally, a new TUI travel agents has opened in Houndshill Shopping Centre.

TYSON BUILDS ON CARBON REDUCTION RECORD

Since 2021, Tyson Construction has achieved a 40% reduction in its carbon footprint and is now working with the Blackpool Net Zero Business team to build on that impressive success.

They are creating a fully funded action plan for the next stage, with the next area of focus the company's construction sites. Driven by the Business Growth Team at Blackpool Council and with funded support from the UK Government's Shared Prosperity Fund, you can get help to decarbonise your business with Blackpool Net Zero Business Academy.

Find out by calling 01253 478660 or visiting www.blackpoolunlimited.com



FUTURE FOCUS ENERGY DEVELOPS SMART ENERGY BOX

A long-standing business at the Blackpool Enterprise Centre in south shore has developed an innovative energy and environmental monitoring solution.

Future Focus Energy has developed a cutting-edge Boxed Monitoring Solution, designed to empower businesses to monitor and manage energy usage efficiently and environmental impact by providing real-time data and intelligent control, enabling companies to reduce their carbon footprint, optimise energy usage, cut costs and be environmentally aware.



General News

HIGHFURLONG SCHOOL COMPLETES EXPANSION

Highfurlong School has officially completed a multi-million-pound expansion project.

Featuring a state-of-the-art hydrotherapy suite, the project included a new building to help manage the growing demand for SEND places at the school.

The £4.8m new building doubles the school's capacity to 180 students, reducing the need to use out-of-borough placements.



The new building which connects to the existing school via a covered walkway, includes a specialist teaching room for the delivery of subjects such as science, food technology and life skills, as well as a hydrotherapy suite designed to provide children with a sensory experience.

BLACKPOOL YOUTH ZONE HANDED OVER

A new £1.7m Blackpool Youth Zone will open in spring after being handed over early.

Blackpool Youth Zone on Gorton Street will offer a variety of activities for young people and provide a safe and supportive space to learn, grow, and develop their talents.

It includes a fully equipped kitchen area, offices, toilets, two large halls for physical activities, and two smaller rooms that will host a range of other programmes, including gaming sessions.



The main contractor, Warden Construction, completed its work on the state-of-the-art centre and handed the keys over to Blackpool Council two months earlier than expected. Warden also ensured that 89% of the supply chain used was sourced locally.

BLACKPOOL RECEIVES £1.8M TO PLANT NEW TREES

A £1.8m grant from United Utilities will pay for new trees to be planted in Blackpool. The first wave of these trees is hoped to be ready for the 2025 planting season and green up areas of the town.

SAFE SPACE INITIATIVE LAUNCHED

Blackpool new 'Safe Space' project provides assistance to residents and visitors who may need additional assistance on a night out through a joint 'community safety partnership'.

Assistance is provided at the reception area of 'The Place - for Skills and Work' building at number 1 Clifton Street, which is open for specific support each Saturday from 10.00pm to 3.00am.

People News

KATE SHANE TO HEAD UP BLACKPOOL TOURISM OFFER

Following Philip Welsh's departure, Kate Shane will now take the lead for tourism in Blackpool.

Kate was also recently appointed as the managing director for Blackpool Council's leisure portfolio to bring her skills and experience to work alongside us, in close partnership with other tourism businesses across the resort, to help drive forward the visitor economy by delivering a "One Blackpool" approach to our leisure assets.

ANDREW WHITE TO RETIRE FROM BLACKPOOL MUSIC SERVICE

Andrew White set up Blackpool Music Service (BMS) in 2002. The 66-year-old said after more than two decades leading the service it was the right time to "slow down". He said BMS loaned 4,000 instruments to youngsters in 44 schools across Blackpool and the surrounding areas and had created a "huge calendar" of musical events to perform in.

FYLDE COAST YOUNGSTER IS STAR OF BBC CHRISTMAS TV SCHEDULE

An eight-year-old actor from the Fylde Coast was the star of the BBC's Christmas Day coverage. Reuben Kirby, from Thornton Cleveleys, who attends Scream Theatre Schools, voiced the title role of Tiddler in the animation based on the popular book by Julia Donaldson and Axel Scheffler.

KILA STARS ON REPAIR SHOP

BBLG Member and head of charity at Blue Skies Hospitals Charity Kila Redfern starred on BBC One's Repair Shop in January. In her other role as Lytham town crier, she took her dull handbell to be spruced up by carpenter Will Kirk and silversmith Brenton West.

And finally...

HELLO

Thank you to everybody who has wished me well with taking on Blackpool Business Leadership Group – I am looking forward to my first meeting.

This group has around 700 members who want the town and our people to flourish, using business as the tool to create economic growth and jobs. It's a fantastic nucleus to deliver something impactful. I am very keen that BBLG can facilitate that growth and help drive the town forward.

However, this is your membership network. Over the next few months, I am really keen to hear your thoughts on how BBLG works for you, and how you and your business benefit from being a member.

Any comments on its future direction are welcome. Please do get in touch on my email below, and I look forward to seeing you all and getting to know you better in the coming months.

Adam Ogden

Project and Communications Manager

Blackpool Council

adam.ogden@blackpool.gov.uk