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Blackpool Town Deal Board

Last Modified March 18, 2024



The membership and role of the board is to:

- Develop and agree an evidenced-based Town Investment Plan.
- Develop a clear programme of interventions.
- Coordinate resources and influence stakeholders.

The board is not a legal entity, its role is advisory. Its purpose is to work with Blackpool Council, to which it is accountable as the lead council, to produce a well-evidenced Town Investment Plan which sets out a clear understanding of Blackpool, focusing on assets, opportunities and challenges which will help to create a business case to secure Town Deal funding.

Members of the Blackpool Town Deal Board:



Above: (Town Deal Chair) Peter Cole, Chartered Surveyor

Peter is a Chartered Surveyor and has substantial experience in town centre regeneration and international property investment. He is a member of the Town Deal Board and was Chair of the Future High Street Fund Bid Board.

He is a former Chief Investment Officer and Director of Hammerson plc and is a Non Executive Director of LabTech International and Primary Healthcare Properties plc.

Town Deal Board member from: October 2020.

[Peter Cole Declaration of Interests \[PDF 100KB\]](#)





Above: Alan Cavill, Blackpool Borough Council

Alan became Director of Communication and Regeneration at Blackpool Council in April 2014. This area is responsible for Regeneration, Enterprise and Employment, Tourism, Business & Visitor Economy Strategy, Libraries, Heritage, Housing, Planning, Illuminations, Communications and the Transport department. Prior to this he was Assistant Chief Executive of Regeneration, Tourism and Culture, a position he was appointed to in July 2011 and he has been on Council's corporate leadership team for over ten years.

Specifically Alan now carries the responsibility for the Council owned Leisure Assets which includes Blackpool Tower and the Winter gardens Complex. The Winter Gardens is the home of the Blackpool Dance Festival; the competition and brand that is now owned by Blackpool Council.

He has over thirty years of experience working on various aspect and projects in tourism and regeneration in the North West including Salford Quays, Workington Ironworks, Preston Docks, East Manchester and of course Blackpool.

Before moving to Blackpool in 1997 to manage Blackpool Challenge Partnership he spent fifteen years with Central Government in Manchester in the Department of Transport, Department of Environment and Government Office for the North West.

He is also Chairman of Blackpool & the Fylde College; a Queens Award winning outstanding educational institute with over twenty thousand students, he is vice chairman of British Destinations (a national body representing tourism destinations), holds a number of trustee positions on charitable bodies, has a Bachelor of Science Degree in chemistry from Salford University and is a MIED (Member of the Institute of Economic Development).

Town Deal Board member from: February 2020.

[Alan Cavill Declaration of Interests \[PDF 101KB\]](#)



Above: Alun Francis OBE, Blackpool & The Fylde College

Principal and Chief Executive, Blackpool and The Fylde College (B&FC)

Alun Francis is Principal and Chief Executive of Blackpool and The Fylde College. He has thirteen years of experience in further education, having previously led Oldham College. Prior to this he had a varied career which has included a range of public services,

local government, area-based regeneration, youth work and education, including primary, secondary and higher education. Alun has a strong interest in the economics of what is now referred to as 'levelling up' and sees FE colleges as making a strong contribution to addressing this challenge.

Alun is Interim Chair of the Social Mobility Commission which is an independent body, sponsored by the Cabinet Office, which exists to create a United Kingdom where an individual's future is not determined by the circumstances of their birth.

He received an Order of the Order of the British Empire for service to education in the 2021 New Year's Honours List.

Town Deal Board member from: September 2023.

[Alun Francis declaration of interests \[PDF 121KB\]](#)



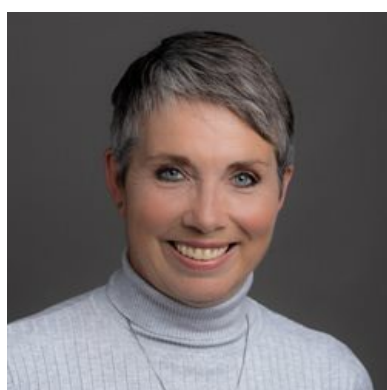
Above: David Gaffney, Arts England Council

David Gaffney works for Arts Council England as a Senior Relationship Manager where he helps develop arts projects, assesses applications for funding, manages funding programmes, delivers talks and training sessions on arts funding and works with regularly funded arts organisations.

David Gaffney is also a writer and he is the author of the novels *Never Never* (2008) and *All The Places I've Ever Lived* (2017) plus the flash fiction and short story collections *Sawn-Off Tales* (2006), *Aromabingo* (2007), *The Half-Life of Songs* (2010) and *More Sawn-Off Tales* (2013). David's graphic novel with Dan Berry, *The Three Rooms In Valerie's Head* is out now.

Town Deal Board member from: July 2020.

Updated Declaration of Interests form pending.



Above: Debbie Francis, Lancashire Enterprise Partnership (LEP)

Debbie Francis has over thirty years of experience, both in the UK and overseas, across a range of industries from IT to infrastructure maintenance to rail. Debbie now has a varied portfolio career as well as running her own consultancy and training practice. Until recently, Debbie was a City Executive for Arcadis after four years as Managing Director of DRS, a rail freight business, and before that, four years as LNW Route Finance and Commercial Director with Network Rail. Debbie is Chair of the Lancashire LEP, Chair of the Harwich Haven Authority, a non-executive Director of Loram UK and a non-executive Director on the board of the MDC Stockport, as well as a Trustee of Pave The Way. She is named in the Top Northern Power Women List, won the 2019 North West & IOM Director of the Year for Inclusivity, and received the 'Woman with Edge' award, which recognises businesswomen who challenge the status quo - at the 2019 Women of the Year awards. She was recently awarded an OBE for services to women in rail.

Town Deal Board member from: February 2022.

[Debbie Francis Declaration of Interest \[PDF 206KB\]](#)



Above: Canon Dick Cartmell, Together Lancashire

Blackpool born and a PE Teacher in Remedial and Special Education 1965 to 1977. Dick was ordained C of E in 1979 and was based for thirty years in the ministry on outer housing estates, ending at Blackpool Holy Trinity 2008. In his retirement he set up a Parish Development course and now since 2014, has worked as Together Lancs Fylde Coast Co-ordinator. An avid Pool season ticket holder, Dick enjoys music through a male voice choir and believes in human regeneration ahead of economic success. Let's never forget this town began as a health resort.

Dick set up two church urban fund projects in Blackburn and Blackpool based on community survival and wholeness, both of which lasted for over ten years. He is now about to launch a Poverty/Truth commission on the Fylde Coast which works on the principle "Anything about us, without us, is not for us." This is all about storytelling truth unto power and from this comes real change.

Town Deal Board member from: February 2020.

[Dick Cartmel Declaration of Interests \[PDF 101KB\]](#)





Above: Graham Cowley OBE, MBA, MICE, Business in the Community (BiTC)

Graham is a Chartered Civil Engineer who spent much of his career managing public private partnerships as Chief Operating Officer with Capita Property Services.

While in full time employment, Graham volunteered as a Director of the Lancashire Enterprise Partnership, chairing the £750 million Growth Deal Programme. This role required significant investment of time in Blackpool and he was ultimately asked to become independent Chair of the Blackpool Opportunity Area (OA), a Government funded pilot to improve social mobility. This was another voluntary role in which Graham invested two days per week for six years, working with many partners to achieve notable improvement in school inclusion, literacy and connecting young people with the world of work.

Prior to completion of the Blackpool Opportunity Area programme in 2022, Graham was asked to work for Blackpool Pride of Place, a business-led partnership, on a part time basis, listing among the achievements the first Levelling Up deal in the UK with Government. Skills and education continue to be a major priority.

Graham also uses his private sector property experience in a part time Non-Executive Director capacity with Atlas, the wholly owned property company of Blackpool NHS Trust.

Town Deal Board member from: June 2023.

[Declaration of Interests \[PDF 102KB\]](#)



Above: Helen Warren, Department for Work and Pensions

I am the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) Senior External Partnership Leader for the Cumbria & Lancashire District. I have worked in the Civil Service for thirty one years in a variety of departments, including: War Pensions, Working Age Benefits, Retirement Services, in particular managing Bereavement teams nationally. In 2022, I joined the Jobcentre side of DWP and I lead a team of external partnership managers.

I am committed to working in partnership with key stakeholders to ensure that Jobcentres deliver a quality service that supports the diverse needs of our customers, enabling everyone to achieve their goals into sustained employment.

Town Deal Board member from: May 2022.



Above: Jane Cole, Blackpool Transport

I am the Managing Director of Blackpool Transport, the award winning, major bus and tram operator for Blackpool and the Fylde Coast. We operate bus and tram services, offer rail replacement, event management and Park and Glide services.

I joined Blackpool Transport in 2014 after a successful 17year career working for Virgin Trains at a senior level in Operations, Business Development and People Development.

Leading a successful passenger transport business requires a customer first attitude and strong inter-personal skills, extensive industry knowledge and the ability to develop and grow the people in your team which I am able to do as a trained executive coach and mentor (ILM Level 7 in progress) and Common Purpose World Leader.

Blackpool Transport is an award winning company with our most recent award being Employer of the Year for the Lancashire Red Rose Awards.

I have successfully delivered business transformation programmes that are aligned to delivering strategic business aims and local transport plans and I was recently voted Business Woman of the Year at the Northern Enterprise Vision Awards.

As we move towards 2021 we have the vision at Blackpool Transport to continue to grow and develop our work in the community and with our stakeholders to make Blackpool and the Fylde Coast a great place to live, work and visit.

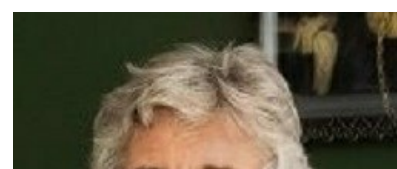
I am very active in the Transport Industry and the Business world to keep my skills and knowledge up to date and relevant as:

- An Executive Board member of Album
- Fellow member of CILT
- A member of CPT
- Vice President of the North west Lancashire Chamber of Commerce
- Executive Board member of Blackpool and Fylde Collage
- Committee Member of Common Purpose
- Board member of Blackpool Pride of Place

I am also a member of many networking groups and in particular Women in Transport.

Town Deal Board member from: February 2020.

[Jane Cole Declaration of Interests \[PDF 105KB\]](#)





Above: John Sullivan, The Big Picture

John is a longstanding cinema and leisure expert and has acted in a senior development and management capacity on numerous retail, leisure and residential schemes throughout Australia, Asia, Europe and the UK.

From 1996 John has been based in London, UK, acting initially for Warner Village (UK) Ltd as property director and in senior development roles for Village (Greece), CGV (South Korea), Warner Village (Taiwan), Village (Germany/ France), Warner Village (Italy), Vue (UK), The Eye (Eire), Village (South Africa).

In 2002, John set up his leisure consultancy group which turned into TBP, a cinema anchored business which creates innovative and exciting leisure destinations and is continually ahead of the curve with a forward thinking approach. Employing this strategy, TBP consistently demonstrate their market leading abilities especially against complacent and stagnant competition.

John was born in Australia and has a love and passion for seaside town regeneration. He is proud and delighted to be working alongside Blackpool Borough Council to deliver the Backlot Cinema and Diner at Houndshell in 2023. A nine screen state of the art multimedia venue with an all-day diner serving the community and tourists of the UK's favourite coastal destination.

Town Deal Board member from: September 2022.

[John Sullivan declaration of interest \[PDF 102KB\]](#)



Above: Kate Shane, Merlin Entertainments Group, Regional Director

Kate joined Merlin Entertainments in 2011 as General Manager of The Blackpool Tower, taking the position as Head of the Merlin attractions in Blackpool, including the Blackpool Tower, Circus and Ballroom, Madame Tussauds, Sea Life and the Dungeons, in 2016.

The Cluster employs up to three hundred and fifty local people and has seen strong growth in visitor numbers, financial performance and guest KPI's (Satisfaction, Customer Service and NPS), all of which is underpinned by investment in skills training and the wellbeing of the team.

Kate is a co-opted member of the Lancashire LEP Board, sits on the Advisory Board of IAAPA EMEA and is also on the Blackpool Pride of Place Board, part of Business in the Community.

Kate was previously a Governor of Blackpool and the Fylde College (Ofsted Outstanding), a Non-Exec Director for Blackpool

Transport.

Kate is a passionate advocate of Blackpool and has a genuine desire to create a better future and improve opportunities for those who live, work and visit the area.

She believes collaborative working, bringing business, the third sector and communities together is the only way to achieve success for the UK's favourite seaside resort.

Town Deal Board member from: February 2020.

[Kate Shane Declaration of Interests \[PDF 102KB\]](#)



Above: Mark Robinson, Ellandi

Mark is a high-profile leader in the worlds of retail property and placemaking, a position recognised with his appointment to lead the government's High Street Task Force in July 2020, following his role as Revo President in 2019.

Over nearly three decades, Mark has worked in all aspects of the industry as an advisor, investor/developer and occupier. In 2008 he co-founded Ellandi, a business currently undertaking over 30 projects in the UK with a value in excess of £1.5 billion.

Ellandi has won Property Entrepreneurs of the Year at the Property Awards and was shortlisted for the Retail Property Company of the Year award by Estates Gazette. Most recently, Ellandi won the inaugural Estates Gazette Rewire award recognising our commitment to leading diversity and inclusivity in the built environment industry.

Mark is a passionate advocate of the role of community in repurposing and shaping the purpose of our future places in response to the challenges and opportunities presented by the current market.

Town Deal Board member from: September 2022.

[Mark Robinson Declaration of interest \[PDF 102KB\]](#)





Above: Neil Jack, Blackpool Borough Council

Neil Jack was appointed as Chief Executive of Blackpool Council in September 2011. Neil, who was born and educated in Blackpool, had previously been Director of Finance and Resources at Blackpool Coastal Housing (BCH) since 2006. During this time BCH's success in a Government inspection generated nearly £50 million to improve the quality of social housing in Blackpool.

Prior to joining Blackpool Coastal Housing, Neil had previously worked for Blackpool Council in the Finance Department covering a wide variety of services.

During his six years as Chief Executive, Neil has helped steer the organisation through £118 million worth of cuts to the council's budget, while also overseeing external investment in the town of around £350 million, and acting as the landlord to some of the UK's most famous attractions: The Blackpool Tower, Winter Gardens and Sandcastle Waterpark.

The current and upcoming investment in regenerating Blackpool includes construction of Blackpool's first business district, a revamp of the resort's tramway and extension to the train station, major new conferencing facilities at the Winter Gardens plus £55 million to ensure that young children get the possible best start in life and that teenagers in the town get access to the best mental health support designed to increase their resilience. Neil has a key role in the delivery of both the Better Start and HeadStart programmes in Blackpool. He is the Chair of Executive Board for the HeadStart Programme and an Executive Board Member for the Better Start.

Work led by Neil to readdress Blackpool's housing supply has also included replacing run down social housing with new quality, family accommodation, and involves requiring poor private landlords to improve the quality of HMOs in areas of the town. An innovative £30m project for Blackpool Council to operate as a private landlord to improve run down properties in the town and enhance the current housing marketplace across the town is also under way.

As part of the council's work to create a stronger economy, Neil has also overseen huge improvements to Blackpool's tourism offer, with more than seventeen million visits to the resort being made every year, generating £1.32 billion into the town's economy and supporting 20,000 jobs. As part of Neil's role to improve Blackpool's tourism offer, he also chairs the Turning tides board, which works to improve the quality of bathing water across the North West, culminating in Blackpool being awarded the region's first Blue Flag in 2016.

Town Deal Board member from: February 2020.

[Neil Jack Declaration of Interests \[PDF 101KB\]](#)



Above: Paul Maynard, MP for Blackpool North

Paul has been the Conservative Member of Parliament for Blackpool North & Cleveleys since May 2010, retaining his seat in the 2015, 17, 19 elections. During Paul's time in Parliament he has held a number of ministerial roles, including rail minister, Government Whip, courts minister and latterly aviation minister. Paul has an interest in transport infrastructure, regeneration, financial resilience, and various aspects of the tourism industry. Paul attended St. Ambrose College in Trafford, and University College Oxford.

Town Deal Board member from: February 2020.



Above: Richard Fee, Chief Executive Officer, Nikal

Richard has over 30 years' experience in UK Investment and Development markets. He has worked at DTZ Debenham Thorpe, Henderson Global Investors and Dunedin Property Ltd. Whilst at DTZ he was a Property Fund Manager for British Gas Pensions and Imperial Tobacco, both of which had balanced funds of circa £250m.

At Henderson he was Property Fund Manager of all Industrial assets for Pearl Assurance, NPI and London Life with an asset base of circa £850m and strategically repositioned the portfolio to London Industrials in 2002.

He was a Director of Premier Greenford Ltd – A Joint Venture between Pearl Assurance and Brixton plc which was a £300m development portfolio at Greenford Park and Premier Park, London. These assets are still regarded as prime London Industrial assets. At Dunedin he was part of a very small dynamic management team responsible for investment transactions and asset management of property with a combined value of circa £2.5bn.

In his career Richard has been involved in transactions with a value of circa £4.5bn. More recently he worked as a consultant to West Bromwich Building Society providing advice and workout solutions on their commercial loan book and has also been the driving force on Nikal's Blackpool Central project since inception. Richard was invited to fulfil the role of Chairman at Nikal Ltd in August 2020 and has subsequently set about re-focussing the business for the future.

Town Deal Board member from: March 2021.

[Richard Fee Declaration of Interest \[PDF 94KB\]](#)



Above: Scott Benton, MP for Blackpool South

Elected in December 2019, Scott Benton is the Member of Parliament for Blackpool South. Scott has a proven track record of working with local people, community groups and businesses to get results on the issues that matter to people. He is campaigning alongside residents across Blackpool to improve our local community and to make Blackpool an even better place to live, work and visit.

Scott has considerable experience both in and outside of politics. He previously worked for for Craig Whittaker MP and served as a Councillor in Yorkshire for 8 years where he was Deputy Leader of a local council for part of that period.

Prior to this he worked as a primary school teacher where he focused on supporting under-privileged children.

Scott's political priorities are delivering a strong local economy and creating more jobs for local people.

As well as spending his spare time with family and supporting community events, Scott is also an avid football fan.

Town Deal Board member from: February 2020.

[Scott Benton Declaration of Interests \[PDF 100KB\]](#)



Above: Steve Fogg, Chair of Blackpool Teaching Hospitals Foundation Trust

Steve Fogg has a wealth of experience from a career forged at BAE Systems, from apprentice to engineering, then moving through operations, functional management and programme management to business leadership and his final role before retiring as Managing Director of Corporate Shared Services PLC. He also holds various non-executive Board membership roles, including membership of the Blackpool Pride of Place Partnership, Chair of the Fylde Coast Responsible Business Network and a member of the Blackpool and Fylde College Board. During his time at BAe Systems he represented them as a Member of the Worldskills Advisory Group on Social Mobility, Diversity and Inclusion and was a Member of the National Apprentice Ambassador network and was a leading driver behind BAE Systems approach to Mental Health support. Prior to joining the Blackpool Teaching Hospitals Foundation Trust as Chairman he was Chair of the Lancashire Enterprise Partnership and was a Member of the East Lancashire Hospital Trust Board.

Town Deal Board member from: February 2020.

[Stephen Fogg Declaration of Interest \[PDF 101KB\]](#)





Above: Steve Williams, Force Technology

An entrepreneur and business leader who has created three successful engineering companies and turned-around range of manufacturing businesses and charities with employee numbers from 10 to 150.

Actively engaged in UK manufacturing cluster groups with a focus on developing small and medium enterprises (SMEs). A passionate supporter of educational, heritage and cultural charities and regional regeneration projects in Northern England.

- Managing Director and Owner - Force Technology Ltd
- A specialist manufacturing company established 2015 with over 30 employees
- Voluntary Roles - Lytham Hall - Trustee and Project Coordinator, Lytham Windmill and Old Lifeboat House - Museum Coordinator
- Director - Northern Automotive Alliance, Institute of Spring Technology
- Trustee - Heritage Trust for the North West, Lytham Town Trust, Lytham Heritage Group

Town Deal Board member from: February 2020.

[Steve Williams Declaration of Interests \[PDF 106KB\]](#)



Above: Tracy Hopkins, Blackpool Fylde and Wyre VCFS

Tracy Hopkins is currently CEO of Citizens Advice Blackpool and has been in this role since 2014. As a strategic leader in the Voluntary, Community, Faith and Social Enterprise Sector (VCFS), Tracy has been instrumental in developing the partnership of VCFS leaders across the Fylde Coast and Chairs the VCFS Leadership Group, working closely with partners across the Lancashire and South Cumbria Integrated Care System as part of the VCFS Alliance.

Following her time at Manchester University studying psychology, Tracy trained as a teacher in FE. This then took her on to developing training courses for adults and working within education and skills. Tracy spent 7 years a CEO of an Education Business Partnership (EBP) across Greater Manchester. Providing opportunities for young people and developing enterprise learning at a time when there was a policy focus on employability and education. During this time, Tracy worked as a consultant to the Department for Education and Skills, advising on employer engagement and helping employers implement meaningful corporate social responsibility agendas. Tracy also worked with the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust to develop education leadership and travelled to North America to share models of successful leadership with leaders from around the world, this work was instrumental in the development of academies and school business managers. Tracy's entrepreneurial skills helped her transform the EBP from a charity dependent upon grants to a social enterprise selling services to schools and colleges.

This move towards social enterprise development, saw Tracy take up the role of CEO of an exciting organization that provided accommodation, work and training to people who were street homeless. Tracy spent almost four years running this social enterprise;

developing the retail offer, opening a community café and supporting people to make the transition into independent living, employment and positive changes to their lives. During this time, Tracy also acted as Chair of a Domestic Violence charity and a trustee of Preston Community Network. Tracy worked alongside initiatives such as Big Local to support communities to find their own solutions. As an advocate of VCFS infrastructure, Tracy has contributed to a range of projects with the aim of creating a robust, sustainable VCFS that makes a positive impact on local communities.

As CEO of Citizens Advice in Blackpool, Tracy has taken the organization from a position of financial uncertainty to one of stability. Building a team who are responsive, capable and willing to innovate in order to provide the best possible service to our communities, the CAB is viewed as a strategically significant across the VCFS. Through working with funders, Tracy has secured projects to help people with debt and mental health issues and has set up Young Citizens Advice Blackpool – the first of its kind in the country. Tracy is passionate about the work of the CAB, regularly contributes to research and campaigns work at a national level emphasizing the impact this can have on the lives of seldom heard communities and individuals. Building on links with the NHS, Tracy is now working with neighbourhoods across the Fylde coast to implement Social Prescribing.

Town Deal Board member from: February 2020.

[Tracy Hopkins Declaration of Interests \[PDF 130KB\]](#)

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