

DESTINATION

blackpool

Resort Place-Making
2015 - 2017

Blackpool Council

www.blackpool.gov.uk

Blackpool

A three year prospectus for a transforming destination



The story unfolds...

Blackpool Council

Blackpool is
the UK's most
visited seaside
destination

A Destination Management Plan for Blackpool



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1

Introduction

Blackpool has been the UK's most popular seaside destination for more than a century. Our ambition is to keep the resort at the forefront of tourism for generations to come by creating a place that has a rich blend of heritage and contemporary attractions.

Welcome



A Destination Management Plan For Blackpool

Blackpool needs little introduction as a mainstream tourist destination. Loved and visited by millions, it occupies a unique place in the hearts and minds of the British people.

It has achieved that position through an enduring relationship and strong emotional bond with generations of visitors, who have remained loyal to the resort offer in the face of increasing competition from both coastal and urban destinations.

The challenge is to maintain that status against a backdrop of a more aspirational family audience; a tangible lack of investment in some aspects of the visitor offer; and negative perceptions held by higher spending visitors who are unconvinced by Blackpool's appeal.

If anyone doubts that such perceptions can never be overturned, then take a look at the remarkable season of 2014.

This was a year in which Blackpool very visibly turned a corner. Investment in a substantial destination marketing campaign (including TV advertising), a programme of high-profile free events and the long-awaited return of the West End summer show to the Opera House created a positive vibe within the resort, the like of which has not been experienced for years, as well as an upsurge in visitor numbers.

The opportunity that now beckons is to build on that momentum by continuing to apply a subtle brand repositioning

of Blackpool; one that creates a contemporary, family-oriented beach resort that is renowned for the breadth and quality of its visitor offer in terms of attractions, accommodation, leisure facilities, transport links, events and entertainment.

If we are to achieve that, there must be a clear commitment from all public and private sector stakeholders to continue to collaborate to reinvent Blackpool as an exemplar destination for new generations.

Without that commitment, Blackpool will continue to dwell on its past instead of looking forward to the future.

I am delighted to present this Destination Management Plan (DMP) which sets out a vision and strategic direction for the resort.

Instigated and managed by VisitBlackpool (the tourism arm of Blackpool Council), it is designed to be holistic, setting out how together we will deliver a real step change.

The DMP has the needs of all investors and visitors at its heart and seeks to improve the town for everyone. Great destinations are great places to live and work as well as to visit.

Cllr Graham Cain
Cabinet Member for Tourism & Leisure



Bringing rich heritage and contemporary attractions together with stunning effect



Transforming Blackpool



This Destination Management Plan for 2015-17 seeks to build on the substantial investment that has been made in Blackpool over the past decade. It strives to create a place where visitors can enjoy an experience that matches their expectation of a modern resort destination.

The key outcome is not merely to increase visitor numbers and target the higher-spending leisure seekers that other destinations are enjoying without the inherent attractions that Blackpool possesses, but also change some of the deep-rooted negative perceptions of the town.

The hundreds of millions of pounds worth of public sector investment in the promenade, tramway and in the acquisition of key leisure assets including the Tower and Winter Gardens, have created the opportunity to change the resort's fortunes.

This plan is underpinned by an aspirational brand positioning aimed at changing any negative perceptions of Blackpool by creating a high-quality, year-round family destination that is capable of supporting a wider economic regeneration.

The essence of the "City Life On The Beach" brand is that we seek to create a place with a contemporary city feel; a vibrant destination that has a thriving retail, leisure and accommodation offer, complemented by better housing, sustainable employment and a tangible sense of civic pride.

HOW?

Retention of the resort's "golden core" comprising world-famous visitor assets and attractions, and thus building on the positive perceptions of Blackpool as a place that evokes warmth, nostalgia and a strong emotional link to people's family experiences.

Gradual **elimination** of poor-quality, sub-standard accommodation and facilities, combined with a shift away from a low-budget stag and hen culture that creates barriers and negative perceptions. We are determined to improve the standard of our facilities, tackle the benefit culture that blights the resort and resolve the over-supply of poor accommodation.

Securing of a range of high-quality entertainment, attractions, branded hotels, restaurants and leisure facilities, and improved conference facilities. All complemented by greatly enhanced customer service, a secure and clean environment, and effective proactive marketing.



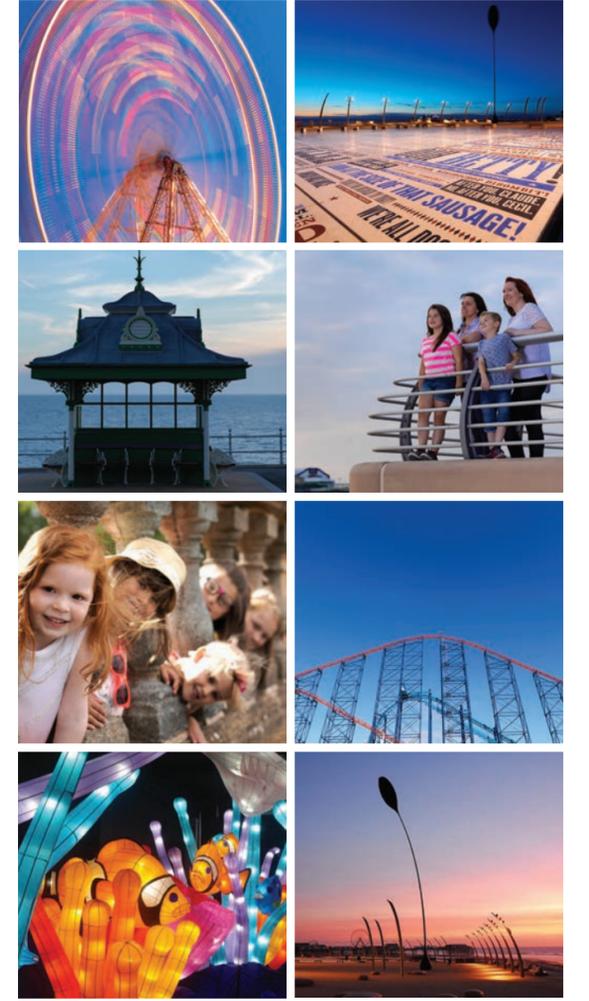


The Value of Tourism

Tourism: The Economic Impact*

- Total of 17m tourism visits (adults and children) equating to 26.9% of all visits to Lancashire
- Total of £1.295bn generated within the local economy through visitor and tourism business expenditure, supporting more than 24,000 full-time equivalent jobs in the local economy
- 13.5m tourism visits made by day visitors to Blackpool, generating over £430m for the local economy
- 3.5m visits made by visitors staying in Blackpool, generating a total of 9.3m bed nights and contributing over £863m to the local economy
- Total bedstock in Blackpool of 69,000 beds, comprising 14,200 non-serviced and 54,800 serviced beds
- Economic impact of tourism rose by 4% between 2012 and 2013

*Annual tourism impact research undertaken by Global Tourism Solutions (UK) Ltd for 2013



Creating a city vibe in an iconic beach location



The Story so Far



Seafront

A six-year project that cost almost £200m and which has resulted in a complete transformation of the seafront, replacing the sea wall with a series of dramatic Spanish steps leading down to the sea and the creation of six new headlands. The remodelling of the promenade has created one of the finest seafronts in Europe, providing an active landscape for visitors and residents, and providing new links between town and beach.

Tower Festival Headland

The first of the new seafront headlands to be developed, this is a spectacular open-air events space for up to 20,000 spectators which has already staged events featuring the likes of Elton John, Gary Barlow and Peter Kay. The headland is also home to the Comedy Carpet, one of the largest public artworks in the UK as well as Festival House – a purpose-built structure incorporating a beach-fronted bar and restaurant, The Wedding Chapel and Tourist Information Centre.

Tramway

A £100m scheme that has created a contemporary tram system between Blackpool and Fleetwood with state-of-the-art, European-style trams running alongside the famous heritage trams.

The revitalised tramway has created the potential to give visitors a more sustainable way of moving around Blackpool and the Fylde Coast as well as opening up a fast and reliable commuter system for local residents.



Acquisition of Key Leisure Assets

Blackpool Council's acquisition of Blackpool Tower, Winter Gardens and other key leisure assets in 2010 brought the resort's most famous attractions into public ownership, creating the opportunity for strategic, purposeful investment. The partnership between the Council and Merlin, the world's second largest leisure operator, has helped create the biggest cluster of visitor attractions outside London, including Madame Tussauds, Blackpool Tower Eye and the Blackpool Dungeon, as well as rejuvenation of the historic fabric of the Tower and associated buildings.

The acquisition of the Winter Gardens has facilitated the start of a sympathetic regeneration of this remarkable building with the restoration and opening up of a number of venues, installation of high-tech cinema equipment and investment in programming including the long-awaited return of the summer season show.

Town Centre Retail

The first phase of the HoundsHill Shopping Centre has been completed and has transformed the shopping experience for residents who had defected to other shopping centres such as Preston. The £150m expansion was completed in 2008, bringing a threefold increase in retail floor space, attracting a wide variety of high street stores into Blackpool.

A new town square has been created outside the Winter Gardens, creating a pedestrianised piazza environment with street pavement cafes, fountains and an outdoor events space. The arrival of branded restaurants in the vicinity is helping us to move towards a more balanced and attractive night-time economy.

Brilliance

This town centre lighting installation brought the Illuminations concept into the town centre, encouraging visitors to explore the town and centre and thus providing additional trading opportunities to the local business community. The centrepiece is Brilliance, a large scale sound and light show in Birley Street.

Events

Blackpool has developed an annual programme of high-quality events capable of attracting large volumes of visitors and residents. The core programme, most of which is free to access, already includes World Fireworks, Ride The Lights, Armed Forces Week, the Blackpool Air Show, and the annual Illuminations Switch-On celebration. This is further enhanced by a range of sporting events, international dance festivals, the regular appearance of the Strictly Come Dancing TV show and annual events such as the World Pigeon Fanciers Congress.



Central Business District

A major mixed-use development scheme that seeks to revitalise one of the key gateways into the town. Situated opposite Blackpool North railway station, the £70m first phase, completed in 2014, includes four key features:

- A 120,000 square foot glass-fronted Sainsbury's supermarket
- A new office development, Number One Bickerstaffe Square office, which is now home to Blackpool Council and other businesses
- A fully refurbished secure and modern car park
- A new public square

The £220m masterplan for the area also includes proposals for a second phase which could include hotels, offices and leisure developments.



Marketing

£1m marketing campaign jointly undertaken by Merlin and VisitBlackpool in 2014, including the first destination-based TV advertising in years, and aimed at changing negative perceptions of the resort. The "Blackpool's Back" campaign also included extensive PR, press and social media activity.

Entertainment

2014 also saw the return of the summer season show, with the international production of MAMMA MIA! being staged at the Opera House within the Winter Gardens over a 12-week run, selling over 100,000 tickets with a value of £3.5m – the highest grossing show in the resort's history.



Private Sector Investment

Over this same period, there has been significant private sector investment, including:

- The £15m investment at Blackpool Pleasure Beach, creating a Nickelodeon Land theme park and new Wallace and Gromit ride
- £3m investment in a new indoor IlluminAsia exhibition within the Winter Gardens
- Year on year investment in Blackpool Zoo by its international owners, Parques Reunidos
- Sustained capital investment in new facilities and visitor attractions at Sandcastle Waterpark
- Substantial investment in other parts of the visitor offer including hotel accommodation, restaurants, bars and attractions



SWOT

Strengths

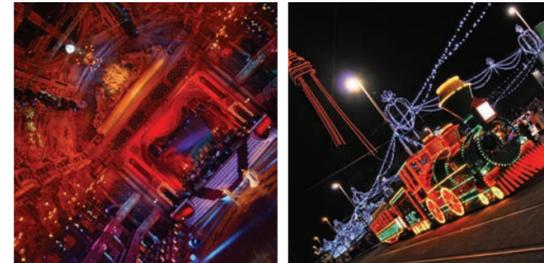
Opportunities

Weaknesses

Threats

Strengths

- Well-established national profile as a mainstream visitor destination
- Increasingly diverse tourism product for different market segments
- Large number of high quality visitor attractions
- Key leisure assets (Tower and Winter Gardens) in public ownership
- Wide range/price of visitor accommodation
- Long-established reputation as a conference destination
- Blackpool Illuminations extend tourism season into November
- Strong programme of established free events
- Easy access to the M55 and national motorway network
- Good rail links, with electrification of routes from Blackpool to Preston and beyond due in 2015
- Updated tram network provides good internal connections across the Fylde Coast



Weaknesses

- Negative perceptions of Blackpool as a place
- Audience profile dominated by lower-spending visitors
- Over-supply of low-grade holiday accommodation leading to market failure and proliferation of HMOs
- Seasonal nature of tourism-related employment
- Low levels of private sector investment in visitor economy
- Lack of strategic investment in Blackpool Illuminations display
- Unbalanced night time/early evening economy with over reliance on bars/clubs, lack of recognised family-focused restaurant brands
- Under-performing town centre – lack of higher-end retail brands
- Lack of appropriate facilities for coach drivers and passengers
- Visitor car park infrastructure not fit for purpose
- Declining local government finances limit ability to deliver brand hygiene factors



Opportunities

- Conversion of large volumes of day visitors into staying visitors
- Development of Central Station site as a major mixed leisure destination
- Development of new/enhanced conference and exhibition facilities
- Development of new branded hotels to support business and leisure tourism
- Conversion of Tower Lounge into family-based attraction
- Creation of a town centre cultural quarter with the Winter Gardens as the focal point
- Development of a heritage-based visitor attraction
- Use of Tourism Academy funding to improve hospitality standards and other skills within the visitor economy
- Rejuvenation of early evening economy with new family based leisure offer
- Working with private sector partners to co-fund marketing campaigns
- Repositioning of Blackpool Airport to support business growth/inbound tourism
- Revitalisation of the Blackpool Illuminations
- Growth in domestic tourism
- Expansion and investment in arts, culture and heritage tourism
- Electrification of the Blackpool to Preston rail line and expansion of direct London services
- Extension of tramway from Promenade to North Station
- Potential reduction in VAT on tourism product
- Development of Stanley Park as a mainstream visitor attraction



Threats

- Further market failure within the visitor accommodation sector leading to more derelict sites along Promenade "shop window"
- Persistent poor external portrayal of Blackpool
- Further competition from major urban centres of Manchester and Liverpool as day visit destinations
- Failure to meet new EU bathing water standards
- Tourism market is price sensitive, particularly during 'off peak' periods
- Sustainability of Blackpool Illuminations without significant private sector support
- Private sector fails to invest and improve quality in the tourism sector
- Further public sector funding reductions leading to a lack of funding to support improvements and refreshing of physical infrastructure in town centres
- New and emerging markets for visitor economy are not identified and tapped
- Diminishing levels of marketing resource against backdrop of reduced local authority funding





3

The Next Chapter

This is about engineering change and creating a destination that will be compelling to new generations of visitors.

What Next?

2014 proved a turning point in Blackpool's fortunes with an upsurge in visitor numbers and the conversion of tens of thousands of day trippers into staying visitors.

Much of that success came on the back of an ambitious "Blackpool's Back" destination marketing campaign that sought to showcase the huge investment that has been made in the resort and thus start to overturn negative perceptions.

With success comes confidence; the sort of confidence that encourages existing businesses to invest and entices new investors to take a stake in the resort's future.

The following pages of this plan seek to build on the foundations that have been laid to deliver a real step change in the quality and consistency of the visitor offer. The key objectives outlined under Product, Place & Promotion spell out the scale of the opportunity that lies in front of us.



Product

Physical development of key sites, attractions and facilities that contribute to an unrivalled destination experience.

- **Former Central Station site:** Facilitate relocation of police and court buildings to create a viable development site that can be marketed for a major new leisure attraction
- **Enhancement of conference facilities:** Agree short and long-term strategies for rejuvenation of conference offer
- **Syndicate:** Development proposal to be determined for the currently derelict Syndicate nightclub
- **Talbot Gateway:** Progression of Phase 2 of Central Business District regeneration scheme including new four-star hotel development
- **Tramway:** Confirmation of tram extension to Blackpool North Station, creating integrated transport hub
- **Promenade headlands:** Facilitate development of new visitor attractions to animate the new headland areas between South and North Piers
- **South Beach:** Revision of planning uses for future development of the Crescent areas of South Shore to address derelict hotel sites
- **Blackpool Tower:** Completion of Tower structural renovation works. Further activity to identify additional commercial development opportunities including alternative use of Tower Lounge
- **Blackpool Winter Gardens:** Demolition of existing car park and the provision of further exhibition space. Identification of additional commercial development opportunities. Enhancement of existing conference offer

- **Heritage-Based visitor attraction:** Securing of Heritage Lottery funding for development of a Museum for Blackpool within the Winter Gardens
- **Creative Cluster:** Establishment of a creative cluster within the town centre with the Winter Gardens at its heart
- **Retail and restaurant offer:** Inward investment activity to attract 'higher end' brands in both the retail and restaurant sector to enhance early evening economy and overall town centre offer
- **Attractions:** Proactive working with private sector operators to invest in new attractions
- **Summer shows:** Confirm programme of West End quality shows for summer season runs at Opera House 2015-17
- **Blackpool Illuminations:** Identification of new funding streams and application of new technologies to rejuvenate the Illuminations offer
- **Former Yates's site:** Sympathetic development of town centre landmark site for leisure and retail use
- **Hotel accreditation:** Roll out of VisitEngland entry level accreditation scheme to accommodation sector to increase numbers of hotels/guest houses that have a "safe, legal and clean" quality mark
- **Town centre zoning:** Progression towards town centre "zoning" identified and agreed within the Blackpool Town Centre Strategy
- **Stanley Park:** Progressive development of new facilities that make Blackpool's showcase park compelling for residents and visitors



Place

Provision of a visitor-friendly experience in terms of infrastructure and environmental management

- **Roads:** Completion of Yeadon Way maintenance project prior to start of 2015 season
- **Rail:** Completion of Blackpool to Preston electrification scheme. Remodelling of Blackpool North station. Further expansion of direct Blackpool North to London services, targeted at inbound leisure visitors
- **Car parking and pricing policy:** Development of more user-friendly car park pricing policy and introduction of enhanced payment facilities. Identification of potential new car parking sites to offset potential loss of spaces at East Topping Street and South Car Park
- **Airport:** Reinvention of Blackpool Airport as a commercial airport focused on inbound tourism and business growth
- **Coach parking:** Development of bespoke facilities for coach drivers and passengers
- **Motorhome hosting:** Identification and development of new locations for motorhomes
- **Way-finding:** Implementation of intelligent variable message signage to assist visitors to navigate through town and identify available parking
- **Electric vehicles:** Identification and development of locations for funding of electric/hybrid vehicles

- **Green corridors:** Implementation of project to create green corridors in and around Blackpool Town Centre, improving gateway and arrival points
- **Housing /HMOs:** Progression of substantial project to change the nature of rented accommodation in key visitor areas to reverse the detrimental visual impact
- **Community safety:** Reintroduction of town centre CCTV monitoring
- **Street cleansing:** Securing of a Service Level Agreement that meets Blackpool's positioning as a quality destination
- **Public protection:** Reduce levels of problematic beggars and hawkers causing alarm and distress in areas of town centre/promenade
- **Beach/bathing water standards:** Progression of partnership working to ensure that Blackpool retains its beach accreditation and is not adversely impacted by EU bathing water legislation
- **Business support and skills (Tourism Academy):** Roll out of skills development initiatives within the visitor economy including the designation of Blackpool as a World Host destination for customer service

Promotion

Without effective marketing, the challenge of repositioning and changing negative perceptions about Blackpool will be difficult to overcome. This DMP sets out a plan for comprehensive marketing activity that promotes the "new Blackpool" to existing, lapsed and new visitors across the UK and overseas.

- **Destination marketing strategy:** Establish innovative destination marketing strategy incorporating events, TV, digital and PR activity with a key focus on changing visitor perceptions of Blackpool
- **Switch On Festival:** Further development of Blackpool Illuminations Switch-On Festival Weekend to include three consecutive days/nights of high-quality entertainment
- **Blackpool Illuminations:** Develop and deliver a bespoke marketing strategy for Blackpool Illuminations including the securing of new advertising and sponsorship



- **Night-time economy:** Work with partners to ensure a credible and sustainable night-time and early evening economy offer including the securing of 'Purple Flag' accreditation
- **Business tourism:** Reposition and market Blackpool as a key destination for bespoke conferencing events
- **Cultural tourism:** Reposition and market Blackpool as a destination for cultural tourism, including the development of a more sophisticated approach to packaging major events
- **Visitor welcome:** Initiatives to improve the visitor welcome including resort ambassadors, Welcome Host designation, improved orientation boards and signage
- **Resort Pass:** Further refinement and promotion of the successful Blackpool Resort Pass including identification of additional bolt-on shows and attractions, and exploration and adoption of wristband or credit card-style technology



This is a place that is wonderfully unique, surprising and challenging...

The Brand Position

The "City Life On The Beach" brand position is an aspirational one.

It is not a marketing slogan – more a touchstone to ensure that key stakeholders in Blackpool are working together to drive up the quality of life for residents and the attractiveness of the offer for visitors.

Within this, Blackpool should be perceived as a happy brand, viewed as a place where memories are made; a much-loved classic, reinvented for a new and more demanding audience.

The Brand Values

The brand is underpinned by a set of values that differentiate Blackpool from other destinations:

Love of the different

There is nothing beige or dull about Blackpool. It's a place that is wonderfully unique, surprising and challenging

Genuine

There is nothing false about Blackpool. We are sincere, true to our roots, no pretence. We are open and glad to see you

Big WOW! Little WOW!

We have some famed, internationally-renowned 'wow' attractions, but also some surprising 'little wows' that add real value to the Blackpool offer

Make Relaxing Easy

We are a great natural host. We work hard to take care of you so you can enjoy the best of what Blackpool has to offer

Positive Energy

The people of Blackpool have a positive, can-do attitude, they make things happen. We are enthusiastic and vivacious

The Hygiene Factors

Whilst the brand values are what differentiate Blackpool from other places, there are also three crucial hygiene factors that don't differentiate, but are critical to the repositioning of Blackpool

Without these hygiene factors in place we will not overturn the negative perceptions of the resort

Quality

Blackpool must strive to deliver a quality product across all areas, not just in terms of accommodation, food and drink, and attractions, but also in terms of car parking, public realm and customer service

Safety

Any perceptions that Blackpool is an unsafe place to visit or a place where the focus of the visitor offer is skewed towards a late-night drinking economy are seriously damaging to Blackpool's brand aspirations

Cleanliness

Clean and tidy streets; public realm that is well maintained; beaches that are free from litter and detritus; bathing waters that comply with European standards; hotel stock that complies with accreditation standards and visitor expectations – these are givens for a resort that promotes itself as a contemporary, quality destination



4

DMP Priorities

The value of tourism is often measured in volumes of visitors. Whilst that is an important statistic, it only tells part of the story.

Some of the purpose of this plan is to deliver physical change; the sort of transformational change that changes perceptions and delivers tangible economic impact.

Key Growth Targets

Description	Baseline figure	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
Overall value of tourism economy	£1.3bn (based on Steam 2013)	£1.32bn	£1.33bn	£1.35bn
Annual total of adult visits	9.8m (based on Omnibus 2014)	10m	10.2m	10.4m
Ratio of staying visitors during summer season	43% (based on Omnibus 2014)	45%	46%	48%
Visitor satisfaction ratings during summer season	89% (based on Omnibus 2014)	90%	91%	92%
Jobs directly supported by tourism	24,050 (based on Steam 2013)	24,500	25,000	25,500
No of visitors to Blackpool Illuminations	3m (based on Omnibus 2014)	3.2m	3.4m	3.5m
Ranking among seaside resorts	1	1	1	1
Number of resort passes sold	13,000 (VisitBlackpool 2014)	14,000	15,000	16,000

A New Horizon

Take a look at this five-year timeline and the scale of what this Destination Management Plan seeks to deliver can be clearly seen.

Collectively, these objectives have the potential to provide the step change that will create a destination that engenders immense civic pride; attracts new generations of visitors and reaffirms Blackpool's status as the most popular beach resort in the UK.

The key objectives set out opposite are both challenging and aspirational, but eminently achievable if Blackpool can harness the change that has already been achieved and use it to create a real sense of impetus.

With that will come investor confidence and a sea change in any residual negative perceptions about what Blackpool stands for and where its future lies.

2015

- Completion of Yeadon Way maintenance project ahead of 2015 season
- Opening of four new branded family restaurants within Blackpool Town Centre
- Reintroduction of town centre CCTV monitoring
- Opening of new Blackpool Pleasure Beach Red Arrows-branded SkyForce attraction
- Revitalisation of Blackpool Airport with small commercial flight operations
- Blackpool South and Bispham achieve EU bathing water standards
- Roll out of Blackpool Approved entry level accreditation scheme for hotels and guest houses
- Completion of steelwork replacement, Blackpool Tower
- Conversion of Tower Lounge into family restaurant/attraction
- Development of new marketing brief for Central Station site
- Planning guidance consultation commences for The Crescents/South Promenade
- Rejuvenation of Blackpool Illuminations
- Launch of updated "Blackpool's Back" destination marketing campaign
- Establishment of three-year programme of West End quality shows for Opera House
- Development of new Christmas In Blackpool destination marketing campaign

2016

- Achievement of World Host accreditation for Blackpool
- Installation of variable message signage to improve visitor navigation and parking
- Work commences on Museum of Blackpool, Winter Gardens
- Preparation works commence on Central Station development site
- Creation of 500 additional bed spaces at 3 or 4 star standard in town centre
- Identification and development of additional visitor car parking facilities

2017

- Completion of budget hotel and family restaurant on site of former Yates's pub on Talbot Square
- Remaining Blackpool bathing waters reach EU quality standards
- Completion of new elephant house facility, Blackpool Zoo
- Completion of rail electrification, Blackpool to Preston
- Development of new coaching facilities
- Work commences on tramway extension from North Pier to North Station

2018-20

- Completion of Museum of Blackpool project
- Completion of first phase of Central Station site development
- Blackpool North station remodelling completed
- Derelict hotel sites on South Prom replaced by new residential and commercial property
- Next phase of Talbot Gateway scheme completed

