

## UK Government British Irish Council Summit

### Blackpool Starburst Visits Factsheet

Sustainable growth and regeneration is a shared goal across the BIC member administrations, with BIC work sectors collaborating on a range of initiatives supporting regeneration and growth across our islands. As we emerge from the C-19 pandemic, the rise in the cost of living is a pressing issue both for BIC administrations and globally. Economic growth plays a key role in job creation, fundamentally enabling people to feel more secure. Building on the previous Guernsey Summit which explored how social enterprises can contribute to resilient communities, this Summit's plenary session will discuss the shared challenges and opportunities for local growth across the islands.

This will be informed by showcasing some examples that Blackpool Council have introduced, where they have leveraged local partnerships between the council, businesses and the voluntary sector to find new ways to tackle long-standing issues. To reverse the decline Blackpool has experienced since the 1980s, the council is taking a holistic approach to sustainable growth and regeneration, recognising that housing, health, education, business investment and economic opportunity are inextricably linked. Their three-pronged approach to stimulating local growth encompasses the following strategies:

- **Town centre regeneration:** To combat high levels of deprivation and poor quality housing, the UK Government funded Blackpool as one of five pilot areas reviewing the supported housing market, aiming to improve housing while using the evidence gathered to guide future policy. Blackpool Council has developed new local standards to support tenants with stability and safety of accommodation and has set up several initiatives to acquire and remodel problematic properties. Other regeneration projects include developing a Central Business District (Talbot Gateway - £220m) to increase job opportunities for residents through investment in a tram/transport interchange, a new 4 star hotel, retail units, a Marco Pierre White restaurant and a new car park.
- **Boosting tourism:** Plans to attract new visitors include opening the Winter Gardens Conference Centre and funding a new museum 'Showtown' to open in 2023, capturing Blackpool's iconic role in developing British popular entertainment. These are good examples for the Creative Industries work sector to consider how creative industries contribute to the growth of resilient local economies. Blackpool Council has also assembled land on prime town centre sites, which has attracted private sector investment. A £300m world-class tourist attraction (Blackpool Central) is now under development and expected to generate 1000 new jobs for local people and will attract 600,000 additional visitors a year.
- **Creating jobs in growth sectors:** To avoid over reliance on a seasonal tourism industry with traditionally low-paid jobs, the council is providing opportunities for businesses to grow by supporting an extension of the Airport Enterprise Zone Business Rate Relief and Enhanced Capital Allowances until 2025. The combination of international connectivity (through the North Atlantic ultra-high-speed data cable) with a carbon neutral energy source available at the Enterprise Zone puts Blackpool in a prime position for attracting digital businesses (i.e. electronic gaming and fintech). The Digital Inclusion work sector explores how online services support resilience in local communities and could benefit from examining Blackpool's strategy.

As part of the BIC Summit programme, the UK Government are inviting delegates to see firsthand Blackpool's ambitious vision for the town as a creative, digital and educational hub for the North-West and beyond. Located in Blackpool Airport's Enterprise Zone, the Lightworks, the Accident and Repair Centre and Lancashire Energy HQ are helping to deliver long-term, sustainable regeneration based on cutting-edge technology, enterprise and education. Annex A includes short bios on the visits' hosts as well as the Blackpool Council members attending the reception and Dinner on Thursday 10 November.

- **The Lightworks** - *Richard Williams (Illuminations Manager), Nick Gerrard (Growth and Prosperity Programme Director) and Mark Harrison (Project Manager - Enterprise Zone and Blackpool Airport)*

Blackpool's world-famous Illuminations are owned and operated by Blackpool Council, bringing millions in secondary income to the town. They are designed, built, maintained and stored in-house at the Lightworks, from where the installation and rotation of displays is also directed. The Lightworks is an excellent example of an organisation that supports Blackpool's strategy by offering skilled jobs to local residents who build and restore Illumination features and lighting technology. This has allowed Blackpool to expand its lighting season from two to four months, covering Christmas and the New Year, which is estimated to bring in an additional £400 million of secondary spend into the town in tourism.

Moreover, the Lightworks products and Illuminations are a source of significant local pride, contributing to creative place-making and enabling Blackpool to successfully secure funding from the UK Government's £3.6bn Towns Fund in 2022, part of which is being used to upgrade the Illuminations to attract new visitors.

The Lightworks site on the Enterprise Zone opened in 2010 and was specifically designed to accommodate the unconventional shapes and sizes of the illuminations installations. Employees typically join with a trade, such as welders and electricians, and the Illuminations team also includes imaginative craftsmen and engineers. Management is currently working with Blackpool and Fylde College to set up an apprentice scheme for the Illuminations with the aim to roll it out in September 2023.

Through design competitions Lightworks collaborates with artists and institutions to create innovative and new experiences for Blackpool's visitors. This year the international designer Jack Irving worked in collaboration with a team of computer scientists at Lancaster University to create *Odyssey*, the largest 3D installation at the illuminations to date, consisting of 10-metre tall sculptures which create an immersive interactive projection show based on deep sea creatures.

- **Lancashire Energy HQ (LEHQ)** - *Bev Robinson OBE (Principal and Chief Executive, Blackpool and The Fylde College) and Alan Cavil (Director of Communications and Regeneration)*

The competitiveness, and hence the economic performance of a region, is intrinsically linked with investment in education and innovation. The importance of promoting a knowledge-based economy, capable of supporting and generating high value added employment, is recognised both nationally and regionally.

With education constituting such a crucial facet to sustainable regeneration, Lancashire Energy HQ (LEHQ) delivers the next generation of engineers and technicians for the renewable and oil and gas energy sectors and is working with the energy industry to upskill its workforce, providing skills, training and awareness for the STEM sector across both existing and emerging technologies.

Its close location to other businesses in the Enterprise Zone, including the Lightworks, is facilitating employment opportunities for students. For example, apprentices at LEQH are recruited directly by employers and, as long as they successfully complete their apprenticeship, they gain full time employment in roles such as nuclear engineers for local SMEs or larger organisations nationally such as the Office for Nuclear Regulation and Westinghouse.

LEQH offers a growing portfolio of training programmes for individuals aged 16 and upwards, who want to develop their careers in the engineering, manufacturing and energy industries. Equipped with industry-standard resources and staffed by educational experts it drives excellence in STEM training standards. Curriculum aligns closely to the needs of employers, who are integral to supporting the evolution of LEHQ into a specialised energy sector training facility.

LEQH works with (local) employers and Blackpool Council to ensure energy sector training needs are met by:

- Co-creating programmes of learning aligned to the needs of industry, working with 1,800 employers.
- Using Labour Market Intelligence (data sources: EMSI, Vector), Local Skills Improvement Plans, Future Skills Unit data and intelligence from employer partners to design the curriculum to address current and future skills gaps. For example, Nuclear Engineering Degrees were co-created with BAE Systems and the Office for Nuclear Regulation.
- Offering working at height, safety, survival and fire training for the Wind industry and specialist emergency response, safety, survival and fire training for the offshore oil and gas industries.
- Delivering training programmes on environmentally sustainable heat sources including green air source heat pumps.
- Strategically partnering with Blackpool Council to collaborate specifically on energy usage and conservation on top of all other environmental and sustainability challenges to achieve their stated ambition of zero carbon initiatives including public transport on the Fylde coast.

Future pioneering developments include **Multiversity** (with investment of up to £65m, including £9m from the Town Deal), a regeneration project which will further cement aspiration and offer flexible higher education opportunities in Blackpool's town centre to serve the whole community and drive productivity.

Blackpool and The Fylde College and Lancaster University are the lead partners for Lancashire's Institute of Technology whose current proposal focuses on clean growth, including hydrogen, both as a heat source and potential fuel for transportation.

- **ARC: Accident and Repair Centre Blackpool - Dane Hyland (Manager) and Rob Green (Head of Enterprise Zone)**

Fylde Coast ARC was established in 1982 as a professional independent repair operation dealing with all car and light commercial accident and insurance repair work. From just one apprentice, the company has grown to over 50 employees servicing some of the largest insurance companies in the UK. The 18000 sq. ft. purpose-built vehicle repair centre site opened in 2019 on Aviation Point (former runway of the Wellington Bombers) on Blackpool Enterprise Zone. It was designed to grow and evolve over time as technology advances with ARC currently installing Tesla electric vehicle charging points.

ARC showcases how being located on the Enterprise Zone has helped the business grow because the initial business rate relief allowed the family to invest in the construction of the new building. Thanks to ARC's close location to Blackpool Airport they have been able to attract business from offshore helicopter operators (including NHV Group) which frequently require ARC's specialised services for body and paint repair works.

The company heavily invests in apprentices and has a close relationship with Blackpool and Fylde College (of which Energy HQ is a part). They are also expanding their training for staff to become certified Tesla mechanics to reflect the growing ownership of electric vehicles, allowing ARC to draw in business from a larger geographic area in the north west. ARC's investment in Tesla technology is ensuring their company is environmentally sustainable and its commitment to upskilling employees and increasing the number of apprentices contributes towards the sustainability of the wider automotive sector.

**UK Government  
November 2022**

## ANNEX A: Biographies of Blackpool Council Representatives and Visit Hosts

### 1. Blackpool Council Representatives at the Reception and Dinner

#### Neil Jack – Chief Executive, Blackpool Council

- Appointed as Chief Executive of Blackpool Council in September 2011.
- Responsibilities, successes and projects include:
  - Overseeing unprecedented levels of public and private investment of approx. £500m in the town.
  - Developing strong partnerships with the private and voluntary sector which were instrumental in Blackpool securing one of the country's first Town Deals, worth an initial £40m of public investment.
  - Ensuring investment in young people through £55m *Better Start* and £10 *HeadStart* programmes.
  - Facilitating pioneering interventions to replace run down private sector housing with new quality accommodation in the heart of the town by overseeing circa £70m of investment in a Council owned private housing company which is on track to deliver 1000 new quality family homes by 2024 (circa 500 already complete).



#### Antony Lockley – Director of Strategy and Assistant Chief Executive

- Appointed in October 2017 Antony has both a professional and academic background in housing, regeneration, local governance and place leadership.
- In 2004 Antony joined the NGDP, the national fast-track scheme for local government, before going on to lecture in housing, regeneration and public policy from 2008.
- Antony has been leading on securing £300 million of public funding for the renewal of Blackpool's famous tramway and promenade and its new Conference Centre.
- Under Antony's leadership, Blackpool won Council of the Year for 2021/22 at both the national Inside Housing Awards and Northern Housing Awards.
- As Assistant Chief Executive, Antony leads on the interface with national government, to include achieving Blackpool's status as a national levelling up pilot area in early 2022.



#### Alan Cavil – Director of Communications and Regeneration

- Appointed in 2014 and specifically responsible for the Council owned Leisure Assets which includes Blackpool Tower and the Winter gardens Complex.
- Over 30 years of experience working on various 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 Alan spent 15 years with the Central Government in Manchester in the Department of Transport, Department of Environment and Government Office for the North West.



- Alan is vice chairman of British Destinations (a national body representing tourism destinations). He was also Chairman of Blackpool & the Fylde College; a Queens Award winning outstanding educational institute with over 20,000 students.

**Cllr Ivan Taylor - Deputy Leader of Blackpool Council and portfolio holder for Partnerships and Performance.**

- In Blackpool, he lives in Claremont Ward and represents the Ward on the Council.
- He is the longest serving member on Blackpool Council since the Borough was founded in the 1870's.
- He served as Leader of the Council from 1991 to 2000, overseeing Blackpool's conversion to a unitary authority.
- An engineer by profession, most of his career was spent with British Aerospace.



**2. Visit Hosts**

- **The Lightworks**

**Richard Williams - Illuminations Manager**

- Managing the world famous Blackpool Illuminations since 1987 - bringing ideas to life.
- Overseeing the whole manufacturing process, from initial concept through to final manufacture and installation.
- Working with world famous designers such as Laurence Llewellyn Bowen who is our creative curator.
- Responsible for the maintenance of all the features used in the display, as well as installation of the annual show on the promenade.
- Background in Electronic Engineering at Blackpool and Fylde College

**Nick Gerrard - Growth and Prosperity Programme Director, Blackpool Council**

- Leading the team responsible for implementing Blackpool's £1billion+ transformative Growth and Prosperity investment programme which includes major schemes at Blackpool Airport Enterprise Zone, Talbot Gateway Central Business District, Blackpool Central and Blackpool Town Centre.
- Over 30 years experience in planning, urban regeneration, economic development and corporate management at the public/private interface with high calibre Boards including senior positions at Manchester's New Economy, Trafford Council, North West Development Agency, Merseyside TEC and Trafford Park Development Corporation.



**Mark Harrison - Project Manager Enterprise Zone and Blackpool Airport**

- Project Management in relation to the commercial development of Blackpool Airport and Enterprise Zone.
- Specialising in commercial property asset management, property acquisition and disposal, property management and landlord and tenant liaison.



- **Lancashire Energy HQ**

**Bev Robinson OBE - Principal and Chief Executive, Blackpool and The Fylde College**

- Over 25 years' experience in further and higher education colleges
- Member of the Board of the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education. She was on the Independent Panel for the Review of Post 18 Education and Funding which produced the Augar report and was a member of the Independent Panel on Technical Education chaired by Lord Sainsbury.
- Bev is a member of the Lancashire LEP Skills and Employment Advisory Panel and a member of Blackpool Town Deal Board.



**Alan Cavil** will be accompanying this visit from Blackpool Council (see bio above).

- **Accident and Repair Centre Blackpool**

**Dane Hyland - ARC Bodyshop Manager**

- One of three Directors of Fylde Coast ARC.
- Management degree from Lancaster University.
- Worked in Australia for a year before becoming part of the family business that was established by his parents and has been working at ARC for the last 8 years.



**Rob Green - Head of Enterprise Zone**

- Responsible for the Delivery of Blackpool Airport Enterprise Zone and Hillhouse enterprise Zone on behalf of Wyre Council, devising the initial concepts for both in 2015.
- Qualified in Urban Estate Management from Liverpool Polytechnic in 1979, qualifying as a Chartered Surveyor in 1981. Was Chair of RICS Merseyside and Isle of Man General practice Division in 1995/6.
- Previously served as an independent Governor of Edge Hill University between 2008 and 2018, and has held a number of directorships on behalf of Pilkington companies – including Greenbank Partnerships and Ravenhead renaissance. Participated in EU funded research groups on Historic Airports and Shale Gas

