

Report to:	TOURISM, ECONOMY AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
Relevant Officer:	Philip Welsh, Head of Visitor Economy
Date of Meeting	2 February 2017

TOURISM PERFORMANCE REPORT

1.0 Purpose of the report:

- 1.1 To provide information on tourism performance between April and December 2016 using various indicators including number of visits, footfall, car parking, tram usage, satisfaction ratings and events. There is additional information on sales of the Blackpool Resort Pass and on use of Tourist Information services.

2.0 Recommendation(s):

- 2.1 To consider the performance of tourism and associated services and to identify any further areas for scrutiny as appropriate.

3.0 Reasons for recommendation(s):

- 3.1 To ensure constructive and robust scrutiny of the report, which has been requested by the Committee.

3.2a Is the recommendation contrary to a plan or strategy adopted or approved by the Council? No

3.2b Is the recommendation in accordance with the Council's approved budget? Yes

- 3.3 Other alternative options to be considered:

Not applicable

4.0 Council Vision/Priority:

- 4.1 The relevant Council Priority is "The economy: Maximising growth and opportunity across Blackpool."

5.0 Background Information

- 5.1 This report covers performance for the main tourism season stretching from early April 2016 to the end of October 2016, as well as picking up the months of November and December 2016.
- 5.2 The headline visitor numbers derived from the national Omnibus survey will not be available until mid-February.
- 5.3 The indicators below provide a “snapshot” of levels of activity in the resort between April and December 2016, including sales of the Blackpool Resort Pass; tram usage; footfall; inbound rail travel; use of the Tourist Information Centre; and usage of the VisitBlackpool website.
- 5.4 By and large, the indicators show a very positive picture for the resort. A number of visitor economy based businesses have reported exceptional trading figures for the 2016 season. Some of this growth can clearly be attributed to the weakening of the pound post-Brexit and concerns over travelling into mainland Europe, both of which created a staycation “bounce” in the UK.
- 5.5 With a very strong destination marketing campaign in place, Blackpool was well positioned to take advantage of this effect.
- 5.6 As can be seen from the figures released by Visit England a few weeks ago, Blackpool also continues to hold its position as the UK’s leading seaside destination for day visitors, ranked first among all seaside destinations.
- 5.7 As always, the challenge for the resort is to convert a higher percentage of day visitors into staying visitors as that has far greater impact on the wider visitor economy.

5.8 Footfall Counts

5.8.1 Town Centre: Monthly Footfall (24hr)

Month	2013	2014	2015	2016
April	1,571,497	1,629,541	1,433,133	1,454,419
May	1,872,470	2,131,019	1,945,661	1,839,345
June	1,824,731	2,106,542	2,084,723	1,934,011
July	2,830,941	2,789,242	2,532,051	2,225,619
August	3,085,538	2,491,717	2,572,176	*2,688,159
September	2,552,651	2,983,718	2,726,806	2,416,582
October	2,654,852	2,624,230	2,659,827	*2,620,629
November	1,996,937	1,891,998	1,438,985	1,308,193
December	1,437,716	1,524,575	1,356,227	1,223,614
Total	19,827,333	20,172,582	18,749,588	17,710,571

- Note that the October footfall in 2016 is only marginally short (-1.5%) of the October record set in 2015 and the August 2016 total is the highest for three years.

5.8.2 Promenade: Monthly Footfall (24hr)

Month	2013	2014	2015	2016
April	342,751	360,433	326,932	366,617
May	447,002	455,760	455,901	494,222
June	372,978	488,291	482,350	*530,240
July	885,797	803,904	710,355	724,099
August	894,354	563,184	700,496	*955,116
September	509,619	753,587	741,903	*772,805
October	307,623	500,031	655,771	*760,334
November	253,645	254,780	246,831	*269,521
December	156,940	169,085	169,252	166,567
Total	4,170,709	4,349,055	4,489,791	*5,039,521

- Note that the 2016 monthly Promenade foot counts were higher than 2015 for eight of the nine months during the period April-December, culminating in over 5 million foot counts. December was the only month that was slightly down compared to 2016. There was a substantial 36% increase in August compared to the 2015 figure. Monthly records were set in 2016 for June, September, October and November.

5.8.3 October Half Term (24hr Footfall)

Year	Date(s)	Total
2011	Oct 22-Oct 30	998,967
2012	Oct 27-Nov 4	749,785
2013	Oct 26-Nov 3	794,592
2014	Oct 25-Nov 2	708,765
2015	Oct 24-Nov 1	730,841
2016	Oct 22-Oct 30	789,216

- These are the October footfall figures in isolation, illustrating the huge volumes that we see in the last half-term holiday of the year. This table, along with other indicators below (and particularly the tram usage figures) shows that October is now a critical trading month for the resort's visitor economy.

5.8.4 Tourist Information Centre: Monthly Visits

Month	2013	2014	2015	2016
April	3,297	3,646	3,298	3,289
May	4,089	4,556	5,338	4,515
June	0	4,861	5,324	5,167
July	12,964	11,927	12,753	*12,978
August	20,550	34,100	34,503	32,353
September	6,078	7,012	13,022	12,102
October	12,128	13,813	17,061	16,260
November	2,924	1,396	2,069	2,556
December	903	910	1,059	*1,231
Total	62,933	82,221	94,427	90,451

- A monthly record was set in both July and December. However, there was an overall decline in visits which might be a result of more people using our website platform to access visitor information both before they get to resort and once they are here using their mobile devices.

5.8.5 [VisitBlackpool.com: Unique Monthly Website Visits](#)

Month	2013	2014	2015	2016
April	87,927	94,452	84,366	*99,698
May	105,496	104,117	144,979	126,862
June	112,527	123,041	131,984	108,081
July	103,761	132,102	216,076	208,020
August	172,824	206,373	321,072	*330,019
September	116,996	137,901	279,706	*301,305
October	122,778	132,056	171,163	*226,601
November	72,201	75,825	79,122	*122,090
December	39,252	46,676	53,680	*63,582
Total	933,762	1,052,543	1,482,148	*1,586,258

- The VisitBlackpool website had a record breaking Apr-Dec period with almost 1.6 million visits; this was largely assisted by a very strong end to the season with unprecedented monthly website visits achieved for the five consecutive months starting from August.

5.8.6 [Resort Pass: Monthly Sales](#)

Month	2013	2014	2015	2016
April	572	956	722	*1,000
May	1,137	1,082	838	*1,475
June	1,275	1,396	1,316	*1,745
July	3,621	3,529	3,379	*4,040
August	3,496	3,147	3,201	*3,511
September	1,241	1,224	1,437	*1,438
October	2,081	1,517	1,921	*2,439
November	34	17	9	5
December	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Total	13,457	12,868	12,823	*15,653

- The Resort Pass had an exceptional 2016 tourist season with almost 16,000 passes sold in the period April-October and record monthly sales totals registered throughout the season. For the first time, the value of the sales exceeded the £1m mark.

5.8.7 [Monthly Rail Passengers \(Inbound\)](#)

Month	2013	2014	2015	2016
April (Period 1)	87,463	107,537	118,888	99,649
May (Period 2)	91,757	96,879	100,038	*105,469
June (Period 3)	118,477	115,317	71,741	*126,264
July (Period 4)	134,199	120,091	124,006	121,832
August (Period 5)	160,848	179,366	174,593	*191,030
September (Period 6)	138,484	145,657	131,666	*152,840
October (Periods 7 & 8)	92,970	99,216	99,216	*101,671
November (Period 9)	51,348	56,446	49,698	56,310
December (Period 10)	41,056	43,001	43,640	TBC
Total	916,601	963,509	913,487	955,066+

- The period Apr-Dec is set to become the busiest on record with an anticipated 1 million (TBC) inbound rail passenger journeys made to Blackpool. Unprecedented numbers of monthly inbound rail passengers were registered in May, June, August, September and October. These encouraging figures were recorded despite the continued disruption of the electrification works across the region. The completion of the Preston to Blackpool electrification project between now and the May 2018 is expected to cause further disruption and we are working closely with Network Rail and the rail operators to mitigate any negative impact on visitors to Blackpool.

5.8.8 [Monthly Tram Passengers](#)

Month	2013	2014	2015	2016
April	296,441	292,159	361,406	358,864
May	349,109	331,909	378,653	*395,736
June	382,270	332,180	374,090	*425,044
July	521,189	475,058	551,591	*593,874
August	578,115	516,164	685,457	684,586
September	502,546	531,543	627,640	610,893
October	577,716	570,947	827,064	753,941
November	330,367	290,292	289,503	*333,902
December	187,547	167,500	181,711	*231,875
Total	3,725,300	3,507,752	4,277,115	*4,388,715

- The 9 month period covering April to December 2016 was the busiest on record with over 4.3 million passengers using the tram service. The season benefitted from a strong beginning (May to July) and end (November to December) with record monthly totals achieved over a series of consecutive months.

5.8.9 [Council Car Parks: Monthly Ticket Sales](#)

Month	2013	2014	2015	2016
April	69,458	89,114	90,253	84,250
May	68,999	88,221	91,809	*93,462
June	70,215	79,150	78,025	*81,905
July	88,769	95,879	102,264	*106,647
August	110,919	127,804	130,707	130,130
September	87,175	111,893	119,393	110,929
October	107,095	121,385	143,735	141,672
November	73,860	77,956	69,133	72,735
December	58,507	60,413	63,934	*69,305
Total	734,997	851,815	889,253	*891,035

- Whilst car parking is not a “pure” visitor economy indicator in that it is influenced by resident usage too, it does help to illustrate how tourism marketing and events create “spikes” in usage. The Council car parks increased their combined Apr-Dec ticket sales for the third consecutive year in 2016; recording 891,000 pay and display ticket sales in total. Similarly to the tram figures, the beginning of the season from May to July was particularly strong with record monthly totals achieved over three consecutive months, the year finished on a high with a record breaking December total.

5.9 This report also sets out the initial findings from the 2016 Blackpool Has It All destination marketing campaign. This campaign (now in its third year and previously labelled as “Blackpool’s Back” was primarily funded by Blackpool Council and Merlin Entertainments, with financial contributions from a range of other visitor attractions and accommodation businesses.

5.10 As in previous years, the campaign comprised three elements – PR, digital media and primetime TV advertising in Scotland and the north of England. The PR element (reported below) measures the amount of publicity generated by the campaign in terms of Press visits to the resort and the coverage generated from this. It also measures the impact of one off pieces of PR activity during the campaign.

5.10.1 [Blackpool Has It All Campaign PR Value](#)

PR performance YTD	2014	2015	2016	Variance 2015-16
PR Value	£1,377,564	£1,877,914	£3,161,182	£1,283,268
PR Reach (million)	1.4m	1.05m	4.0m	2.95m
ROI	44:1	63:1	97:1	+ 34 ROI
Press Trips	16	24	27	+ 3 trips
Press Trips Pieces of Coverage	44	60	75	+ 15 pieces
Competitions (Total Reach)	14,000,000	18,000,000	18,851,624	851,624

5.10.2 Visit Britain:2013-2015 Average No of Day Visits by Seaside Resort (Local Authority)

Local Authority	Visits (millions)	Spend (millions)
Blackpool	8.65	£406.74
Scarborough	8.05	£309.47
Brighton and Hove	7.6	£317.51
Bournemouth	6.92	£208.04
Torbay	5.9	£131.83
Great Yarmouth	4.98	£125.96
Eastbourne	3.96	£192.37
Southend-on-Sea	3.19	£102.33

- Note that there is a lag in the Visit Britain reporting and these figures provide an average figure for the numbers of day visitors in the years 2013-2015. It does provide a useful indication though of where Blackpool sits within the “hierarchy” for seaside destinations. Note that the visits and associated spend do not cover staying visits.

6.0 **LIGHTPOOL: YEAR TWO**

6.1 In 2015, Blackpool Council was successful in securing £2m of Coastal Communities Funding to reinvigorate Blackpool Illuminations. 2016 saw the second year of this activity and included:

6.2 The project included a number of elements:

- Three new 3D light projections on to the Blackpool Tower building (adding to the two that were created in the first year of LightPool). One of the films was created by international designers, The Makula; a second was created by the daughter of Laurence Llewelyn-Bowen and a third featured Space Station astronaut Tim Peake. They ran throughout the Illuminations season.
- A widely-acclaimed “Neon” exhibition at The Grundy Art Gallery which featured the works of artists such as Tracy Emin. It ran from the start of the Illuminations until the end of the year and attracted a record attendance for the gallery of almost 12,000 people.
- The inaugural LightPool Festival, a week of spectacular outdoor performances incorporating light and fire, and a hugely innovative outdoor art trail incorporating more than

30 installations around the town centre. It took place during the October half term.

- A new LightPool “village” on the Comedy Carpet 3D projection area offering visitors refreshments, photo opportunities and branded merchandise. The village was intended to incentivise visitors to view the Illuminations on foot rather than by car. Enhanced arrival and collection points to the south and north of the Illuminations display.
- Recruitment of a team of ambassadors to enhance visitor experience during the Illuminations season.

6.3 The full impact of LightPool will be revealed when the results of the next Omnibus survey are produced towards the end of February, along with some face-to-face visitor research that was undertaken during the Illuminations season.

Does the information submitted include any exempt information?

No

List of appendices: None

7.0 Legal considerations:

7.1 None

8.0 Human Resources considerations:

8.1 None

9.0 Equalities considerations:

9.1 None

10.0 Financial considerations:

10.1 None

11.0 Risk management considerations:

11.1 None

12.0 Ethical considerations:

12.1 None

13.0 Internal/ External Consultation undertaken:

13.1 Not applicable

14.0 Background papers:

14.1 None