

# **Night Time Economy Working Group Report**

**August 2015**

## **Introduction**

In February 2014, as part of its decision not to recommend an Early Morning Restriction Order, the Licensing Committee did recommend that the Council create a working group to consider all of the issues that were of concern in the night time economy in Blackpool.

The Council agreed to the proposal and formed the Night Time Economy Working Group (NTEWG) with representatives from the Council, police, health, residents and the licensed trade.

At its first meeting in July 2014 the NTEWG agreed that the theme of the working group would be “improving the perception of Blackpool”. Two sub-groups were set up, one focusing on crime, disorder and public safety and the other on improving the early evening economy. The group also felt that it was important to conduct a survey to ascertain what the perceptions of Blackpool actually were.

The sub-groups met on a number of occasions to hear representations from a wide range of people and groups.

An interim report was considered by the Licensing Committee at its meeting in December 2014 however at that time the Working Group did not have the benefit of the perceptions survey.

This report highlights the issues identified by the perceptions survey and the sub-group meetings and provides, in its recommendations to the Licensing Committee, measures targeted at improving the perceptions of Blackpool Town Centre.

## Perceptions Survey

In order to obtain feedback from the general public on the town centre and in particular perceptions of the night time economy, research was undertaken by In:fusion on behalf of the group with the aim of understanding the perceptions of Blackpool Town Centre and views on the night time economy. Two forms of survey were undertaken:

1. Structured telephone interviews with residents from Blackpool, Fylde and Wyre. In total 360 of these interviews were conducted. Due to the limited numbers of people contacted the responses were not completely representative of the Fylde Coast population with men being slightly under-represented and over 65s being over-represented;
2. Open access consultation promoted via the Council website and social media. Questionnaires were available in the libraries and were also completed via a series of face to face interviews. 625 responses were received to this part of the consultation.

### Telephone Survey

The results of the telephone survey revealed that 54% of Blackpool residents visit the town centre at least once a week however 23% had not done so in the last year. The main reason provided by these residents for not using the town centre was health, but some did indicate that they did not need to visit because they could get what they needed locally or from out of town.

62% of perceptions of Blackpool were negative. The majority of comments referred to the town as being in decline and lacking the offer/quality that it once had. Other comments were that it was run down and in need of attention. There were positive comments that acknowledged that the town looks better now but it is still in need of more development.

When asked what would improve their perceptions of the town centre, 87% indicated improved retail shops and 43% cafes and restaurants. 48% of the 90 who never visited the town centre indicated that nothing would encourage them to visit in the future (but it is possible that some of these respondents were the ones who indicated that they did not use the town centre because of health reasons). Others who had not visited within the last year indicated better parking and improved shopping.

The majority (83%) of people who visited the town centre were very or quite satisfied with it as a place to visit during the day. Satisfaction levels dropped at night with only 45% of people being very or quite satisfied.

The things that would improve people's satisfaction with the town centre depended on the time of day:

Daytime (6am – 5pm)	Quality and quantity of shops
	Parking
Evening (5pm – 8pm)	Feeling safer was a key factor
	More police (on foot)

Night (8pm – 6am)	More Police
	Better and safer parking
	Cleaner and safer atmosphere

### **Anti-Social Behaviour**

Drunk and rowdy people were the biggest issue raised by the residents of Blackpool. People using and dealing drugs were a bigger issue for residents of Fylde and Wyre than they were for those from Blackpool.

People feel safer during the day (91%) than they do at night 20%. Respondents believed that an increased police and security presence to reduce anti-social behaviour would make people more likely to visit.

A perception in the evening/night time periods is that it is not safe, being full of drunks. The town centre is not family friendly being largely a pub scene with no late night shopping.

### **The main themes arising from the research**

Although some of the responses were positive about Blackpool and the changes that have already happened in the town centre, the main themes are that the town is in decline, run down and dirty with empty shops. The evening/night time economy is not family friendly, is full of drunks and people do not feel safe.

The survey indicates that the following would improve perceptions of the area:

- Better quality and wider range of shops
- Improved parking (cost and availability) and road systems
- More visible policing
- Cleaner and safer atmosphere
- Reduction in anti-social behaviour
- Family friendly shows/events
- Late night shopping
- CCTV (monitored)
- Nice restaurants and sensible bars near the theatres and away from the jobs.

## **Themes identified by the Working Group**

During the meetings to consider representations from interested parties, the working group identified the following:

1. High quality, well managed venues were a key factor in improving the perception of Blackpool and encouraging people to enjoy the night time economy in a responsible manner
2. Zones – Blackpool aims to have a mixed and vibrant nightlife and for this to work effectively there needs to be a quieter zone where families can eat and socialise separate from a more lively adult orientated area.
3. CCTV – a monitored CCTV system has a dual purpose. It assists the police in preventing and detecting crime and it also makes people feel safe.
4. Street lighting
5. Taxi marshalls
6. First aiders in licensed premises – to reduce the burden on the ambulance service
7. Marketing
8. Funding

## Strategies to take into consideration

### Blackpool Core Strategy

The strategy aims to make Blackpool the first choice shopping destination for Fylde Coast residents and an attractive place to visit and do business. To do this there needs to be a high quality retail offer combined with positive leisure, cultural and social experience during the day and into the evening.

Within the Town Centre an area described as the principal retail core will become the main focus for the retail development. This area comprises of the main shopping streets in the town centre.

### Blackpool Town Centre Strategy – March 2013

This strategy outlines the following vision for Blackpool:

*“In 2027, Blackpool Town Centre is the thriving heart of Britain’s favourite resort, offering all year-round high quality shopping, leisure, cultural and entertainment destination.*

*Residents and visitors from all walks of life choose to spend time here throughout the day and into the evening.*

*The revitalised Tower and Winter Gardens are major attractions along with an exciting programme of events and festivals.*

*Blackpool hosts a vibrant outdoor café culture, with attractive streets and spaces providing high quality public realm and strong links between the town centre and the beach.*

*A high quality integrated transport system allows easy access to the town centre and provides a positive arrival experience”*

This vision is supported by six objectives:

1. Re-establish the town centre as the first choice shopping destination for Fylde Coast residents
2. Strengthen the town centre as a vibrant leisure, entertainment, cultural and business tourism destination for residents and visitors
3. Grow the town centre as a place to do business by creating a Central Business District and creative industries hub
4. Create a choice of high quality homes within and around the town centre
5. Improve the quality of buildings, streets and spaces and their maintenance and management
6. Provide convenient access to the town centre by all modes of travel and enable easier pedestrian movement

The Town Centre Strategy notes that the evening/night-time economy is based on a heavy drinking culture, which is a deterrent to many visitors and residents. There needs to be a shift towards more family-orientated evening activities, particularly within and adjacent to the principal retail core.

These two strategies break what in planning terms is designated as the town centre into a number of distinctive areas and key sites:

A - Principal Retail Core – the main shopping streets of Church Street, Victoria Street, Bank Hey Street and the Houndshill Shopping Centre

B – Winter Gardens

C – Central Business District based around the new Council offices and Blackpool North Railway Station

D – Promenade Frontage (Leisure Zone)

E – Former Central Station Site

F – Retail/Café Zone and Mixed Use Zone – which includes the St John’s area and the Market Street/Queen Street areas

## Conclusions and recommendations

There is a great deal of similarity between the issues identified by the Working Group and those highlighted by the perceptions survey. These, at least in part, seem to have also been considered when producing the town centre strategy in 2013.

### Zones

The working group identified in its interim report the need for effective zoning to provide a quieter area where families and groups could meet to socialise and a more lively area with late night bars. This is supported by the perceptions survey which highlights the need for quality family friendly establishments away from the lively late night drinking areas. To a certain extent this is already starting to happen with a café/eating area emerging around St John's, Cedar Square and Victoria Street with higher quality branded restaurants opening.

#### Recommendation 1

**The Licensing Committee considers amendments to its Statement of Licensing Policy to establish Queen Street and the surrounding area as the late night entertainment area and St John's, Church Street and Victoria Street as the area where applications for café/restaurant and other family orientated applications are encouraged**

The creation of zones is not a simple process when you are dealing with an already established town centre as there are bound to be existing venues in the wrong area, however this is not a reason to start the process. Over time as the different zones become established and well known residents and visitors for example wanting to go to the late night bars will automatically go to that area. Any late night business in the incorrect zone will want to be where all of the trade is therefore there will be an incentive for it to move or to change its business model to adapt to the area it is in.

### Quality of venues

Whilst there are a number of brewery led and national brands in Blackpool, there are a high number of businesses that are suffering from a lack of investment and appear to be being run on a shoe-string. All venues need to be encouraged to operate to the same high standards

#### Recommendation 2

**The Licensing Committee endorses the creation of an accreditation scheme for licensed premises in Blackpool which will reward good operators and encourage improvement in others. Such a scheme will be bespoke for the needs of Blackpool based on the compliance manual that has been recently updated.**

There is also the concern that the town centre saturation area may be stifling investment rather than encouraging it.

### **Recommendation 3**

**The Licensing Committee consider the need for the town centre saturation area following the creation of the zones.**

### **Anti-Social Behaviour**

Many of the responses to the survey highlight the concerns about anti-social behaviour specifically arising from drunkenness, drug taking, street beggars and people trying to sell rag mags and similar publications. The Council are currently consulting on the creation of a Public Space Protection Order which can have the effect of prohibiting certain conduct for example drinking on the street. This order is aimed at trying to prevent the behaviour from taking place to start with, but it also gives officers powers to deal with anti-social behaviour if it does occur.

### **Recommendation 4**

**The Licensing Committee considers giving formal support to the creation of a Public Space Protection Order in the town centre based on the results of the perception survey.**

### **Late Night Levy**

Whilst many of the issues raised during the lifetime of the working group can be actioned by changes in policy, some for example CCTV and increased police presence do require funds. One possibility for funding is the late night levy.

A licensing authority may decide that a late night levy is to apply in its area.

When making a decision the licensing authority must consider:

- The costs of policing and other arrangements for the reduction or prevention of crime and disorder, in connection with the supply of alcohol between midnight and 6 am, and
- Having regard to the costs, the desirability of raising revenue to be applied in accordance with section 131.

A licensing authority may not decide that the levy is to apply on part only of its area.

### **Definitions**

Relevant late night authorisation – a premises licence/club premises certificate which authorises the supply of alcohol at a time or times during the late night supply period on one or more days in the related payment year.

Late night supply period - must begin on or after midnight and end at or before 6 am. The period must be the same for each payment year beginning during the levy year and throughout such payment year.

### Consultation

Prior to making a decision to implement the levy it is intended that the licensing authority will have discussions with the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) and local police to decide whether it is appropriate to introduce a levy in the area. If so the licensing authority must formally consult with the PCC, police, licence holders and others about its decision to introduce a levy.

### Licensing Authority Revenue

The licensing authority can retain up to 30% of the late night levy to fund other activities besides policing. The services funded should tackle alcohol-related crime and disorder such as taxi marshalling, and booze buses or be used for other related purposes such as street cleaning.

### Permitted Categories of Exemption

- a) **A hotel or guest house, lodging house or hostel** at which the supply of alcohol between midnight and 6am on any day may only be made to a person who is staying at the premises
  
- b) A **theatre** at which the supply of alcohol between midnight and 6am on any day may only be made to a person for consumption on the premises who has a ticket for the performance, is involved in the performance or is a guest at an event to which the public does not have access
  
- (c) A **cinema** at which the supply of alcohol between midnight and 6am on any day may only be made to a person for consumption on the premises who is at ticketholder or is a guest at an event to which the public do not have access
  
- (d) Premises in respect of which a premises licence authorising bingo is in force and the playing of bingo is the primary activity
  
- (e) a club which is registered as a community amateur sports club by virtue of section 658 of the Corporation Tax Act 2010;
  
- (f) Community premises in relation to which the premises licence contains the alternative licence condition;
  
- (g) A public house which is a hereditament in respect of which the ratepayer is subject to a non-domestic rate calculated in accordance with section 43(6A) of the Local Government Finance Act 1988;
  
- (h) Premises liable to pay the BID levy where one of the purposes of the BID will result in or are likely to result in the reduction or prevention of crime and disorder in connection with the supply of alcohol at premises with late night licences
  
- (j) Premises authorised to supply alcohol for consumption on the premises between midnight and 6am on 1st January in every year (but are not so authorised at those times on any other day in any year).

## Discounts

Discounts of 30% can be given to licence holders

- (a) Who are members of a relevant arrangement; or
- (b) Licence holders where the non-domestic rateable value is less than £12,000

“Relevant arrangement” is an arrangement which—

- (a) Is established for purposes which include relevant purposes,
- (b) Requires its members to take steps to promote the relevant purposes, and
- (c) Contains provision for the cessation of the membership of a holder of a relevant late night authorisation who has failed to take steps to promote the relevant purposes.

## Application in Blackpool

### Estimate of sums that could be raised

The amount that can be charged on a late night levy depends on the fee band the premises falls within.

Band A = £299

Band B = £768

Band C = £1259

Band D = £1365

Band E = £1493

It is estimated that approximately £227,000 could be raised from a levy however the costs of setting up the levy and administering it would need to be deducted. By way of example the annual administrative costs in Newcastle are £18,000.00 a year and the initial costs could be as high as £60,000.00 taking into consideration staffing and consultation costs.

These calculations are based on an assumption that hotels/guest houses will be exempted from the levy (note the exemption is only for sales to residents and most can sell to residents and bona fide guests)

The breakdown of premises per band is as follows:

Band	Premises	Levy	Total raised
A	11	299	3,289.00
B	91	768	69,888.00
C	53	1259	66,727.00
D	17	1365	23,205.00
E	43	1493	64,199.00

### Impact of exemptions/reductions

If a 30% reduction is given to premises with a non-domestic rateable value less than £12,000 this will reduce the calculation by £9050.70

### Other points to note

Of the 31 Club Premises Certificates in force for members clubs, 13 will be affected by the levy. There are a further 7 members clubs who operate under a premises licence which would be affected.

12 premises are licenced to sell alcohol until 00.30 hours. If all decided to voluntarily reduce their hours there this would mean a reduction in income of £10,711.

### Recommendation 5

**The Licensing Committee considers in more detail whether a late night levy is a suitable option for Blackpool.**

### CCTV

A manned CCTV system serves two purposes, assisting the police in identifying the perpetrators of crime and ant-social behaviour, as well as providing reassurance to members of the public. Whilst the system is already in place it is acknowledged that manning the CCTV room even on a part-time basis will involve securing sustainable funding either from the late night levy or another source. It does appear however to be an important factor in making people feel that they are safe when they come into the town centre so monitoring should be re-instated if the funding can be secured.

### Recommendation 6

**Funding options should be explored to permit the manning of the CCTV system to be re-instated.**

\*Note the recent announcement about the return of monitored CCTV

### Visible "Police" presence

The police are suffering from budget cuts as are local authorities, therefore, although desirable, the likelihood of police officers being available to create a visible presence in the town centre is low. Nevertheless responses from the survey indicate that a uniformed presence would have the effect of making people feel safer in the town centre so it is necessary to consider alternative options to the traditional police constable in uniform.

### Recommendation 7

**Options for providing a uniformed presence in the town centre should be explored.**

### The Night Time Economy Working Group

Making positive changes can only be done on a multi-agency basis but this will only work if a co-ordinated approach is taken. Taking an overview of the work being done is outside of the remit of the Licensing Committee as it covers a variety of Council functions.

**Recommendation 8**

**The Night Time Economy Working Group should continue to oversee and co-ordinate town centre related projects.**