

Blackpool Council



wyre
council

6 April 2020

BLACKPOOL, FYLDE AND WYRE ECONOMIC PROSPERITY BOARD

Tuesday, 7 April 2020

Written updates provided in lieu of meeting

A G E N D A

- 1 UPDATE ON FUTURE HIGH STREET FUND AND FYLDE COAST TRAM LOOP (Pages 1 - 4)**
- 2 HILLHOUSE ENTERPRISE ZONE UPDATE REPORT - APRIL 2020 (Pages 5 - 8)**
- 3 BLACKPOOL ENTERPRISE ZONE UPDATE - APRIL 2020 (Pages 9 - 20)**

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Report to:	Blackpool, Fylde and Wyre Economic Prosperity Board
Report Author:	Nick Gerrard, Growth and Prospeity Programme Director, Blackpool Council
Date of Meeting:	7th April 2020 (CANCELLED)

Future High Street Fund (FHSF) and the Fylde Coast Tram Loop

1.0 Purpose of the report:

- 1.1 To update the Board on the FHSF bidding process for Blackpool, Fleetwood and Kirkham and the proposed Fylde Coast Tram Loop business case study

2.0 Recommendation(s):

- 2.1 Members are asked to note the report on which further updates will be given and a draft brief circulated for comment in due course.

3.0 Background Information

At last Board meeting on 7th January, following a proposal for the three local authorities to include a funding request in their respective Future High Street Fund (FHSF) bids to support a business case study into a Fylde Coast tramway loop it was agreed:

- a) That the proposition was accepted.
- b) MHCLG are approached to secure endorsement for the approach being undertaken with a view to Future High Street Funding.
- c) Lancashire County Council, as transport authority for the vast majority of the study area, are formally approached for their support.
- d) Blackpool Transport, Network Rail and Northern Railway are briefed on the proposal and are given an opportunity to input.
- e) Community Rail Lancashire, Transport for the North, the DfT and the Poulton and Wyre Railway Society are consulted.
- f) Kirkham Business Group and Kirkham Town Council are consulted.

Previous Board meetings have highlighted the aims and objectives of the FHSF fund and how each Fylde coast authority had been invited to submit a bid for Blackpool, Fleetwood and Kirkham respectively.

Wyre Council were in the first phase and so were required to submit a draft bid by the end of January deadline and a full bid by the end of April although in view of the Covi-19 pandemic this has been extended to 5th June. Fylde and Blackpool Councils

were required to submit their draft bids by the 16th March and full bids by 30th June but they now have the option of submitting their bids from 30th June to 31st July.

This has now been done and each bid currently contains an £800k bid for resources to support a comprehensive feasibility study and outline business case to provide a sufficiently developed preferred option, which will be capable of being implemented if a future funding opportunity becomes available.

Appraisal feedback takes 6-8 weeks and Wyre have recently received their feedback which made no comment on the Tram Loop proposal. The depth of detail required for bids is clearly set out, which with the COVID-19 outbreak and its ramifications, there is some concern over the ability to develop bids to the standard required to meet the short deadline, especially for Wyre whose deadline is shortest. Not surprisingly no guidance from Government has yet been issued to change the situation or relax the deadlines so in the meantime all 3 bids continue to be developed to aim to meet the existing deadlines.

Also, as referenced at the last Board it was discussed that even if the bid for the study was unsuccessful through the FHSF, any work undertaken would stand all three authorities in good stead for future bids, and the issue of improving connectivity across the Fylde Coast was critical

In terms of the Board's other resolutions progress is highlighted in italics below:

b) MHCLG are approached to secure endorsement for the approach being undertaken with a view to Future High Street Funding.

The Delivery Manager for Blackpool and Fylde's bids gave no definitive response but said that the matter would need the input of the Department of Transport if included in the final submission

c) Lancashire County Council, as transport authority for the vast majority of the study area, are formally approached for their support.

Discussions have commenced on the draft brief which, once it is sufficiently ready will be the subject of a wider consultation

d) Blackpool Transport, Network Rail and Northern Railway are briefed on the proposal and are given an opportunity to input.

e) Community Rail Lancashire, Transport for the North, the DfT and the Poulton and Wyre Railway Society are consulted.

Some discussions have commenced and once more progress has been made on c) a draft brief will be the subject of a wider consultation

f) Kirkham Business Group and Kirkham Town Council are consulted.

A meeting took place on 10th March with Fylde and Blackpool officers to explain the proposals more fully, understand the opportunity this potentially presented and the

issues of concern to Kirkah's businesses and communities so that these could be addressed in the brief.

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Report to: Blackpool, Fylde and Wyre Economic Prosperity Board
Report Author: Rob Green, Head of Enterprise Zones, Blackpool Council
Date of Meeting: 7th April 2020 (CANELLED)
Recommendation: That the Committee notes the report.

Hillhouse Enterprise Zone: Progress Report

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

A series of meetings have been held with the senior managers at NPL Estates to better understand their proposals for a phase of speculative development which would in part, assist the decanting of existing businesses from the old International Business Centre, releasing that site for redevelopment with the focus on the need for enabling infrastructure and the funding thereof.

Further clarification has also been obtained on the phasing and costings of the wider on and off site infrastructure costs and for individual development plots. This information is now being modelled into a revised delivery plan by consultants Genecon. The implementation plan will also reflect the impacts of the withdrawal of Vinnolit from the site over the next 12 months and the release of additional development land that this may enable. A draft of the implementation plan is due and a meeting is to be scheduled to go through costings.

MARKETING

Newsletter

The previous newsletter was distributed to 52 recipients on 11th February:
<https://mailchi.mp/fd16f90c03fe/may-e-newsletter-582797>. Work continues to engage more people to sign up to the newsletter.

Marketing Strategy

A marketing strategy has being drafted for inclusion in the Delivery Plan which will be circulated with these notes. The EZ marketing team will support tenants on the site with any good news stories and a news is anticipated from Forsa Energy about starting on site in April (dependent on current COVID-19 restrictions).

Events

Hillhouse EZ literature was made available at the recent Northern Powerhouse EVO North event (March) in Manchester and the Place NW Lancashire Development Update (Feb) as part of the

Blackpool: The Place for Business delegation. Some useful contacts were made and shared with the Lancashire Hydrogen Steering Hub for follow up.

Hydrogen Steering Group

The second Lancashire Hydrogen Steering Hub took place at Wyre BC offices on 27th February 2020. 18 people attended from both the public and private sectors and BOC delivered a presentation on hydrogen fuelled vehicles. The next meeting that was scheduled to take place on 30th March has been postponed till further notice.

The Hillhouse and Wyre teams are in the process of drafting Terms of Reference for this group.

The vision for hydrogen power on the Fylde Coast is to help meet local ambitions to deliver a clean low carbon energy economy in the area and to create a centre of excellence supported by education and industry. The plan is to deliver hydrogen research and production at Hillhouse, leading to the creation of a support network for hydrogen production, hydrogen storage, and supplies to local authorities, transportation companies, businesses and housing is in its infancy and more work needs to be commissioned to develop the proposals and look at integration with other renewable energy provision needed to power the Hydrogen generation.

SITE ACTIVITY

Vinnolit - It is confirmed that Vinnolit ceased trading on August 31st 2019 and the site is now in the process of decommissioning and staff redeployment. Key staff will remain on site until at least Summer 2020 to assist in the decommissioning of the site. It is understood that a majority of the existing workforce have either opted for retirement or secured new roles with other businesses at Hillhouse with employment support and re-training advice being provided. Close contact is being maintained with Vinnolit management both onsite and via the immediate parent company in Germany.

The plant ceased operating as tier 1 COMAH status although lower tier COMAH status remains in respect of other manufacturing operations and upper tier COMAH status would be easily re-instated if required.

Biomass - Heads of Terms have been agreed between a Biomass developer and Le Fylde Estates (Landowner NPL Group) for a 150,000 tonne p/a EfW plant within the Hillhouse Enterprise Zone. Site investigations and early planning works are taking place. It is projected this will create a number of short-term constructions jobs and permanent operative jobs once completed.

Forsa Energy – Forsa are expected to start work on site in April on the development of a new 20MW Short Term Operating Reserve (STOR) gas turbines, planning consent having been granted in 2017.

Job Creation – We expect a high number of construction jobs to be created this next quarter due to the start on site by Forsa Energy. At the time of writing, the team is waiting for confirmation on how many construction full time equivalent jobs are currently on site. In Q1 2020 the team will contact all Hillhouse businesses to assess what additional growth and jobs creation there has been over the past 12 months.

Joint Agent for LAMEC Cluster – The team is working with LCC to appoint a joint international agent for all four LAMEC sites by Spring 2020.

EZ Fiscal Benefits - The clock continues to tick with regards to the EZ fiscal benefits with the business rates relief due to expire on 31st March 2021 and the enhanced capital allowances (ECA) due to expire in November 2023, which will leave only a very short window of opportunity to capitalise once new development sites are released upon completion of key enabling infrastructure. As detailed in the Blackpool Airport report a combined approach to seek an extension of fiscal benefits is underway.

FORTHCOMING ACTIVITY

- Complete implementation plan by January 2020
- Procure specialist State Aid advice once IP completed
- Complete updated Risk Register by January 2020
- A flood risk assessment to be commissioned for the entire site
- A transport assessment be commissioned for the entire site
- A utilities assessment to be commissioned for the whole site
- An Environmental and Ecology study to be commissioned for the entire site

Ends

List of Background Papers

Paper	Date	Contact/Tel
None		

Reason for inclusion in Part II, if appropriate

Exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972. The report contains information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information). It is considered that in all the circumstances of the case the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

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Report to: Blackpool, Fylde and Wyre Economic Prosperity Board
Report Author: Rob Green, Head of Enterprise Zones, Blackpool Council
Date of Meeting: 7th April 2020 (CANCELLED)
Recommendation: That the Committee notes the report.

1. Blackpool Airport Enterprise Zone: Progress Report

a) Masterplan

Work to revise the EZ masterplan and delivery plan has commenced in the first quarter 2020 with Cassidy and Ashton engaged to update the original Mott MacDonald/IBI plan and with Genecon updating the financial predictions and delivery plan, based on the revised layout and phasing reflecting specific details now agreed around phase one, highways and airport design. The new plan will also reflect the impacts of the data centre study recommendations and the changes surrounding the Squires Gate Industrial Estate.

The first draft of the revised financial modelling delivery plan will provide new estimates of cost retained rates revenue, jobs and impact upon GVA over the lifetime of the EZ. It is hoped that the revised plan and delivery plan can be completed and presented for approval to EPB by June. The approved Marketing Strategy will continue to be implemented for the Enterprise Zone and where appropriate will be updated upon completion of the masterplan update.

b) Fiscal Incentives

The clock continues to tick with regards to the EZ fiscal benefits with the business rates relief due to expire on 31st March 2022 and the enhanced capital allowances (ECA) due to expire in November 2023, which will leave only a very short window of opportunity on which to capitalise on them once new development sites are released upon completion of key enabling infrastructure.

Agreement has been reached at the LEP EZGC for action to approach MHCLG and HMT on behalf of the four Lancashire and other Northern EZ's to seek extensions of the Fiscal benefits.

A formal proposal seeking an extension of the fiscal incentives available to EZ's is being circulated to all northern EZ's seeking their support in principle. Thereafter calling a virtual meeting of EZ's to be hosted by Lancashire to confirm the basis of a collective approach to MHCLG and HMT. An amendment to the original draft will be made prior to issue with regards to the further implications that the coronavirus pandemic will now have on the delivery of essential infrastructure over the coming months and we would wish to target government approval for a range of anticipated new post-pandemic, economic stimulation, fiscal measures.

c) Current Activity - Phase One

A planning application for the grass sports pitch element of phase one has now been submitted to Fylde BC seeking approval for the creation of 12 no. grass sports pitches, a new airport perimeter track and new crash gates for the airport. The security perimeter fence is now complete and marks the area

where the new pitches will be situated. Contractors are currently on site undertaking preparatory works so that the seed can be sown in May/June so that the grass is ready for play at the start of the football season September 2021.

A second planning application will be submitted in the next few weeks for two 3G pitches, new changing room facilities, a new car park and access into the site. The planning application may also include provision for a new primary electricity substation required to support anticipated increased power demand from early development of the phase one sites including the potential for possible data centres, subject to agreement with ENWL. Plans to stage a public consultation in respect of the application have had to be shelved in light of the present restrictions and alternative methods of consultation to be explored for example an online portal displaying all plans and information and a feedback form for the public to record comment. This would be supported by a letter to the local residents and business community.

A third Outline planning application will follow for the use of the former Common Edge Playing fields for commercial and residential development, in line with the original masterplan and will encompass the access arrangements for the Eastern Gateway road and upgrading of Common Edge Highway between School Road and Division Lane.

A series of detailed planning applications are then envisaged for individual developments and the Highways over the coming years.

d) Eastern Gateway Access Road

Highway and transportation studies undertaken to support the phase one planning applications have confirmed that the M55 link road is not critical to the ability to develop out phase one of the EZ. Blackpool Highways team are currently remodelling the road design to ensure the local infrastructure can cope with additional commercial development.

The position of the access road which will now be a traffic light junction rather than a roundabout, will be located to the north of South Shore Cricket Club. Work to the existing highway at Common Edge Road upgraded with work undertaken via the existing Highways PFI. A separate design and build contract will be awarded for the new link between Common Edge Road and Amy Johnson Way, once the phase one outline planning consent has been secured. The target date for opening the through route remains first quarter 2022.

e) Common Edge Sports Facilities

Initial work focusses on the relocation of existing grass pitches onto former airport land which will take circa 18 months from completion until they can be fully utilised. At the request of Sport England the Blackpool Council Playing Pitch Strategy is also being updated and the composition of the Common Edge facilities will reflect new requirements.

f) Link Road

Ongoing issues in relation to the funding and delivery of the proposed M55 link road continue and are being managed by Lancashire County Council, particularly in terms of funding and a delivery timescale, with a final decision on the roads delivery timetable hopefully due by the end of March. Blackpool Council as the EZ accountable body, have agreed to a mechanism which assists Fylde Council to accelerate contributions toward the M55 link road by adjusting arrangements for use of retained

business rates growth. This may have a slight decelerating effect upon the overall EZ delivery programme.

g) Initial Speculative Development

Full planning consent has been granted by Blackpool Council for the development of a speculative 4,000m² B1/B2 unit on a site at Amy Johnson Way. Heads of terms have now been agreed with a prospective occupier and the formal contracts are being drawn up. It is expected that a construction contract can be entered into with work commencing in June with the property in occupation from late Spring 2021.

h) Planning Applications

In addition to the phase one applications there is currently one live planning application for new development being considered by Blackpool Council for a proposed development of a 20MW gas fired power generation facility. Concerns have been lodged surrounding safeguarding airport operations and these are being worked through.

A retrospective planning application for a concrete batching plant and materials handling on land to the rear of the Squires Gate Industrial Estate is also under consideration attracting a number of local objections.

In November planning consent was awarded for a 1,400m² development on land in private ownership off Amy Johnson way and construction has now commenced, the majority of the property will be occupied by the developer for his business but marketing has commenced for the adjacent unit which offers 5,730 sq ft B2/B8 industrial space with an option for mezzanine ancillary.

i) Squires Gate Industrial Estate (Former Wellington Bomber Factory)

The new owners of Squires Gate Industrial Estate continue to carry out improvement works on the property and have filled some of the vacant accommodation with new tenants. At the present time it is most unlikely that the owner would wish to explore the demolition and redevelopment of the property as initially proposed in the masterplan, although efforts continue to encourage appropriate development to come forward.

j) Communications Infrastructure

Work has continued to support the installation of the new transatlantic fibre optic telecommunications cable, part of the North Atlantic loop from New York to Denmark, which is being developed by Aqua Comms. Cable ducting has been laid from the proposed landing point to the base station at Blackpool Airport. Additional cable ducting has been laid across the EZ estate, with a further expansion of the network under the Local Fast Fibre Network (LFFN) programme at the planning stage. The new transatlantic cable is due to come ashore in May/June 2020. Discussions are ongoing to conclude agreements for the completion of the LFFN link to Hillhouse EZ via the tramway.

The presence of the new optic fibre link will provide fast communication links with timings of less than 64 milliseconds to transmit data from Blackpool to New York, providing a distinct competitive advantage and USP for the EZ. The new connection will open up the possibility of securing investment in the provision of data centre facilities at the EZ and of securing investment from data driven industries. The availability of power, particularly green power will be vital to secure major data centre investment and initial proposals for the development of solar PV facilities across the EZ estate and airport are being investigated.

Further to a study by data centre specialists COWI, a specialist task group has been established to progress the opportunities in this sector working closely with BITC and the Blackpool Pride of Place board. The last meeting took place on 28th Jan and it was agreed that a series of workshops would take place to identify specific sectoral opportunities and next steps for marketing to this particular sector. The Town Deal Board will explore the opportunities enhanced digital connectivity presents for Blackpool as it develops the Town Investment Plan. This will be supported later in the year by an event in London organised by Business in the Community and Pride of Place Partnership to promote the investment opportunities in this sector. As available plots are identified at the Enterprise Zone and brought to market, the team will have further discussions with the wider group on how these plots are marketed to this target sector.

k) Fibre Blackpool

Fibre Blackpool is a project run by a co-operative group from the private and public sectors working together to roll out the extension of a local full fibre network (LFFN) that will give an improved, gigabit capable, broadband internet connection to residents and businesses on the Fylde Coast. Early enquiries have been very positive and the Internet Service Providers involved in the campaign are actively marketing to businesses across the Fylde. Case studies and press releases from ITS Group are awaited for phase 2 promotion and when received, the EZ team will share on the various website and social media platforms. ITS Group are also planning to hold an open free event for EZ businesses, but this will now be postponed until further notice during the current COVID-19 crisis.

l) Marketing

Marketing Lancashire are currently awaiting proposals from Richard Barber & Co. for phase 2 of the EZ websites. A conference call will be set up to progress implementation of new website features when the proposal is received.

Blackpool EZ marketing officer attended a workshop about website accessibility recently and this will also be fed into any new design for the websites and brochures.

Press and promotional activity continue and since the last meeting the team has exhibited at the following profile raising events:

- Place NW Lancashire Development Update, Feb, Nick Gerrard also spoke at this event
- Northern Powerhouse EVO North Conference, March

Sponsorship of Lancashire Business View's Regional Hotspot Feature is coming up in the May/June edition in which there will be a focus on EZ developments.

A briefing presentation to new LEP Board members was due to take place at the end of March but is currently postponed. We will wait for further advice from the LEP as to how they would like to progress.

Attendance at an aviation conference in London in June has been cancelled and the event rearranged for October.

Marketing Lancashire was due to have a Lancashire delegation at MIPIIM Cannes where there will be members of the LEP team well positioned to promote the LAMEC websites to an international audience. The event is currently rescheduled to take place 2-5 June 2020 and the team will monitor the situation as the date gets nearer.

We are also working with LCC to appoint a joint international agent for all four LAMEC sites by September 2020.

In Q1/2 2020 we will be looking at updating and streamlining the promotional material to reflect any changes made to the websites, the Masterplan and Delivery Plan.

The fifth EZ newsletter is scheduled for distribution to 120 registered recipients at the end of March and work continues to engage more people to sign up to the newsletter. An interim newsletter was issued on 16th March with updates on the coronavirus outbreak and links to government webpages offering guidance and advice to businesses. The team will continue to update all EZ stakeholders through the website and social media channels on new developments and any help that is available to them. Further updates will be issued as more government information becomes available.

Levels of short term and urgent enquiries for commercial property are anticipated to reduce due to the current restrictions on movement and uncertainty to many businesses financial situation. Longer lead enquiries and enquiries for design and build, we expect to remain steady but will monitor the situation over the next few months.

m) Blackpool: The Place for Business

The online communications campaign has come to the end of the initial 12 months contract with external agency collaboration Clarity/Diva. A tender is currently live on the NW Chest portal for a new 12 month marketing campaign, deadline is 27th March. Interviews and presentations are due to take place w/c 13th April and the team will discuss the best way forward in light of the current restriction of movement.

n) Blackpool Airport

Work continues to replace worn out systems and upgrade the airports operational capabilities with the new Instrument landing System (ILS) and replacement of taxiway lighting now complete.

Architects Cassidy + Ashton have been appointed to undertake initial feasibility/option studies for the replacement of old aircraft hangars and associated aircraft parking aprons as a first step toward opening up the frontage of Squires Gate Lane for new business park development. Their work will also include studies on the provision of a new control tower, fire station and administration facility, probably to be located south of the main runway outside of the EZ boundary.

C+A will be meeting existing aviation and interested external parties to hold informal workshops to define requirements for new hangars.

o) Third Party Development

The only construction presently underway is the development on land to the east of Seneca House off Amy Johnson Way.

To date:

- A total of 202 live enquiries are currently logged for Blackpool EZ.
- Some 73 businesses have located to the Enterprise Zone since April 2016.
- A total of 1520 jobs have located to the Enterprise Zone, this figure includes jobs new to the area, safeguarded jobs within Blackpool and construction full time equivalent jobs.

p) Project Team

The meeting of the Blackpool Airport EZ Project Team took place on 7th February at NW Chamber of Commerce offices. The next meeting has been cancelled due to restrictions on movement and a written report will be circulated to the group.

r) Risk Register

The Blackpool Airport Enterprise Zone risk register is available for consideration and review and is fully updated on a quarterly basis or when significant changes occur.

Report Author

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BLACKPOOL AIRPORT ENTERPRISE ZONE NEWS

MARCH 2020



Welcome to the Blackpool Airport Enterprise Zone newsletter bringing you updates on planning and development, business successes, Blackpool Airport and more.

Please email nicole.billington@blackpool.gov.uk or call Freephone 0808 1644922 or visit [BlackpoolEZ](#)

COVID-19 UPDATE FOR BUSINESS

Given these uncertain times, we understand that many local businesses are worried about COVID-19 and what the financial implications of this will mean for their business.

In the recent budget, the government pledged to "Support businesses that experience increased costs or disruptions to their cashflow. This includes expanded Business Rates reliefs, a Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme to support up to a further £1 billion lending to SMEs, a £2.2 billion grant scheme for small businesses, and a dedicated helpline for those who need a deferral period on their tax liabilities."

The situation is changing daily and the best way to keep updated is through the government website which has lots of advice and guidance for employees, employers and businesses.

Government Guidance for Business

The team at Blackpool Council are also on hand to help and will do our best to answer your queries. There is a wealth of helpful information at:

[Blackpool Unlimited - COVID-19 Business Advice](#)

or you can call the Blackpool Airport Enterprise Zone Team on Freephone 0800 1644922.

[The Budget - what you need to know](#)

For more general health advice on what to do if you are feeling unwell or at risk of infection, please follow the latest advice on the government and NHS websites.

[COVID-19 Government Response](#)
[NHS Website](#)

Thank you. The EZ team wishes you all the best of health at this difficult time.

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BLACKPOOL AIRPORT ENTERPRISE ZONE NEWS

23 MARCH 2020

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Launch of dedicated COVID-19 Business Support Helpdesk

Blackpool Council has set up a dedicated helpdesk to support local businesses during the coronavirus pandemic. The helpdesk will help businesses to understand and access the £330 billion package of rescue measures announced by the Chancellor earlier this week – including temporary loans, rate relief and cash grants to help meet ongoing costs.

The wide-ranging measures include:

- The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme offering 80% wage subsidies up to a cap of £2,500 per month for 'furloughed workers'. Applies to all UK employers

- A business rates holiday for all retail, hospitality and leisure businesses in 2020-21; and cash grants of £10,000 (for premises with a rateable value of under £15k) and £25k (for premises between £15k and £51k rateable value)
- A one-off grant of £10,000 to all businesses currently eligible for Small Business Rate Relief (SBRR)
- Business rates holiday for nursery businesses for 2020-21
- A Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CBILS) offering loans of up to £5m to companies with less than £41m turnover
- Support for larger firms through the COVID-19 Corporate Financing facility – aimed at companies with short term cashflow issues
- Support for businesses with outstanding tax affairs through HMRC's Time to Pay service
- Support for businesses to defer VAT payments for 3 months (until 30 June 2020)
- For self-employed Income tax payments due on 31st July will be deferred until 31 January 2021
- Support for business paying sick pay to employees (a rebate scheme)

Further guidance is expected shortly to local authorities on how to administer rate relief and one-off grants – businesses do not need to register with the local authority as details are already held.

HMRC is currently setting up the IT system to enable claims for wage subsidies through the Job Retention scheme. The Council's helpdesk will be manned by business support experts assisted by colleagues in the business rates department.

Businesses should use this link [Blackpoolunlimited](#) to complete an enquiry form. The team will then respond with bespoke help and guidance. Regular updates on Government support for business during the pandemic will be available on the BlackpoolUnlimited.com website.

Further updates can be found on the government website: [Government Business Advice](#)

Please feel free to pass this information on to other businesses in the area who you think will benefit from this service.

URGENT UK GOVERNMENT REQUEST: SUPPLY OF COVID-19 ANTIGEN TESTING KIT

Any organisations that can supply for sale any or all of the below should email:
covidtestingtriage@dhsc.gov.uk

There is an urgent call out to the life sciences sector to help increase the supply of antigen testing kits for COVID-19.

The requirement is for commercial supply of the following:

- * Full testing packages (specification below)
- * Any of the separate components within the testing package
- * Any alternative tests government should be considering

The **specification** for testing kit is as follows:

1. Swabs:

- Nasopharyngeal (Florescent fiber tipped (polyester) or flocked swabs) with polystyrene shafts that are scored at 80 mm for a breakpoint
- Nasopharyngeal (minitip) are currently preferred
- No discoloration on the swab bud (i.e. yellowing or brown discoloration)
- Sterilised and individually wrapped
- No calcium alginate swabs
- No swabs with wooden shaft
- Nose and throat swabs (Rayon tipped – FDA review in process)

2. Sample Vial

- Glass (20.25 +/- 0.25 x 47.25 +/- 0.5) & Plastic (TBD)

3. Viral transport medium
 - Covid-19 transport medium
4. Alcohol/Sanitiser wipes
5. Re-packaging (storage/biohazard packaging)
 - Vial wrap – Specification TBC
 - Sealed zip lock bag
 - Second bag (plastic/cushioned)
 - Sealable container – 'Biobottle'
 - Postal 'biobox'

In addition, there is also a requirement for swabs for PCR diagnostic testing.

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