Report to:	TOURISM, RESOURCES AND ECONOMY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
Relevant Officer:	Philip Welsh, Head of Visitor Economy
Date of Meeting	16 June 2016

TOURISM PERFORMANCE REPORT

1.0 Purpose of the report:

1.1 To provide information on tourism performance between January and April 2016 using various indicators including number of visits, footfall, 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 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 both prior to and including the early stages of the 2016 season in Blackpool between January and April 2016.

5.2 The headline visitor numbers for the first four months of 2016 will not be available until the mid-year following the completion of national survey work. The indicators below provide a "snapshot" of levels of activity in the resort between January and April, including sales of the Blackpool Resort Pass; tram usage; footfall; use of the Tourist Information Centre; and usage of the VisitBlackpool website.

5.3 The initial signs for this first quarter are all very positive with year-on-year growth across all indicators. It is particularly encouraging to see strong growth in sales of the Blackpool Resort Pass, which went on sale much earlier this year than last.

Town Centre: Monthly Footfall (24hr)

Month	2013	2014	2015	2016
January	1,261,490	815,202	886,219	759,349
February	1,246,170	832,795	1,129,666	1,027,744
March	1,379,021	1,505,904	1,401,736	1,233,574
April	1,571,497	1,629,541	1,433,133	1,454,419
Total	**5,458,178**	**4,783,442**	**4,850,753**	**4,475,086**

Town Centre: Monthly Footfall (9am-5pm)

Month	2013	2014	2015	2016
January	690,597	521,291	589,802	643,154
February	823,405	568,211	697,507	836,387
March	939,261	1,103,716	941,662	982,493
April	1,089,109	1,187,325	985,786	1,092,898
Total	**3,542,372**	**3,380,543**	**3,214,758**	**3,554,932**

Note: The February 9am-5pm count was the highest February total on record. Note also that February includes the Showzam/February half-term festival which features a strong programme of street theatre aimed at attracting additional town centre footfall.

Promenade: Monthly Footfall (24hr)

Month	2013	2014	2015	2016
January	71,363	73,277	96,447	90,966
February	177,065	135,263	168,274	175,630
March	232,540	244,023	245,007	245,268
April	342,751	360,433	326,932	366,617
Total	**823,719**	**812,996**	**836,660**	**878,481**

Note: The January-April 2016 Promenade footfall total (24hr) is the largest on record and is probably reflective of the relatively fine weather over the latter part of February and the first half of March.

Promenade: Monthly Footfall (9am-5pm)

Month	2013	2014	2015	2016
January	56,500	23,919	51,102	68,167
February	144,403	99,921	92,966	134,970
March	170,610	190,484	150,913	186,222
April	215,282	241,613	190,494	247,870
Total	**586,795**	**555,937**	**485,475**	**637,229**

Tourist Information Centre: Monthly Visits

Month	2013	2014	2015	2016
January	1,524	1,546	1,497	1,434
February	2,028	1,702	2,374	3,098
March	3,147	1,652	2,068	2,147
April	3,297	3,646	3,298	3,289
Total	**9,996**	**8,546**	**9,237**	**9,968**

Note: 2015 was the busiest season that the Tourist Information Centre has experienced since relocating to Festival House. 2016 is already showing growth with a particularly strong performance in February.

VisitBlackpool.com: Unique Monthly Website Visits

Month	2013	2014	2015	2016
January	66,734	57,581	51,088	73,024
February	68,384	51,838	56,653	77,402
March	81,456	72,518	88,763	89,526
April	87,927	94,452	84,366	99,698
Total	**304,501**	**276,389**	**280,870**	**339,650**

Note: The VisitBlackpool website attracted significantly more unique visits in 2015 than any other year (1.68million), 2016 is already ahead of 2015 and has had record breaking monthly totals for each of the first three months of the year.

Resort Pass: Monthly Sales

Month	2013	2014	2015	2016
January	0	0	0	38
February	53	49	51	248
March	572	297	367	883
April	572	956	722	1,000
Total	**1,197**	**1,302**	**1,140**	**2,169**

Note: Resort Passes are traditionally sold from February onwards, but the decision to start selling them a few weeks earlier this year has paid off with 1,169 Resort Pass sales since January 2016 – almost three times the total achieved in 2015. The 883 sales in March 2016 is a monthly record.

Monthly Rail Passengers (Inbound)

Month	2013	2014	2015	2016
January	44,734	43,928	46,462	48,341
February	64,431	56,906	64,778	70,105
March	68,283	67,758	67,752	78,448
April	90,702	115,809	104,027	TBC
Total (Jan-Mar)	**177,448**	**168,592**	**178,992**	**196,893**
Total (Jan-Apr)	**268,150**	**284,401**	**283,019**	**TBC**

Note: Year to date inbound rail passengers are up on 2015 for each of the first three months to date. April figures are not yet available due to the change of train operator from April 1. It is worth noting that we are facing potentially significant disruption to rail services during the next two years as electrification works continue across the region. It is important as a destination that we find ways of mitigating this impact.

Monthly Tram Passengers

Month	2013	2014	2015	2016
January	162,399	181,663	153,590	171,567
February	203,694	193,858	197,113	215,895
March	273,767	260,252	236,219	280,133
April	296,441	292,159	361,406	358,864
Total	**936,301**	**927,932**	**948,328**	**1,026,459**

Note: Last year saw tram usage soar to record levels and 2016 has continued in an even more impressive vein with record breaking February and March totals already achieved. April took a slight dip due to the timing of the Easter break.

5.4 The Head of Visitor Economy also holds responsibility for producing and delivering the Blackpool Destination Management Plan, a three-year place-making plan that was developed and published in March 2015. The tables below provide a formal update on progress made over the first year of the plan.

5.5 **Destination Management Plan Key Growth Targets**

Description	Baseline Figure	2015 Target	Achieved	Comments
Overall value of tourism economy	£1.3bn	£1.32bn	£1.33bn	Growth over target and previous year
Total number of visits (derived from national Steam survey)	16.9m	17m	16.8m	Marginal decline of 0.9% year on year.
Annual total of **adult** visits (derived from Omnibus household survey)	9.8m	10m	9.0m	Decline in adult numbers during Spring and early part of summer, partly offset by record numbers in August.
Ratio of staying visitors during summer season	43%	45%	45%	Despite marginal decline in overall adult visits, the all-important ratio of staying visitors v day visitors has increased according to plan
Visitor satisfaction ratings during summer season	89%	90%	93%	Strong performance between “peak” May to August season
Jobs directly supported by tourism	24,050	24,500	23,900	

No of visitors to Blackpool Illuminations	3m	3.2m	3m	
Ranking among seaside resorts	1	1	Not yet available	Ranked fifth among ALL UK destinations including cities
Number of Resort Passes sold	13,000	14,000	13,241	Volume of passes sold ahead of previous year, but behind target due to late start on sales activity in first quarter of 2015

5.6 **Destination Blackpool: Resort Place Making 2015-17**
Key Development Projects for 2015/16

Description	Achieved – Y/N	Comments
Completion of Yeadon Way maintenance project ahead of 2015 season	Y	
Opening of four new branded family restaurants within Blackpool town centre	Y	Prezzo; Las Iguanas; Ed's Easy Diner; Mr Basrai's World Cuisine
Reintroduction of town centre CCTV monitoring	Y	Re-launched in September 15
Opening of new Pleasure beach Red Arrows-branded SkyForce attraction	Y	Opened in May 2015
Revitalisation of Blackpool Airport with small commercial flight operations	Partly	City Wing resumed flights to Isle of Man and Belfast, April 15
Blackpool South and Bispham achieve EU bathing water standards	Y	All Blackpool beaches reached new standards
Rollout of Blackpool Approved Entry Level accreditation scheme for hotels and guest houses	Y	Launched in April 2015 in association with Stay Blackpool, Yes Hotels and Visit England
Completion of steelwork replacement, Blackpool Tower	Y	*Project delayed due to adverse weather conditions, completed Easter 2016
Conversion of Tower Lounge into family restaurant/attraction	Partly	*Project delayed due to protracted negotiation. New family restaurant to open July 16
Development of new marketing brief for Central Station site	Partly	Brief due for completion and distribution later this year
Progress future development at New South Promenade to address derelict hotel sites	Y	Plans approved for former Palm Beach; plans in development for former Abbeydale Rest Home and Kimberley Hotel
Rejuvenation of Blackpool Illuminations	Y	New LightPool programme launched in September 15

Launch of updated Blackpool's Back destination marketing campaign	Y	2015 campaign successfully launched and delivered
Establishment of three-year programme of West End quality shows for Opera House	Y	CATS programmed in 2015. Mixed programme of West End quality shows lined up for 2016 into 2017
Development of Christmas In Blackpool destination marketing campaign	Y	

6.0 Lightpool: Year One

6.1 In 2015, Blackpool Council was successful in securing £2m of Coastal Communities Funding to reinvigorate Blackpool Illuminations. The project included a number of elements including:

- 3D light projections on to the Blackpool Tower building.
- New exhibitions at Grundy Art Gallery.
- Light-based programme of outdoor events around Birley Street.
- New town centre digital festoons.
- Appointment of a team of ambassadors to enhance visitor experience.

6.2 In the first year, the programme generated exceptionally high levels of public awareness. Key statistics:

- The LightPool programme overall experienced by over 560,000 visitors
- The Blackpool Tower projection show had the greatest proportion of national awareness.
- Creation of 12 ambassador posts between June and the end of the Illuminations.
- LightPool converted an estimated 6% of visitors' behaviour from viewing the Lights in a car to walking through the central sections, generating an additional £4m of spend.
- Grundy exhibition doubled its normal attendance to almost 7,000 visitors.

6.3 For 2016, there will be at least two new projection shows, including one to be produced by internationally-renowned company, The Macula. Plans are also being developed for a week-long LightPool festival at the end of October which will see a number of light installations throughout the town centre.

6.4 Sustainability of the LightPool project is a key objective for 2016, with heavy focus being put on income generation including:

- Enhanced arrival points to the north and south of the resort to incentivise public donations and to generate sales of branded merchandise and souvenir programmes.
- Creation of a LightPool "village" on the Tower Festival Headland where visitors will be able to buy LightPool merchandise and personalised photographs.

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 The 2015/16 tourism marketing and events programme was delivered within budget through continued tight controls on staffing and other expenditure, and generation of additional income.

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