

CABINET MEMBER FOR TOURISM AND LEISURE – COUNCILLOR CAIN

Illuminations

Erection of the 2014 display is on target and no issues are foreseen. The media launch of the new features for 2014 is scheduled for 17th July 17 at Lightworks. The Illuminations team is also working on other lighting projects in the town centre including the signage for Illuminasia and feature lighting in support of the summer season run of MAMMA MIA! at the Opera House.

Leisure Management

Gateway Fitness – Official Opening

Gateway Fitness Centre, the Council's fourth Health and Fitness facility opened its doors to the public for the first time on Monday 19th May. The new state of the art facility boasts a 60 station gym with a range of cardiovascular, resistance and free weights equipment along with an exercise class studio and high class changing facilities. The equipment has been supplied by Matrix Fitness and is the latest range, packed with advanced functionality, which combines a brilliant, high-definition display, a myriad of entertainment options and a responsive touch screen interface with internet and social media access. Designed to mirror popular tablet computers and optimised for exercisers, the intuitive app interface offers a more refined, exercise-friendly experience, with little to no typing and simple navigation. Further more, the class studio will be fitted with state of the art indoor cycling technology that projects images onto a large screen, enabling customers to fully immerse themselves in the cycling experience.

Sporting celebrity Colin Jackson officially opened the facility on Friday 6th June 2014.

Permanent Price Drop

From June 2014, Sport Blackpool is reducing their Health and Fitness membership prices for new and existing customers. The price drop sees customers direct debits and annual payments reduce by an average of 8%, with the headline membership price reducing from £33 a month to £29.99 a month. The aim of this permanent price drop is to encourage more people to be more active, more often by using our leisure facilities.

Worlds Largest Swimming Lesson

Sport Blackpool once again took part in the Guinness World Record attempt to break the record for the world's largest swimming lesson. The Sandcastle Waterpark is the lead organisation for the event, which is a synchronised attempt with waterparks from across the world taking part at the same day and time. Last years attempt was a success, with over 200 pupils from Blackpool Primary Schools helping to break the world record. The 2014 attempt took place on Friday 20th June at Palatine Leisure Centre, Moor Park Health and Leisure Centre and Woodlands pool.

Stanley Park and Showground

Four new stone statues procured from Ribble Reclamation, now proudly stand within the Italian Gardens in Stanley Park. The stunning figures were lifted onto newly prepared plinths in April and have been extremely well received by park users. Each statue, as well as all other heritage statues and features within the park, have now been branded with a unique forensic security tag called Select DNA. The statues are made from granite stone and represent nature's four seasons. They are similar in size, colour and sculptural style and are hand carved from a single block of stone. Each figure is approximately five feet tall and now stands on a matching york stone stand, well elevated above eye level and surrounded by newly planted ornamental yew hedging.

The completion of one of the largest play sites in the North West is in sight on Stanley Park this month. Further to securing grant monies from SITA's Enhancing Communities Fund, a new £110,000 children playground's aimed for two to eight year olds is now under construction by specialist contractor Wicksteed. The Council and the Friends of Stanley Park have been working together since 2011 on plans to upgrade Stanley Park's playground for young toddlers and children. The project is in line with Stanley Parks five year strategic management plan and will help to boost the parks National Green Flag Award status, which has been held for six consecutive years. A public consultation exercise was undertaken for four weeks in December 2011. A tender process followed and a new playground design plan, which incorporates the community's wants and wishes, has been developed and agreed. Following the submission of a number of grant applications, funding for the project was secured in March 2014 and works started in April. It is hoped the playground will be open early June.

Marton Mere Nature Reserve and Ecological Areas

Prospective volunteers looking to get involved in Blackpool's rich green environment are going to enjoy a new project led by Leisure and Catering Services and Groundwork Lancashire West and Wigan. The Council's Parks Development Manager is teaming up with Groundwork to create a new green space volunteer website, which will enable the local community to find out more about town wide environmental volunteer opportunities as well details on the benefits of volunteering, how to apply and town wide green projects.

The website will be a one-stop-shop for town wide green volunteer schemes and make it easier for people to get information, apply and get involved. It will also ensure that green volunteering in Blackpool is professionalised and coordinated in context of the big picture, to help both the environment as well as the individual. The website will outline opportunities for individuals as well as community, special interest and corporate groups. It is expected to be launched in September 2014.

Tourism and Marketing Services – VisitBlackpool

VisitBlackpool has announced a three-day festival to celebrate the start of Blackpool Illuminations. The festival will open on Friday 29th August with a free switch on event on the Tower Festival Headlands, staged in association with Rock FM. The Saturday and Sunday evenings will be paid-for concerts, with Saturday featuring a series of excerpts from leading West End shows, with Thriller Live as the headline show. Sunday has been programmed as a pop concert with recording star Rebecca Ferguson topping a bill that also includes Atomic Kitten and Liberty X. Tickets for the festival weekend are now on sale. Details of the Friday night line-up will be announced over coming weeks.

Blackpool's tourism season has got off to a flying start with over three million adult visits between January and April, 500,000 higher than in the same period in 2013. The independent, UK-wide Omnibus survey shows that the resort saw year-on year growth across all four months, with April (which includes Easter) recording the highest visitor figures at one million visits. Visitor satisfaction levels also improved significantly – 89% in 2014 compared to 75% in 2013.

The first destination-based TV ad for several years is now in production and will be screened in early July in Scotland and the north of England. The advertisement, which is part of a joint campaign between Merlin Entertainments and VisitBlackpool, is aimed at changing negative perceptions of Blackpool and encouraging new and lapsed visitors to take a fresh look at the resort. The television advert will be supported by extensive digital and PR activity. Pleasure Beach and Sandcastle Waterpark are already running television adverts for their individual attractions and a MAMMA MIA! Advert was broadcast during June.

Sport, Physical Activity and Play.

School Sport has continued to deliver high quality results as the School Games in Blackpool has seen children and young people engage in school sport competitions for athletics, swimming, football and

rugby union to name a few.

With the Lancashire School Games rapidly approaching, schools across Blackpool are working closely with their students to attempt to claim one of the Blackpool Teams for 1st July. Blackpool will see 16 school teams taking to the sports pitches to compete against the winning schools from the other School Games Organiser areas across Lancashire at the celebration of sport, which will take place in Stanley Park.

Schools have also started their preparations for Blackpool Youth Games, which will once again coincide with National School Sports Week. There are 28 sporting competitions, which will take place across four and a half days and will engage over 2500 from Blackpool Schools.

The PE and Sport Team is currently working with schools to promote the delivery programmes available for 2014/ 2015 and to provide support and guidance to schools when considering the use of their Sports Premium for the forthcoming school year.

Stroke Rehabilitations Sessions in the Feel Good Factory

Active Blackpool has introduced stroke rehabilitation sessions for male clients within the Feel Good Factory at Palatine Leisure Centre on Tuesday and Thursday. Clients are being referred from the early supported stroke discharge team, stroke association and the stroke physiotherapist. The Feel Good Factory equipment is a perfect choice for anyone coming back to exercise after periods of rest or inactivity.

One of the first clients has been using the equipment for five weeks and quotes:

“I have achieved more strength in my weak arm and leg, better balance when walking and bending to lift things up. I now feel more confident when out walking and exercising, more at ease with myself and now communicate better with others. I can now move my arm a little on my own, hold it still by myself, walk a lot better and its still improving, didn't think I would get so much in 5 weeks of using the Feel Good Factory equipment”.