

## CABINET MEMBER FOR TOURISM AND LEISURE – COUNCILLOR CAIN

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### **Illuminations**

Initial reaction to the 2014 display has been extremely positive with the new features including the Alice's Garden tableau (sponsored by the Hounds Hill Shopping Centre) and Dr Who Island (on Gynn Roundabout) attracting significant attention.

Although it is early days, the Promenade collection is already ahead of 2013 at the same point and it is hoped that this momentum will be helped by a new map and guide, containing £25 of discount vouchers for attractions and parking, which is being distributed at the arrival points.

The business collection has also started well and stood at 10% of last year's total before the Illuminations were switched on. It is becoming evident that the work being undertaken with the private sector-led Friends Of The Illuminations is yielding an increased understanding of why local businesses should support the show and, in turn, an understanding of how easy it is for businesses to contribute at different price levels.

The Blackpool Illuminations division has successfully tendered to provide the full design and equipment list for Sunderland's 2014 illuminations show. The team has been working with Sunderland for two years, but this year's enhanced project includes the lighting up of the whole of Sunderland's promenade with a mixture of new and traditional designs, largely based on an Alice in Wonderland theme. Income from the project will be used to support Blackpool's own Illuminations budget.

### **Leisure Management**

#### Cardiac Rehabilitation

Thanks to a continued partnership between Active Blackpool and the NHS Cardiac Rehabilitation team, a number of new sessions have been established to support the progression of cardiac patients following a cardiac event. Patients that have attended Cardiac Rehabilitation phase three at Moor Park Health and Leisure Centre with the NHS now have the opportunity to continue to exercise at the leisure centre by progressing onto a specific class with the Active Blackpool team.

The classes take place on a Wednesday and Fridays at Moor Park Health and Leisure Centre under the supervision of the Active Blackpool Cardiac instructors.

Furthermore, following increased demand, the Active Blackpool team have set up some new specialist classes for chronic heart failure patients to attend at both Blackpool Sport Centre and Moor Park Health and Leisure Centre. These new classes are a fantastic addition to the existing heart failure programme, which the NHS rehabilitation team believe will provide a real opportunity for patients to continue to exercise in a community setting.

#### Swimtag at Palatine Leisure Centre

The Swimtag technology that was installed at Palatine Leisure Centre in January 2014 in partnership with the ASA has proven to be very successful with 460 swimmers currently registered as Swimtag swimmers. The technology is installed in 75 centres across Europe and Sport Blackpool is one of the top three sites for swimtag usage, thanks to our members making the most of this amazing technology.

Centre members are currently taking part in a three-month centre based challenge to swim individually the distance from Blackpool Tower headland to Douglas, Isle of Man (IOM) a total distance of 103km.

As of day 19, Mark Beardmore was well ahead of the swimming pack with a massive 80 km swum in just 19 days. Mark has quite a story to tell. By his admission, Mark does not consider himself a technically proficient swimmer, but he started swimming regularly at Palatine Leisure Centre in April as a way of getting fit. Mark now swims regularly and since starting the IOM challenge Mark has been further incentivised to increase his swimming time and distance and is currently swimming up to 5km daily. To date Mark has lost over four stone in weight and become fitter as a direct result of taking up swimming.

#### Jane Whittle official duties at the Commonwealth Games and European swimming Championships

One of our Sport Blackpool and Blackpool Aquatics swimming coaches, Jane Whittle, was recently selected for official poolside duties at the Commonwealth Games in Glasgow, playing a key role in officiating some of the major races throughout the games. Jane is currently on official duties at the European Championships in Berlin and looks forward to sharing her inspirational stories with the children and young people she teaches to swim on her return in September.

#### Change4life family fun days

Sport Blackpool recently held a Change4life family fun day at Blackpool Sports Centre on Sunday 3 August, which was a great success. A range of free taster sessions including badminton, short tennis, gymnastics, climbing were on offer throughout the day with local sports clubs showcasing what they have to offer Blackpool families. Throughout the day, customers took part in gym challenges, health checks and a 'Sport Bingo' challenge with a chance to win some great prizes, including a year's free family membership by taking part in six of the activities throughout the day.

Two further Change4life free family fun days at Palatine Leisure Centre took place on Saturday 23 August and at Moor Park Health and Leisure Centre on Sunday 7 September, which hosted similar activities along with the pools being full of aqua taster classes, fun sessions and get safe for summer sessions.

#### Free Swimming - summer holidays

Sport Blackpool continued to offer free swimming during the school holidays to children and young people aged sixteen years and under at Palatine Leisure Centre and Moor Park Health and Leisure Centre. From family fun sessions through to large inflatable sessions at Palatine Leisure Centre, there was something for everyone and continued to be hugely successful in providing a great activity for children and young people throughout the school holidays.

The summer holidays has seen an increase in free swimming participation across both sites, with 5005 children swimming for free at Palatine Leisure Centre, an increase of 14% compared to 2013 and 4521 free swims at Moor Park Health and Leisure Centre, an increase of over 50% compared to the previous year.

#### New Sport Blackpool Website

Sport Blackpool has recently gone live with an exciting new look website. The website, which retains the same address [www.sportblackpool.co.uk](http://www.sportblackpool.co.uk) is now part of the Blackpool Council website and is up to date with mobile and tablet functionality. The site is more streamlined making the user experience easier and more user friendly. Bookings for classes and court/ pitch hire can still be made through the new website linking in with our on line booking facility. Live class and pool timetables are available on the website giving up to the minute availability for customers.

### **Stanley Park and Showground**

Stanley Park has received its sixth consecutive national Green Flag Award for 2014 for upholding high standards in horticultural and conservation management, community involvement, service provision and quality of facilities. The award follows the recently received Certificate of Excellence from review website Trip Advisor. The certificate has been awarded based on the quality of customer reviews the park has earned on the website over the past 12 months. Stanley Park is ranked 11 out of 60 listed attractions in Blackpool. It is also ranked at 22 out of 232 listed attractions within all of Lancashire.

Stanley Park's new playground for young children and toddlers is now complete and open to the public. The facility, combined with the adjacent adventure playground for older children, is now the largest council managed play site in the North West. It was created using funding from SITA's Enhancing Communities Fund and the improvements are in line with Stanley Parks five year Strategic Management Plan, boosting the parks National Green Flag Award status. The Parks Service and the Friends of Stanley Park have recently secured a further £5,000 for more playground features and improvements including the installation of a toddler teacup roundabout as well as four new play panels, which will encourage mental stimulation and make play more accessible to children with special development needs.

### **Marton Mere Nature Reserve and Ecological Areas**

The Marton Mere Heritage Lottery Project has now started and will be delivered directly by Blackpool Council's newly formed Park Service following the withdrawal of national charity The British Trust for Conservation Volunteers as project lead, due to unexpected large-scale national redundancies within the organisation. Funding providers the Heritage Lottery Fund and Veolia Environmental Trust have formally allocated the project delivery and associated £376,800 to the Council and works will occur on the ground from October 2014.

The Parks Development Manager will oversee the staff, managerial and strategic management/ monitoring of the lottery project, reporting to the Heritage Lottery Board/ Veolia Environmental Trust regarding ongoing progress, financial management and compliance with grant terms and conditions. The development manager will also manage the fixed term contract project staff.

A Project Officer will be appointed to oversee the day-to-day management of the project including delivery of capital works, conservation management and community engagement programmes. They will be expected to develop and build effective relationships with key partners, community organisations and local people as well as design and deliver programmes of community events, activities and volunteer projects. An Environmental Volunteer Coordinator will be appointed to assist with a three-year programme of volunteer and community involvement projects, coordinating volunteers in practical conservation and estate management projects in line with the project timetable.

### **Registrars and Coroner's support**

A new initiative was launched in August, aimed at recruiting volunteers to assist bereaved relatives through the process of an inquest. A charity called the 'Coroners Courts Support Service' is assisting the coroner in seeking these volunteers and the response so far has been excellent.

### **Tourism and Marketing Services – VisitBlackpool**

The decision to revert back to a free Friday night Illuminations switch on event appears to have been fully justified with 77,000 applications for free wristbands received for the event and over 18,000 people attending on the night. For the first time, the switch on celebrations were extended to three nights with ticketed concerts being held on Tower Festival Headlands on the Saturday and Sunday, and a new food festival being staged between the switch on arena and Central Pier. Around 3,500 tickets were sold for each of the ticketed concerts. Response to the new-look festival has been extremely positive, with a number of hotels reporting maximum occupancy over the weekend. An audit of media activity over the weekend revealed that the resort received in excess of £750,000 of PR coverage in

newspapers, magazines, TV, radio and online. A decision will be made over the next few weeks as to whether to repeat the same formula next year.

The Blackpool's Back marketing campaign, underpinned by the first destination-based TV ad for Blackpool in many years, appears to have been extremely successful, both in terms of increasing the numbers of people visiting the resort and in changing media perceptions of Blackpool. The campaign is due to continue until the end of September when a full review of activity will be undertaken by Blackpool Council and Merlin Entertainments, who jointly funded the marketing activity.

### **Sport, Physical Activity and Play.**

#### PE and School Sport

The summer term was full of sporting highlights and achievements, which saw children from Blackpool taking part in Blackpool Youth Games and Lancashire School Games. Once again, Blackpool Youth Games coincided with National School Sport Week to offer a weeklong festival of sport made up of 28 competitions with almost 3000 young participants involved. The five-day festival of sport offers both traditional events such as football, cricket and hockey as well as alternative sports including cheerleading, dodge ball and ultimate Frisbee.

The Lancashire School Games Level Three Games took place in Blackpool on 1 July and saw children and young people representing their school at the County Level Event. Each of the schools taking part had already won the School Games Level Two Blackpool Competition and now it was their chance to put their skills to the test against other schools from across Lancashire. The day itself was a great success and ended in terrific fashion with St Teresa's and Park School being crowned Lancashire Champions for Gymnastics and Tee-Ball respectively.

Sport for young people has not stopped for the school summer holidays and has continued with both the Leisure Centre Sports Camps and the Community Sports Outreach Programme. A total of 19 venues across Blackpool were identified for the Community Sports Programme and have benefitted from multi-sports sessions delivered each week by qualified sports coaches. The sessions have seen children aged 5 – 16 engage in sporting activities who may ordinarily not have the opportunity to do so and ensure that the high quality sports provision for young people on Blackpool reaches as many children as possible.

#### **Relationships with the Winter Gardens Company**

The summer-long run of the international touring production of Mamma Mia! ends on 18 September and at the time of my report being produced ticket sales are valued at over £3.23m equating to over 100,000 people, making it the most successful summer season show in the Opera House's history. Negotiations are continuing over the programming of shows for 2015 and beyond.