Report to:	**TOURISM, ECONOMY AND COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**
Relevant Officer:	Philip Welsh, Head of Tourism and Communications
Date of Decision/Meeting:	8 January 2020

TOURISM PERFORMANCE UPDATE

1.0 Purpose of the report

1.1 To provide information on overall tourism performance for 2018 and trends for 2019 using various indicators including car parking, inbound rail travel, sales of the Blackpool Resort Pass and usage of tourist information services for the current year.

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 update provides data giving an insight into performance and trends within Blackpool's visitor economy.

5.2 **STEAM* TOURISM DATA 2018**

The latest STEAM independent research figures for 2018 show that Blackpool's tourism economy has grown for a fourth successive year.

5.2.1 Compared to the previous year, the total number of visitors in 2018 grew by almost 200,000 to 18.2m, with increases in both day and staying visitors.

5.2.2 Over the same period, the value of Blackpool's tourism industry increased by 4% to £1.58bn. The resort accounts for more than 40% of the value of Lancashire's total visitor economy.

5.2.3 The report also shows that the total number of full-time tourism and hospitality jobs supported in Blackpool has grown to 25,400 – a one per cent increase over the previous year.

5.2.4 The STEAM research shows there has been consistent growth since 2014, when Blackpool's visitor numbers stood at 16.8m and the value of the tourist industry at £1.3bn.

	2017	2018	YOY Variance
Total Visitor Numbers (000s)	18,052	18,222	+0.9%
Day Visitors (000's)	14,616	14,778	+1.1%
Staying Visitors (000's)	3,436	3,444	+0.2%
Total Visitors Days (000's)	24,256	24,417	+0.7%
Visitor Days – staying visitors (000's)	9,641	9,639	0%
Total Economic Impact (£'s)	1,523,953	1,581,526	+3.8%
Economic Impact day visitors (£'s)	506,481	532,063	+5.1%
Economic Impact staying visitors (£'s)	1,017,472	1,049,463	+3.1%
Number of FTE Jobs supported	25,106	25,387	+1.1%
Accommodation Bed Stock	67,021	67,031	0%
Serviced Accommodation Bed Stock	53,921	53,895	0%
Non-serviced accommodation Bed Stock	13,100	13,136	0.3%

*STEAM research (Scarborough Tourism Economic Activity Monitor) is a model used by many Destinations Management Organisations in the UK. It uses locally derived data from a variety of sources such as hotels, attractions, tourist information centres, events and other accommodation to estimate the number of visitors, revenue generated and employment supported by tourism.

5.3 **Key Indicators, April to October 2019**

The tables below are drawn from the monthly Visitor Economy Performance Indicator (VEPI) reports. These are intended to provide year-on-year trends for footfall; car parking; rail passengers; sales of Resort Pass; and visits to both the Tourist Information Centre and VisitBlackpool website.

5.3.1 Note that footfall cameras measure movements, not people, and are therefore not a precise indicator of how many people are in the vicinity of the cameras. Nor do they measure activity on the seaward side of the Promenade. They do, however, provide a like-for-like comparison against previous years.

5.3.2 The other statistics give an accurate measure of consumer activity.

5.3.3 The indicators for April to October show variable results, illustrating what appears to have been a season of mixed fortunes for the resort with a very positive Easter (April), August Bank Holiday, and final week of October half-term. Easter and August Bank Holiday clearly benefited from exceptional weather and October half-term from a substantial events programme.

5.3.4 Other parts of the season were adversely affected by inconsistent weather, with the Met Office reporting the summer as one of the wettest on record. Severe weather also impacted on the summer events programme with one day of the Blackpool Air Show weekend cancelled and the other day going ahead with a slimmed-down programme.

5.3.5 **KEY INDICATORS**

Town Centre: Monthly Footfall (24hr)

Month	2019	2018
April	1,245,363	1,300,214
May	1,395,522	1,596,688
June	1,420,269	1,469,066
July	1,733,597	1,760,041
August	2,187,373	2,224,337
September	1,487,677	1,705,548
October	1,474,944	1,554,730
Total	**10,944,745**	**11,610,624**

Promenade: Monthly Footfall (24hr)

Month	2019	2018
April	330,147	406,711
May	449,042	574,414
June	499,085	496,305
July	688,491	686,856
August	876,563	968,271
September	558,731	638,620
October	455,699	503,431
Total	**3,857,758**	**4,274,608**

Council Car Parks: Monthly Ticket Sales

Month	2019	2018
April	102,877	96,639
May	92,606	105,805*
June	88,005	94,791*
July	106,111	101,521
August	136,893*	126,067
September	109,234	116,105
October	134,615	132,041
Total	**770,341**	**772,969**

* Note that record figures were achieved in May 2018, June 2018 and August 2019. Overall, the number of ticket sales was virtually flat compared to previous years despite exceptional results in April and August.

Monthly Rail Passengers (Inbound)

Month	2019	2018
Period 1 (April)	110,338	77,911
Period 2 (May)	92,822	98,982
Period 3 (June)	100,728	97,332
Period 4 (July)	126,820	118,483
Period 5+6 (August)	158,776	160,189
Period 7 (September)	97,177	91,348
Period 8 (October)	95,976	82,478
Total	**782,637**	**726,723**

* After the major disruption suffered during 2018, reliability of Northern services was more consistent during 2019 and that is reflected in the passenger growth across most months. However, there were still issues relating to cancellation of services, particularly on Sundays, over a number of weekends in the main summer season 2019 including August.

Tourist Information Centre: Monthly Visits

Month	2019	2018
April	4,363*	4,174
May	5,087	5,121
June	5,912*	5,846
July	13,482*	12,391
August	27,944	26,241
September	11,295	11,810
October	14,341	15,886
Total	**82,424**	**81,469**

* Note that record numbers for visits to the Tourist Information Centre were set in April, June and July 2019.

VisitBlackpool.com: Unique Monthly Website Visits

Month	2019	2018
April	82,738	90,161
May	96,779	110,244
June	100,570	130,781
July	157,156	183,533
August	220,520	270,534
September	179,004	183,415
October	194,366	214,405
Total	**1,031,133**	**1,183,073**

Resort Pass: Monthly Sales

Month	2019	2018
April	1,383*	751
May	1,429	1,155
June	2,138*	1,852
July	4,533*	4,061
August	4,005	4,272
September	1,731	1,890
October	2,511*	2,307
Total	**17,730**	**16,288**

* An exceptional year for Resort Pass with more than 19,000 sold across the entire year. A monthly Resort Pass sales record was set in April, June, July and October 2019.

5.4 Events Programme

5.4.1 Blackpool's destination marketing is supported by a large events programme which includes a wide range of high-profile events, many of which are free to access.

5.4.2 These include the two-day Blackpool Air Show, Ride The Lights, Illuminations Switch-On concert, four nights of World Fireworks and 66 nights of Illuminations.

5.4.3 Over the past three years, VisitBlackpool has developed an additional event, Lightpool Festival, which takes place over the October half-term.

5.4.4 In 2019, the festival grew from three days to two weeks of free entertainment, providing a mix of live performance and light-based art installations including a replica planet Earth in The Tower Ballroom, the world premiere of a large-scale Sun in the Winter Gardens and a display of giant illuminated seesaws.

5.4.5 The programme also included the return of the Carnival of the Lights; an illuminated football tournament for local schools; fire and light-based shows; 3D projections on to the front of The Tower building; and a town centre art trail.

5.4.6 The rapid expansion of the Lightpool Festival has been supported by a wide range of partners willing to collaborate and contribute to the funding. These include LeftCoast, Blackpool Town Centre BID, Northern Rail, Access Fylde Coast, the Arts Council, Primary Futures and The Blackpool Tower.

5.4.7 This has helped us to deliver a compelling programme on a relatively small budget.

5.4.8 Monitoring reports show that the two-week programme of events (excluding the Lightpool projection shows) attracted more than 50,000 visitors including:

- 17,000 people who viewed the Gaia Earth installation in the Tower Ballroom
- A 10,000-strong crowd for the Illuminated Tram Parade and Carnival Of The Lights
- 5,200 visitors to the Wave-Field seesaws in St John’s Square
- 9,000 viewings of the Sun installation in the Winter Gardens
- 6,000 spectators for the Carnival Magic and Pyronix live performance shows
- Around 1,100 participants in community-based events such as Fit2Glow, When I Grow Up, Late At The Library and Lumidogs

5.4.9 The festival attracted a remarkable amount of national media attention with coverage in The Times, Guardian, Daily Telegraph, Sunday Telegraph, BBC and Granada.

5.4.10 Planning for the 2020 Festival is already underway.

5.4.11 2019 also saw the introduction of a number of new events staged by partner organisations. These included:

5.4.12 The inaugural Manford’s Comedy Festival and British Country Music Festival, both staged over three days at the Winter Gardens (in May and September respectively), and Night Run, a unique opportunity for runners to take part in a 7.5k run on a traffic-free promenade ahead of the Illuminations Switch-On. The event, which raised money for Brian House Children’s Hospice, attracted more than 6,000 runners and will be repeated in 2020.

6.0 Legal considerations:

6.1 None

7.0 Human Resources considerations:

7.1 None

8.0 Equalities considerations:

8.1 None

9.0 Financial considerations:

9.1 None

10.0 Risk management considerations:

10.1 None

11.0 Ethical considerations:

11.1 None

12.0 Internal/ External Consultation undertaken:

12.1 Not applicable

13.0 Background papers:

13.1 None