

ILLUMINATIONS UPDATE NOVEMBER 23, 2022

INTRODUCTION

This report is intended to provide a detailed update on the Illuminations service including:

- The annual Switch-On event which took place in the Tower Ballroom on Friday 2 September, with the event streamed to crowds on the Tower Festival Headland
- The annual Ride The Lights event which gave residents and visitors a preview of this year's display ahead of the official Switch-On
- New features within this year's display including a makeover of the Golden Mile and the launch of Odyssey, the biggest 3D installation ever constructed at Lightworks
- Extension of the Illuminations season
- Lightpool Festival and the securing of Arts Council National Portfolio Organisation (NPO) investment over the next three years
- Commercial work including sponsorship
- Environmental improvements
- Progress made on modernisation of the Illuminations utilising Towns Fund investment

ILLUMINATIONS SWITCH-ON



TV celebrity and designer Laurence Llewelyn-Bowen switched on the resort's Illuminations to kick-start four months of Illuminations.

The star of Channel 4's Changing Rooms pulled the switch at the end of a 90-minute concert in front of a 2000-capacity live audience in the Blackpool Tower Ballroom, produced in association with MTV and featuring Blue, Tom Grennan, Nina Nesbitt, Fuse ODG and Mae Muller.

Thousands of people who had gathered on the Promenade to watch the show on a giant screen (pictured above) were treated to a burst of fireworks and a spectacular light show on The Blackpool Tower. The show and Switch-On moment were also live-streamed to a worldwide audience via MTV's YouTube channel, attracting around 25,000 viewers.

Laurence, who stepped in to replace actor and comedian Johnny Vegas, had earlier told the show's host Becca Dudley of his love and affection for the Illuminations and his pride at being invited to perform the Switch-On ceremony. Over the past few years, Laurence has collaborated with the Illuminations production team, designing a number of spectacular features and installations.



The Illuminations Switch-On concert generated further national publicity when two additional shows, The Best of Blackpool Switch-On and a Tom Grennan Special, were premiered on the night of Friday 30 September across the MTV Music channel. A short video of the highlights was also created for use across our social media channels. Discussions over plans for the 2023 Switch-On are already underway.

Ride The Lights



Thousands of families took the opportunity to ride along a traffic-free promenade and get a sneak preview of the 2022 Illuminations display. Bikes of all shapes and sizes took advantage of the seafront route in a free family event that is suitable for all ages. The Promenade was closed to traffic from 6.30pm until 10.30pm.

Cyclists were able to participate at any time during that period although recommended to join the event at either the Starr Gate or Red Bank Road gateways to the promenade. A temporary car park was set up at the airport for those joining at the south end of the route.

The 2022 Display

The Golden Mile has been given a stylish makeover for this year's Illuminations display – thanks to designer Laurence Llewelyn-Bowen, who has created a stretch of Art Deco-style features that is intended to celebrate a golden age of 1930s glamour.

The 21 overhead light installations (*pictured on the Ride The Lights item on the previous page*) form a brand new section entitled Neo Neon within the seafront display.

Each measuring almost 14 metres in length, the installations are divided into three separate styles - arches, wings and fans.

Other new features in this year's display include the biggest ever standalone installation, Odyssey, which has been co-created by international designer Jack Irving and a team from Lancaster University, and manufactured at Lightworks.

Standing 11 metres high, the installation comprises six towers that are combined with state-of-the-art technology to create an immersive and interactive projection show themed on undiscovered creatures lurking in the depths of the deep sea.

The new Beachside Boulevard is a seaside themed roadside section featuring brightly lit neon sandcastles and multi-coloured waves.



The Extended Illuminations Season

The two-month extension to the Illuminations season was introduced as part of our post-pandemic recovery plans to kick-start tourism and hospitality across the resort.

After a spectacular success last year when a combination of the extension and the introduction of the new Christmas By The Sea event attracted record crowds to the Promenade, another extension was announced for 2022.

The Christmas By The Sea event returns on November 18 and will run until the end of the Illuminations season January 2.

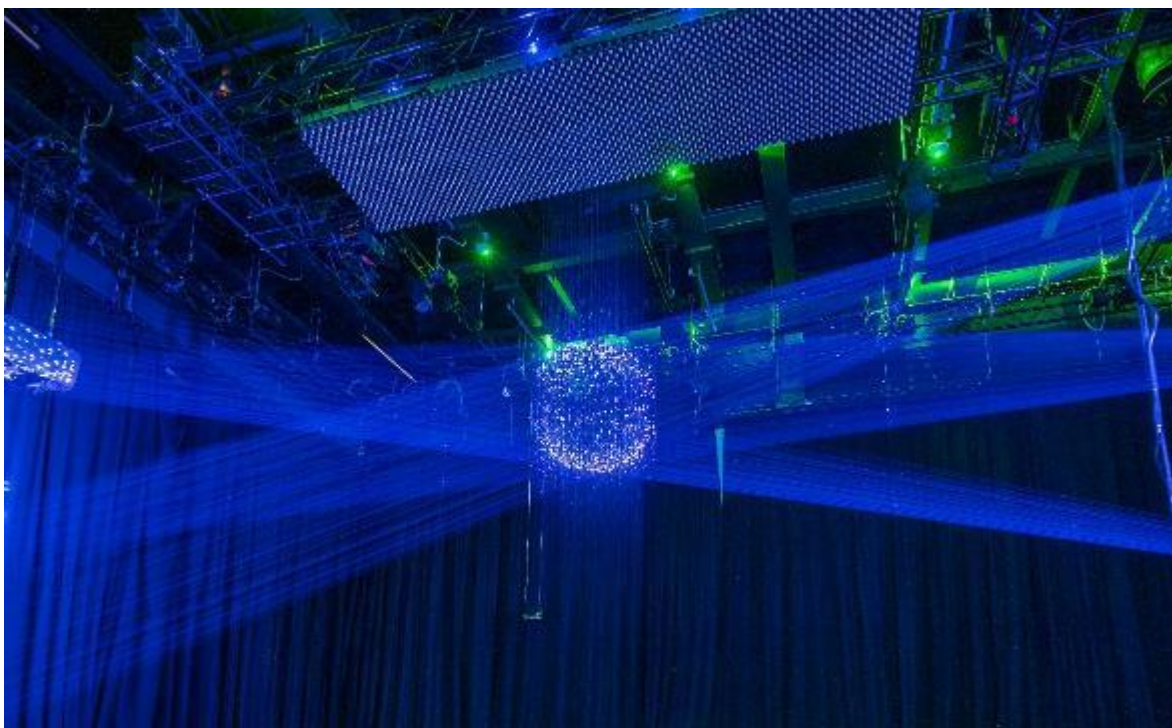
This year's event, which again includes free skating rink, cabins, the Star Flyer, light installations, artificial snowfalls and projection shows, has been funded by the Tourism Business Improvement District (TBID) and broadband provider, TalkTalk.

Lightpool Festival

October half-term saw the staging of our biggest ever Lightpool Festival. Spanning 16 nights, it included an illuminated art trail, live performance and community-based events.

The art trail, which was free to access and staged across a range of indoor and outdoor venues, featured 16 new illuminated artworks including some international pieces from France and the Netherlands never previously seen in the UK

For the first time, the new Conference & Exhibition Centre was used as part of the art trail to showcase the international artworks, including Flux and Drop Of Light (*both pictured below*).



The outdoor part of the trail included light projection shows on St John's Church, the façade of the Winter Gardens, Grand Theatre and The Blackpool Tower.



The festival also saw the return of the extraordinary Carnival Magic show in the Blackpool Tower Ballroom (*pictured above*) and the Illuminated Tram Parade, a once-a-year opportunity to see the resort's illuminated heritage trams travelling in convoy beneath the Illuminations. The two performances of Carnival Magic, which were issued via a free-to-enter ballot, were snapped up within minutes of the ballot opening.

Lightpool Festival Community Engagement

Although the Lightpool Festival is an integral part of our tourism events programme, it also creates significant potential to engage with the local community. These are some of the community-based activities in the 2022 festival:

Aqualux Tour

The Aqualux artwork toured Blackpool on three nights, 15-17 October, driven by the Illuminated Peterbilt owned by Fox Bros, the headline sponsor for Lightpool Festival 2022.

Over the three nights, it stopped at six locations including Mereside, The Grange, Solaris Centre, St George's School, Moor Park Health Centre and Anchorsholme Park, with four sound and light shows at each location

It is estimated we engaged with an audience of more than 1,600 people, giving out glow wristbands, torches and promotional items from Fox, whilst promoting the story behind Aqualux and Lightpool Festival, and handing out more than 1,200 brochures.

Lumidogs

Our workshops returned for 2022 with more than 40 sessions at six different venues across Blackpool with around 180 people attending the workshops to make luminous jackets for their pets. The workshops created 18 days of work for local artists. Some of the dogs and their owners later joined the Illuminated tram parade.

Fit2Glow Children's Football Tournament: We worked with Blackpool Football Club Community Trust for the third year as part of the Health & Initiative programme undertaken by the trust. The tournament involved 29 primary schools and over 240 school children at various venues. The final was held at Blackpool Tower Circus, where parents of the school children were invited to watch the final. The winning team received a trophy for the school and individual 'goody bags' with game, reading book, sweets and BFCCT souvenirs.

Illuminate

A total of 32 children took part in a community engagement project in partnership with the Grand Theatre. As part of the project they created a film of their experiences that was shown over 15 nights as part of the Lightpool Festival programme in the Winter Gardens.

100 Stories High

In a new partnership with theatre company and projection specialists, imitating the dog, and our partners Light Up Lancaster (part of the Light Up The North network), we created a new projection mapping experience for the Winter Gardens, with a specially-commissioned soundtrack by composer James Hamilton.

We sent out a call to all music-loving residents from the area to take part in a choir to provide vocals for the new projection. Over two evenings at The Old Electric venue on Springfield Road, 30 people came together and recorded the vocals to accompany acclaimed singer Neil Balfour.

We Are Blackpool

Representing Blackpool's vibrant community and with a bespoke soundtrack, We Are Blackpool is a once-in-a-lifetime snapshot of soulful reflections and poignant, personal perspectives.

The Lightpool team interviewed 26 people from across Blackpool including Boathouse Youth, Grand Theatre, The Old Electric, Mooky from Blackpool Tower Circus, Cllr Lynn Williams, Streetlife, The Blackpool Church, Blue Skies and the Winter Gardens. Nathan Parker then turned their memories, experiences and aspirations into a beautiful poem that was narrated on film and shown throughout the Lightpool Festival in the Derham Lounge in the Winter Gardens.

It also achieved more than 11.5k views on social media in the first 10 days.

LEAP

This was a free workshop week for artists who want to develop skills in projection-mapping. Led by projection company, imitating the dog, it was held at Lightworks, with priority being given to local residents and artists from the North West.

Lightpool Future Funding

Just a few days after the 2022 Lightpool Festival closed, we learned that it had secured three years of investment.

The Arts Council announced that Blackpool Illuminations was to become a National Portfolio Organisation (NPO) for the first time – providing a funding boost of almost £700k over the next three years.

A grant of £225k a year, starting in April 2023, will allow the Illuminations team to develop the work of Lightpool. The funding is part of a £43.5m investment in Levelling Up by the Arts Council with around 900 organisations being named within the new national portfolio.

The Illuminations NPO funding will enable:

- Commissioning of new light art for the Illuminations display and Lightpool Festival collaborating with national and international artists;
- Delivery of an extensive talent development programme for artists and creatives with artists in residence; and developing new work using the expertise of the Illuminations team and the amazing facilities at Lightworks
- Expansion of the work with local cultural partners such as LeftCoast, Old Electric, and the Grand Theatre to provide year-round activity for children, young people and local communities to creatively take part and present work to a wider audience during the Illuminations season and as part of Lightpool Festival.

Commercial Opportunities

The 2022 display has attracted a number of new sponsors in addition to existing ones. The full list of sponsors includes: Coral Island; Hangar 42; Partington's Holiday Homes; Affinity Lancashire; City Fibre; Blackpool Promotions; White Ribbon; Fylde Coast Women's Association; Truckline Services; DNA PR (Great! TV); Merlin; Northern Rail; TalkTalk; and Barclaycard (payment partner).

Sponsors for the Christmas lights include Houndshill, who are paying for additional exterior lights; PayByPhone, who are sponsoring the Christmas tree in St John's Square; and TalkTalk, who are sponsoring the Christmas By The Sea event along with the Tourism Business Improvement District.

We are also focusing on hiring our services and features to other towns and cities. So far this year, we have achieved the following:

- ❖ Delivery of Christmas displays for Chorley, Lytham, Lancaster and Morecambe
- ❖ Hire of equipment to other light festivals including Lightfall in Middlesbrough and Light-Up Lancaster

Footnote: Lightworks has seen a number of high-profile visits over the course of the year, the last being a visit from Ministers and representatives of the British Irish Council during a visit to Blackpool in early November.

The feedback from that visit was outstanding with the Chief Minister of Jersey reflecting in the subsequent Ministers' meeting how the long history of the Illuminations inspired her to think about how important innovation can be for industry in terms of creating long-lasting impacts!

Environmental Improvements

Some of the Towns Fund investment has been allocated to improve electrical infrastructure on the promenade and in the town centre to help reduce generator hire.

The Illuminations service continues to investigate new manufacturing techniques that will increase the lifespan of features and help minimise maintenance.

The service also continues to invest in LED lighting and other low-power consumption technology which is particularly important in the current climate of higher energy costs.

Towns Fund Investment

Blackpool was one of the first of 101 towns in the UK to secure funding from the Government's £3.6bn Towns Fund.

The Illuminations has been allocated a total of £4.5m to revitalise the display and attract additional visitors through new features, installations and lighting technology.

The five-year investment sets out to deliver the following four key strands of activity:

1. 3km of infrastructure upgrades

Delivered so far

- Upgrade of the Illuminations infrastructure control system.
- Installation of feeder pillars throughout the town.

Moving Forward

- Upgrades and additional power supplies in the town centre.
- Installation of power supplies on the headlands.

Ongoing works

- Installation of illuminations network in Talbot Road and Talbot Square.
- Upgrade of infrastructure on the Tower Festival Headland

2. An extended Illuminations season (September 2, 2022 to January 2, 2023)

Challenges for the team

- Risk to exposure of features to the elements.
- Increased maintenance of the display.
- De-rig of the display in periods when we see the most inclement weather.

3. Investment in new vehicles, plant and job creation

Advance Manufacture

- Using the Year One investment we have made step changes in manufacture of features.
- In some types of manufacture we have reduced production times by over 50%.
- Order placed for a 3D printing robot which will revolutionise manufacture.

Job Creation/Skills Development

- As part of the business plan, we are looking to introduce an apprenticeship scheme and have already created new, more specialised positions within the Illuminations team

4. **Significant new features: Creating an Illuminations step change**

Key Objective

- Three significant new features per year for the duration of the Town Deal project.
- Working with the illuminations creative curator (Laurence Llewelyn-Bowen), established artists and the in-house Illuminations team to design them.

2022 Display: Neo Neon



- The Golden Mile section is the first section of the Illuminations to benefit from the new investment.
- Designed by Llewelyn-Bowen, the art-deco style display comprises 21 pieces made up of arches, wings and fans
- It is the largest roadway section ever created by the team and is entirely programmable, giving the Illuminations team full control of the lighting display.

2022: Creation of Odyssey (with images)

As referenced in the item on new features in the 2022 display, the Lightworks team has created the biggest 3D installation ever seen in the Illuminations display.

Odyssey is an extraordinary collaboration bringing together design, manufacturing skills and state-of-the-art technology.

The six towers, situated on the Tower Festival Headland, create a spectacular sound and light show incorporating 60 powerful lasers. Some interesting facts and figures:

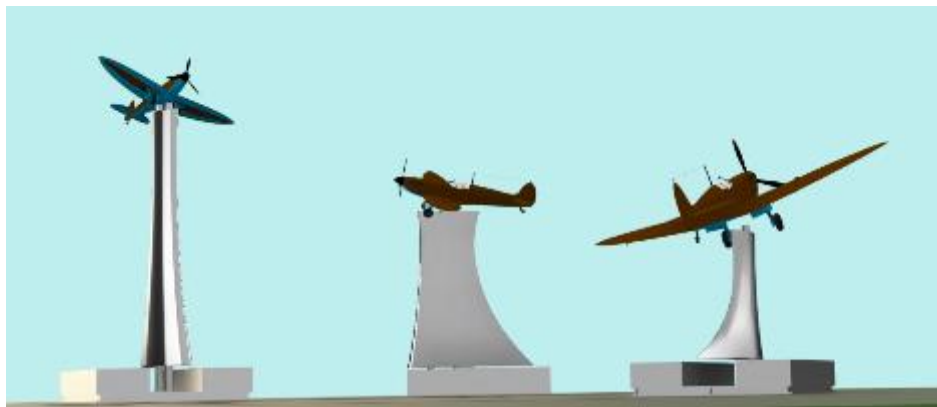
- More than 10,000 lines of code were written by a team at Lancaster University to enable the interactive elements of Odyssey.
- 2,500 hours have been spent developing the software, simulation and testing
- Each tower contains a Panasonic 20,000 Lumens projector, camera and learning software to detect interactions with visitors
- Over 32 tonnes of steel have been used in the construction of the towers.
- 2,400 LED nodes and over 3,500 metres of LED lighting have been used in the display.



Upgrade of existing features

- Working with Illuminations creative curator, the illuminations team will look to enhance and re-create some old favourites taking into account public feedback

Plans for 2023



- Two large new tableaux, first by international artist Chila Kumari Burman, the second being developed in conjunction with a Native Canadian artist, Bruce Alfred.
- Creation of new-look Spitfire Island, designed by Laurence Llewelyn-Bowen and the Illuminations team (*artist impression above*)

Future years

- In-principle agreement is in place to develop Blackpool Illuminations' own drone display working in partnership with Lancaster University creating indoor and outdoor shows.