



## Blackpool Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy 2024 - 2033

*Blackpool Council*

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## 1.0 Key Message

As we write this in 2023, Blackpool has emerged from the COVID-19 pandemic with a sharper understanding of the importance of green and blue spaces for health and wellbeing. In 2019 Blackpool declared a Climate Emergency and now tracks carbon footprint reduction, increasingly underpinned by efforts to support nature's recovery and ensure fair access to green space for all residents. There are new funding sources emerging from Levelling Up and COVID recovery to accelerate social initiatives to improve health, well-being, skills and employability. We are supporting the hospitality industry to keep building Blackpool's brand as a desirable place to live, work and visit.

In the context of the UK Government's 25 Year Environment Plan there are a range of new mechanisms to support the funding and delivery of Green and Blue Infrastructure (GBI). The Plan aims to leave the environment in a better state than we found it, and includes a requirement for new developments to demonstrate that they are providing measurable improvements for wildlife through biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) measures.

This study describes Blackpool's GBI, and summarises the opportunities and challenges for protection, creation, maintenance and enhancement of GBI in the town.

### What is Green and Blue Infrastructure?

**A network of multi-functional green and blue spaces and other natural features, urban and rural, which is capable of delivering a wide range of environmental, economic, health and wellbeing benefits for nature, climate, local and wider communities and prosperity. It is wider-ranging than conventional open space, although it includes parks, open spaces, playing fields, woodlands, but also street trees, allotments and private gardens. It can also include larger landscape features like streams, the sea and other water bodies and urban additions such as green roofs and walls.**

The Strategy will be delivered by Blackpool Council in partnership with its own staff, the community, developers, landowners, schools, healthcare providers and infrastructure managers.

Blackpool faces unique challenges due to poor public health, the intensely urban nature of its built form, poor quality housing stock, and high seasonal unemployment. The hospitality industry was hit particularly hard during the COVID pandemic.

Yet Blackpool has a lot to offer. It has enthusiastic, skilled and committed volunteers working in our green spaces. Volunteering in the outdoors builds friendships and civic pride; at East Pines Park in Anchorsholme, the local community has made many improvements to the park and put true community life into the heart of the green space. A group of parents have enlisted the help of their local councillor to obtain funding which has rejuvenated the park as a thriving local asset. There are many similar groups across Blackpool, some completely run by volunteers, others facilitated by the public or voluntary sectors.

In 2022, Blackpool's Art Deco Stanley Park was voted England's favourite Park in the UK, for the third time by the Fields in Trust, a national charity which protects open spaces and encourages communities to actively care for them. This is a tribute to the managers and friends of Stanley Park who have invested their time and creativity to make Stanley Park a very special place.

We are also proud of our coastline. In Summer 2023, Blackpool Central and Blackpool South Beaches were internationally designated as Blue Flag Beaches, by Keep Britain Tidy. All our

other beaches have Seaside Awards; recognition of years of hard work by many partners improving environmental quality.

Our Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy builds on these successes. We want the town to be known nationally for the quality and attractiveness of its premier open spaces which serve local communities as well as visitors. Our local communities have enthusiastically taken on alleyway greening like the project in Strawberry Gardens which has made local news.

All 17 parks in Blackpool are important, and the Council will support local communities to gain Green Flag Award recognition which demonstrates high quality and value. Revoe Park has already been recognised for its Better Start programme, with huge community benefits provided by the urban park rangers for children's development, and increased self-esteem for people in need of support.

The Better Start programme has also led the development of 'Forest Schools' which enables school children in urban areas to be immersed in nature, learning practical skills and resilience. Our pioneering development of 'Beach Schools' will ensure that our precious coastline is appreciated by future generations.

A shortage of green infrastructure compounds the public health deficit that affects too many in the town. As we regenerate housing areas and restructure the town centre, we will take opportunities to create pocket parks, plant civic trees and improve greenways so people enjoy spending time outdoors. We are well placed to implement the new BNG legislation, and have carefully considered the requirements for affordable housing to ensure that environmental demands will not cause undue viability issues with new developments.

The promenade and beach are also hugely important assets and we will look to expand the use of them through enhancements, activities and events.

Blackpool's wildlife and countryside fringe is also prioritised in this Strategy. Marton Mere is Blackpool's only Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and Local Nature Reserve (LNR) and acts as a centre for an ecological network connecting coast, countryside and urban areas. Biological Heritage sites are also recognised as an essential part of Blackpool's identity.

Greening the town centre, principal road and rail corridors and our enterprise zones, using a range of horticultural and artistic techniques, will also give confidence to incoming residents, visitors and investors that Blackpool is a town which is serious about its overall vision.

Cycling and walking schemes have proved successful and will be supported by the long term vision for joined up walking routes and cycleways, connecting across Blackpool and beyond.

## **How to Build Blackpool's Green & Blue Infrastructure**

### **1 Transform housing quality**

New and improved parks and creative greening initiatives in the Inner Area, South Shore and the outer estates will make our housing better for family life.

### **2 Steadily build our tree canopy**

Blackpool has the fewest trees of any English town, and coastal towns tend to have fewer trees across the country. We have a long-term aim of doubling tree canopy cover, and we will create a legacy for future generations by making the most of

potential tree planting opportunities, starting with cataloguing, retaining and maintaining our current trees and aiming for at least 80% long term survival of newly planted trees to sustainably build our canopy cover.

### **3 A greener centre**

As the town centre and resort core are regenerated, we will create new pocket parks and an iconic public realm.

### **4 The best in the West**

We will celebrate Stanley Park as the best park in the UK so it becomes a must-see for any visitor; and then encourage visitors to explore other parks in the town, Lytham St Annes and Fleetwood.

### **5 Take health seriously**

We will help at least 5,000 more local people each week enjoy exercise at our parks, beaches and we will encourage Forest Schools, Green Gyms and nature-based prescriptions.

### **6 Make it easy to get outdoors**

We will establish Blackpool's Living Streets programme and signpost our green spaces better to help vulnerable users venture outside, whilst reminding the world that we are a start point for national coastal and Trans Pennine walking and cycling tours.

### **7 Keep it down to earth**

Blackpool has a great backbone of volunteers and can always call on help from businesses, "Blackpool-exiles" and loyal holiday-makers with an affinity for the town. Local park friends, tree wardens, volunteer rangers and councillors are key to delivering and maintaining GBI.

### **8 Coordinate communication**

We will plan communication around Green and Blue Infrastructure in a way that makes it easy to engage with and celebrate local spaces and community activity.

### **9 Always Think of the Future**

We will ensure Green and Blue Infrastructure forms part of all our decision-making and supports the future proofing of the town.

The remit of the Strategy is not to safeguard every last bit of existing green space in Blackpool, it is to secure the highest possible quality of spaces. Where a proposed development would result in a green space being reduced in size, the Council will ensure that the remaining green space is a higher quality so that the benefits it provides are more far-reaching than the existing green space.

**"GBI is delivered through a few flagship schemes and 1001 neighbourhood activities"**

Our first Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy and Action Plan were written in 2018 and have guided many recent environmental improvements. We have now refreshed the Strategy and Action Plan following comprehensive consultation and reviewing evidence about what works well in the town. We will use the Strategy to guide our actions, large and small, to build a town nationally known for the quality of its open spaces.

We take heart from other northern places, such as Merseyside and Manchester, where sustained environmental regeneration, alongside economic investment and social change has created parks, cycleways, public realm and places where people and businesses thrive. Fears about investment in landscape being wasted due to vandalism, neglect and plant failure are valid but we will study technical evidence to ensure high standards of planting and aftercare are considered from the outset. Projects such as Sheffield's 'Grey to Green' have gone even further in demonstrating how urban planting can be beautiful, healthy, and resilient to climate change. Investment in GBI is not a "nice to have", we owe it to our townspeople and their children to create a healthy and accessible environment on their doorstep.

**“As a long-term project, this Strategy is the start of a journey of transformation – success can only be achieved with the continued support and involvement of local residents, landowners, developers and a wide range of partners.”**

## 2.0 Vision and Overview

### Our Vision – Blackpool in 2027

Blackpool will be experiencing sustained transformation and its parks, green spaces, coastline and public realm will be locally and nationally renowned. Many more people will be enjoying the health and wellbeing benefits of time spent in Blackpool’s “great outdoors”.

The natural environment will thrive and support Blackpool’s physical regeneration, encouraging economic development and attracting new investors, residents and visitors to Blackpool, Wyre and Fylde. It will consist of *‘an accessible network of quality green open spaces, coast and countryside, which have been enhanced for people to enjoy and to sustain rich biodiversity.’*<sup>1</sup>

Blackpool’s housing areas will be greener, and their open spaces will be safe and well-used. The town will be an exemplar of how coastal resorts can turn their fortunes around through social and environmental regeneration.

Blackpool’s Green and Blue Infrastructure (GBI) Strategy will protect and enhance the borough’s urban, coastal and rural environments to ensure the social, economic and environmental benefits derived from them are maximised.

### National Policy and Legislation

The Government’s 25 Year Environment Plan<sup>ii</sup> (2018, updated February 2023) commits to:

- making sure that there are high quality, accessible, natural spaces close to where people live and work, particularly in urban areas, and encouraging more people to spend time in them to benefit their health and wellbeing; and,
- focusing on increasing action to improve the environment from all sectors of society.

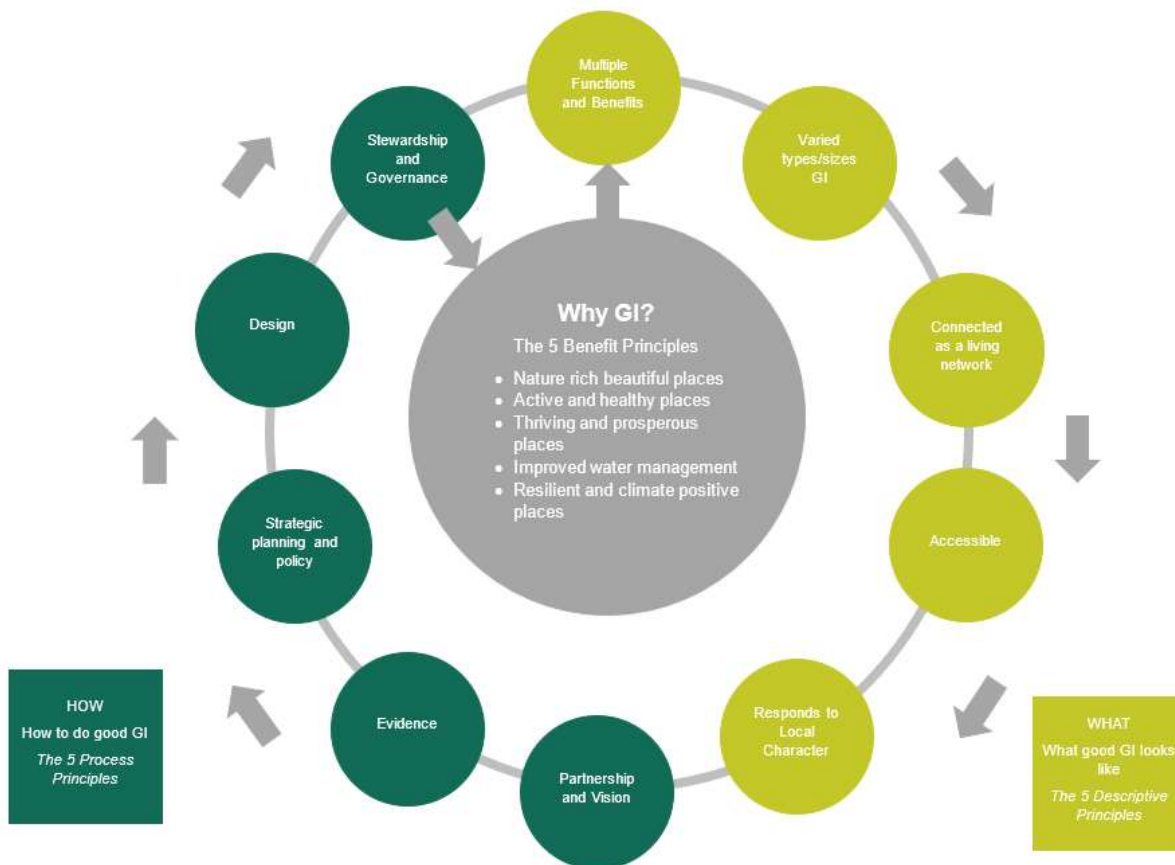
The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2023) sets out the Government’s planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. The NPPF states that strategic policies should set out an overall strategy for the pattern, scale and design quality of places including for GI (para. 20c).

Planning policies should also aim to achieve healthy, inclusive and safe places which includes enabling health life styles through accessibility to GI (para. 92c). New development should avoid increased vulnerability to climate change risk and air pollution through planning GI (para. 154a and 186) and should incorporate “tree-lined streets” (para. 131).

### Natural England’s Green Infrastructure Framework

The Natural England (NE) Green Infrastructure (GI) Framework<sup>iii</sup> published in 2023 provides ‘Why’, ‘What’ and ‘How’ principles for Green Infrastructure planning, design and implementation. The 5 ‘Why’ principles are concerned with the multiple benefits of GBI in ecosystem management and place-shaping.

Figure X: Why, What and How Principles of good GBI



Natural England’s Guidance provides detailed guidelines of how all 15 principles should be applied at strategic and at local levels. The Natural England framework principles are intertwined into Blackpool’s GBI Strategy and key objectives and actions.

### National Design Guide and National Model Design Code

The National Model Design Code<sup>iv</sup> helps local authorities and communities decide what good quality design looks like in their area. It expands on the 10 characteristics of good design set out in the National Design Guide<sup>v</sup>, of which Context, Identity, Movement, Nature and Public Spaces and Lifespan are all highly relevant to how GBI is delivered in new development and regeneration place-making in Blackpool.

### Local Policy

Blackpool’s Local Plan Part 1: Core Strategy (2012-2027, updated in April 2023) includes Green Infrastructure Policy (CS6) which requires planning and development activity to protect, enhance, create and connect networks of GBI. Many other Core Strategy policies (e.g., Housing Provision, Economic Development, Town Centre, Quality of Design, Heritage and Sustainable Neighbourhoods) also rely on GBI to underpin and deliver their aspirations.

Blackpool’s Local Plan: Part 2 Site Allocations and Development Management Policies document, adopted in 2023 has policy DM1 which states that new development should incorporate the requirements from Core Strategy CS6 and contribute toward sufficient and



meaningful amenity space for residents which contributes to GI and in accordance with guidance with the 'Greening Blackpool Supplementary Planning Document'.

Blackpool's Local Plan: Part 2 also highlights key developments where GI could be incorporated including Blackpool Airport Enterprise Zone (Policy DM8) and the Promenade and Seafront (Policy DM10)

Blackpool Council adopted 'Greening Blackpool' in May 2022, which is a supplementary planning document (SPD). This SPD directs new development to fully consider landscaping and green infrastructure, including open space, sports and play facilities, amenity greenspace, public art, biodiversity and trees.

Greening Blackpool sets out detailed guidance on the implementation of relevant policies in the Blackpool Local Plan. The SPD includes the following aims:

- ensure Blackpool plays its part in the national effort to tackle climate change,
- assist in increasing the tree canopy cover in Blackpool from 4.4% to 10%,
- ensure Blackpool's residents and visitors have access to a wide range of high quality landscape and green infrastructure features that meet local green space and play standards to facilitate quality of life, health and wellbeing,
- ensure that every opportunity is taken to provide environmental and biodiversity net gains from development.

Blackpool Council published its Climate Emergency Action Plan in November 2021. The plan commits Blackpool to become carbon neutral by 2039. This Action Plan relates directly to the UK Government setting legally binding targets to ensure the UK is net zero by 2050. The following key themes of the Climate Emergency Action Plan relate directly to green infrastructure; Community Leadership, Communication and Involvement, Natural Environment and Building Knowledge, Capacity and Financial Resources.

## Evidence Base

### Placeholder: Map 1:Blackpool's Green and Blue Infrastructure

This Green and Blue Infrastructure (GBI) Strategy for Blackpool and the associated Action Plan has been drawn up following consultation and detailed review of evidence (in the associated Green and Blue Infrastructure Technical Report<sup>vi</sup>, 2017) about where investment in GBI will deliver the greatest social benefits, environmental improvements and economic enhancements.

The Blackpool Open Space Assessment<sup>vii</sup> was updated in November 2019 and provides evidence on the quantity, quality and accessibility of GBI in the borough.

Chapter 3 provides an overview of the town's outdoor environment and key issues identified during consultation and evidence-gathering. It sets the scene for the GBI strategy. Annex One signposts the reader of this strategy to policy and best practice referenced in the strategy and to key pieces of evidence available in the GBI Technical Report and the 2019 Open Space Assessment.

## Goals and Priorities

Our six strategic goals and implementation priorities for Blackpool's GBI are described in Chapter 4.

- 1 *Engaging People in Health and Wellbeing*
- 2 *Enhancing the Visitor Experience*

- 3 *Greener Housing and Infrastructure*
- 4 *Enabling Productive Businesses and Workers*
- 5 *Promoting a Green Image and Culture*
- 6 *Improving Habitats and Benefitting Pollinators*

## Objectives

Blackpool's GBI Strategy has the following objectives, which align with Core Strategy Policy CS6:

- 1 **Protect and Enhance GBI** *i.e. protecting the best and enhancing the rest*
- 2 **Create and Restore GBI** *i.e. greening the grey and creating new GBI in areas where it is most needed*
- 3 **Connect and Link GBI** *i.e. making the links, improving connectivity and accessibility of GBI*
- 4 **Promote GBI** *i.e. changing behaviour, promoting the benefits of GBI and encouraging greater uptake of outdoor activity and volunteering*

These objectives and a series of headline actions are explained at Chapter 5, along with strategic diagrams and illustrations.

## Action Plan

The GBI Action Plan 2024-2033 is a separate document which provides more detail on the location, content, funding and partnerships needed to implement the Strategy.

## The Need for a GBI Strategy

GBI is multifunctional and consists of many types of open space, with multiple benefits. This means that responsibility for creating, managing, promoting and funding GBI falls to numerous people and organisations, working in partnership. This strategy is a leadership document, setting out a vision, goals, priorities, objectives and actions which will inspire sustained action across the town.

This strategy covers the whole of Blackpool. As GBI does not stop at the borough boundary, the strategy aims to connect with the GBI of the neighbouring authorities, Wyre and Fylde.

## Types of Green and Blue Infrastructure

GBI refers to many different types of green and blue space, in public and private ownership, with and without public access, in urban and rural locations:

- Parks and gardens – urban parks, pocket parks, country parks and formal gardens.
- Amenity space - play areas, communal gardens, playing fields, civic plazas, street trees, living walls and sustainable drainage installations which rely on vegetation.
- Natural and semi-natural green space –Woodland, wetlands, water bodies, nature reserves and other wildlife sites housing a variety of habitats and species.
- Beach and Promenade – civic spaces, piers and headlands.

## Benefits of Green and Blue Infrastructure<sup>viii</sup>

### 1. Economic benefits

- *Economic growth and employment*
- *Attraction and retention of businesses to the area through creation of attractive environments*

- *Tourism and recreation enhancing the economy and providing jobs*
- *Staff health and motivation through greener living and working environments*
- *Increased land and property values*

## **2. Social benefits**

- *Place-making for family housing and social cohesion*
- *Increased health and wellbeing*
- *Providing recreation and leisure assets*
- *Creation of community resources and a setting for volunteering*

## **3. Environmental benefits**

- *Conservation and enhancement of biodiversity, landscape and geodiversity*
- *Increased natural capital value and ecosystem resilience*
- *Protection and enhancement of cultural heritage and a setting for art*
- *Climate change adaptation and mitigation*

### 3.0 Setting the Scene

A useful statistical profile of Blackpool's population, economy, health and wellbeing is regularly updated on the Lancashire County website<sup>ix</sup>, allowing comparisons with county and national trends.

#### Placeholder: Map 2: Green and Blue Infrastructure Typology

##### Urban Fabric

Blackpool is intensely urban and compact in form. Almost 75% of land is developed. At its heart is the Town Centre and the adjoining Resort Core. Elsewhere in the Inner Area, there is very little open space apart from the promenade and beach. The following nine wards fall seriously short of the standard of 4 hectares of open space per 1,000 population, as proposed in the Open Space Assessment<sup>x</sup> (2019): Claremont, Talbot, Brunswick, Tyldesley, Victoria, Hawes Side, Waterloo, Highfield and Squires Gate.

Elsewhere, Blackpool is predominantly residential in character and largely built up to its boundaries, apart from small pockets of Green Belt which extend into Fylde and Wyre districts. In Blackpool the designation of Countryside Areas in conjunction with the Green Belt defines the limit of urban development and provides much needed amenity and open space.

Fleetwood has a tree canopy cover of 3.35%, whereas Blackpool has a cover of 4.4%, compared to the national average is 16%<sup>xi</sup>. Blackpool has a tree canopy cover of 5.1%, compared to an England-wide average of 16.3% in urban areas<sup>xii</sup>. Bloomfield ward has the second lowest tree canopy cover of any urban ward in the UK. This low canopy coverage is a consequence of exposure to coastal weather, the dense Victorian urban fabric, the extent of privately rented property and the demand for car parking. Over the past few years, the Council's Parks team have planted 3,000 trees in suburban road verges and some parks, but it will require the planting of tens of thousands of trees to bring the town's cover up to even half the national average which will be informed by the Tree Strategy from 2020-2030.

The Council owns many of the town's trees and a priority is to maintain this stock in good health, particularly important in the face of climate change and increasing prevalence of pests and diseases.

##### Seascape

Blackpool's coastline is 7 miles long. Blackpool's promenade and seascape is characterised by coastal defences which have received major investments within the past decade. These give the seafront a characterful urban feel. Whilst the defences limit opportunities to greening the seascape, the designed headlands along the promenade provide civic spaces for congregation and art.

Blackpool North and South beach has Blue Flag status after the Environment Agency classed it as having 'excellent' sea water quality in 2023. Seaside Awards have been granted to three other areas of beach in Blackpool, giving the resort an entire coastline of award-winning beaches. Despite the quality of the seafront, some residents report that they feel somewhat disconnected from the promenade, perhaps because of the stark urban environments in the Inner Area, perhaps because of a perception that the promenade is an area for tourists.

##### Green and Blue Infrastructure

A quarter of the town's open space is provided in and around Stanley Park, which is one of the largest parks of its kind in the country. It is historically important and has Grade II\* status on the National Register of Historic Parks and Gardens. It comprises a designed landscape

with play areas, a lake and a café. The Park facilitates sport through its provision of outdoor sports space, tennis courts, flat and crown green bowling and all-weather pitches. It hosts many regional and national events, for example it is a UK centre of excellence for BMX racing.

### Placeholder – recent quote from MP/Councillor on Stanley Park achievements?

Near Stanley Park are a commercially-operated zoo and Marton Mere, the town's principal wildlife site, operated by Blackpool Council.

Blackpool has several other principal parks, numerous playing fields and other small recreation grounds, providing important recreational, sports and visual amenity benefits for local communities.

There is very little GBI in the Inner Area or the Town Centre. Its major GBI resource is the coast and beach.

Route 62 of the National Cycle Network runs the length of the promenade and inland to Stanley Park and Heron's Reach.

## Health and Wellbeing

### Placeholder: Map 3: Health Deprivation in Blackpool

Blackpool has a population of 141,300 and is the seventh most densely populated borough in England and Wales outside Greater London. The population is heavily concentrated in Blackpool's Inner Area which experiences considerable transience as people move in for short-term employment or simply to attempt a new start in life; the inexpensive housing encourages this.

The health of people in Blackpool is generally worse than England's average. Blackpool is one of the 20% most deprived districts/unitary authorities in England with 26.2% (6,855) children living in low income families. Life expectancy for both men and women is lower than England's average. Problems prevalent in Blackpool include alcohol and drug misuse, poor mental health, smoking and obesity. Blackpool has the fourth highest rate of antidepressant prescriptions in the country, and psychological therapy services are very over-subscribed. Over 12.5% of working age residents claim Incapacity Benefit, almost double the national average.

Improving the public's health is now a clear responsibility for local authorities. Blackpool Council are developing a range of approaches to tackling the underlying causes of poor health and promoting healthier lives. Examples include linking GPs to social prescribing alternatives for patients to improve their health and wellbeing and reduce social isolation; debt counselling; volunteering opportunities; and Living Streets "Walk to School" projects in primary schools and workplaces.

In 2017, Blackpool Council was the first local authority in England to sign a Local Authority Declaration on Healthy Weight. The Declaration includes a commitment to make the most of planning and infrastructure opportunities to positively impact on physical health.

Revoe Park, one of the key parks for the Defined Inner Area, has undergone a number of improvements to meet the needs of the community, including a community garden using disused bowling greens; renovation of the park buildings using attractive timber cladding (which has withstood vandalism); and natural play. The Park has benefitted from financial and human resources provided through the Blackpool's Better Start<sup>xiii</sup> programme.

*"Revoe Park is a really important green space in the heart of a built up area, which we can use to help develop a local community around. These improvements should help make it a*

*safer place to visit, while the park rangers and community garden will help families to get outside, learn new skills and make new friends” Cllr. Cain, speaking at a Betterstart event in the park in 2016*

## Tourism

Blackpool is England’s largest and most popular seaside resort attracting 17m tourism visits (13.5 million day visits, 3.5 million staying)<sup>xiv</sup>. Whilst Blackpool remains at the heart of the UK tourism and visitor economy, it has experienced a significant decline in visitor numbers from the 1980’s onwards, a consequence of growing consumer affluence, enhanced consumer choice and perceived obsolescence of the town’s visitor offer.

In recent years there have been positive signs that Blackpool is beginning to revitalise the visitor economy and attract a new generation of families and visitors. Significant new public sector investment has improved the quality of the resort offer and the urban environment; however, Blackpool still has some way to go in providing a high quality resort offer which appeals to a 21st century tourist market and supports a sustainable visitor economy.

## Quality of Place

Blackpool’s world renowned British Seaside has developed around its iconic Victorian architecture including Blackpool Tower, Winter Gardens, theatres, hotels and many other civic buildings. The built heritage of Blackpool is something which people are proud of and identify with.

The downside of the intensive development of visitor and residential accommodation, is that it has resulted in creating many of Blackpool’s low income and vulnerable households, in Blackpool’s inner area, has a negative effect on forming stable and cohesive communities. The high levels of crime, anti-social behaviour, worklessness and low educational attainment coupled with significant transience presents one of the most testing social and economic challenges in the country.

*“You can’t do welfare reform separately from having some sort of place-based economic strategy as well” Jonathan Portes, Chief Economist, Dept. of Work and Pensions, 2002-2008, (quoted in “On the Edge”, a Financial Times article about Blackpool, November 2017)*

Although not always causative, the lack of GBI in the Inner Area correlates strongly with wards suffering lowest levels of mental health and physical wellbeing. The Council has strategies to improve the worst quality housing and promote further family based tourism development, reducing the negative connotations associated with day-tripping.

Blackpool is committed to growth and regeneration in several key areas, as expressed in the Core Strategy Key Diagram (figure 10)<sup>xv</sup>. The Town Centre, Resort Core and neighbourhoods within the Inner Area are the primary focus for transformation. In terms of housing, this means restricting multiple occupancy and poor landlord behaviour, with targeted demolition and building of new family homes, such as the new Foxhall Urban Village. Outside the Inner Area, housing estates such as Mereside, Grange Farm and Queens Park are being restructured to improve the quality of the housing offer; and new housing is expected in outer areas of the town around Whyndyke Farm and Moss House Road.

## Economic Growth and Investment

Blackpool Town Centre is the main retail and cultural centre for the Fylde Coast and employs over 6,000 people, generating a retail turnover of around £300 million per annum. However, the Town Centre is under performing as a sub-regional retail centre. Jobs in Blackpool are generally low skill and low wage, and small businesses predominate. Furthermore, reliance on the tourism industry means there is high seasonal unemployment in the winter months.

Blackpool Airport Enterprise Zone (EZ) is a 144ha site incorporating Blackpool Airport which is now in the control of the Council. The EZ is a key employment site with potential to support nearly 140 new businesses and up to 3,000 new jobs over the next 25 years. The EZ has a strong emphasis on creating a green and attractive environment.

Blackpool Council alongside with Blackpool Housing Company and Blackpool Coastal Housing are also pro-actively enabling development and working with developers and investors to shape and facilitate regeneration and new development.

Gateways are a key economic priority and include Yeadon Way, Preston New Road, and Progress Way leading to the Enterprise Zone. The tourist entry points at Blackpool North Station and Central Corridor also provide potential for introducing added value through GBI.

## Land and Biodiversity

### Placeholder: Map 4: Land and Biodiversity

Undeveloped open land in the east of the town is made up of protected public open space, sites of nature conservation value, Green Belt and Countryside Areas. Blackpool's intensely built-up urban area means this open land has important landscape, nature conservation and environmental value.

Marton Mere Local Nature Reserve, located on the eastern edge of the town, is one of the few remaining natural freshwater sites in Lancashire covering an area of 39 hectares. The reserve was once associated with a former rubbish tip but is now a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) due to its bird populations.

With a wardened visitor centre, Marton Mere is the hub of nature conservation activity and volunteering in the town.

Blackpool has a number of Biological Heritage Sites (BHS); these are part of a network of key wildlife sites across Lancashire. Within Blackpool nearly all the BHS's are ponds which form part of land allocated as open space. The North Blackpool (or Kinncraig) Pond Trail is an example of how nature assets are linked together and used as an educational asset.

Fylde's arable growing systems require healthy populations of pollinators and the urban greenspaces within Blackpool can provide a reservoir of plants and habitats suitable for these vital insect species.

Agricultural land on the eastern boundary of Blackpool is level, fertile and open. Extending into neighbouring Wyre and Fylde, the field boundary systems (ditches, hedges and shelterbelts) have become fragmented and have lost distinctiveness due to urbanisation.

## 4.0 Goals

The graphic below highlights Blackpool's six main GBI Goals, which have been identified from consultation and a review of evidence. Investment in GBI will of course benefit other areas of public life such as heritage, climatic resilience and education.

### [Placeholder: Infographic 1](#)

#### **Goal 1: Engaging People in Health and Wellbeing**

##### **Our Goal**

Blackpool's Green and Blue Infrastructure is the setting for people to meet, exercise, play and recharge their batteries. Contact with the natural world reduces stress, helps recovery and builds community cohesion, particularly through volunteering together. Our Green and Blue Infrastructure can help Blackpool's residents live long, happy and healthy lives.

##### **Our Priorities**

These are our implementation priorities:

##### **Early Years and Family Groups**

Through initiatives like Better Start, Blackpool is already diversifying its parks to create natural play opportunities which build mental resilience amongst children<sup>xvi</sup>. Our parks are used by adults learning parenting skills through horticultural and craft activities in family groups.

##### **Schools and Routes to Schools**

Greener school grounds and well treed routes to school are shown to improve mental health of children using them<sup>xvii</sup>.

##### **Adult Life and Older Years**

Urban parks provide a natural health service which is worth many millions to the local economy<sup>xviii</sup>.

### **[UPDATE CASE STUDY]**

#### **Inner Area**

The open space audit shows there are massive deficiencies of accessible greenspace in the Inner Area. This has a particularly negative effect on young families, the elderly and those less mobile who may not be able to easily access the parks and promenade. Planning policy can resist any further losses of vegetation and encourage creation of pocket parks, street trees and doorstep green infrastructure in regeneration and new development proposals. Blackpool has a low rate of participation in outdoor activity<sup>xix</sup>.

#### **Blackpool Outdoors**

About 18,500 Blackpool people use the outdoor environment each week. This is 5,000 people less than the national average for a town of our size. To get another 5000 people outdoors each week in Blackpool would mean:

- 17 more "Parkruns"; or
- 167 school groups; or



- 250 new walking groups; or
- 400 new sports teams; or
- 1,250 more families using our parks.

Quite a challenge! Obviously not all these activities need to happen at the same time – nevertheless our parks and promenade are good enough and big enough to deliver!

### **Cycling and Walking**

Blackpool has the opportunity to become a highly walkable and cyclable town. These activities immediately improve health and wellbeing. To encourage more “green travel” for recreation and commuting we can promote:

- The “Living Streets” programme; a project to establish walking and routes suitable for children, commuters and less active residents by making the most of local parks and open spaces.
- Greenways (walking and cycling routes) to the town centre.
- The “Quality Corridors” where investment in public realm, street scene management and street trees will enhance walkability.

### **Volunteering and Training**

Blackpool has a very active volunteering culture particularly in the fields of social care and rehabilitation and is highly valued. Parks provide extensive volunteering opportunities for businesses and for individuals. GP’s can prescribe outdoor social activities and participants report the mental health benefits they gain from social contacts.

### **Case Studies – to be updated**

#### **Grow Blackpool**

Grow Blackpool is a Groundwork led initiative funded by Blackpool Council to promote the benefits of eating fresh fruit and vegetables daily and enabling people to grow it themselves. Saving money, learning new skills, becoming more active and making new friends are all outcomes of the scheme. One of the achievements from Grow Blackpool is the formation of the Friends of Jubilee Gardens. The group care for the 100 year old Promenade Sunken Gardens by Gynn Square in Blackpool. They want the gardens to be well maintained and to play their part in supporting other Agencies and Council Departments in achieving this aim particularly with cuts to Council budgets and the realisation that the way public spaces are funded and managed in the past has now changed. To make this happen, involvement from the local community is vital and needs to be nurtured and encouraged.

#### **Revoe Park**

Blackpool’s Better Start programme has funded Early Years Park Rangers to promote learning through play. The programme has funded works to improve security, create a natural play area and convert disused bowling greens into training areas for woodwork and horticultural skills. These are used by parent and toddler groups and by adults seeking to rebuild their skills and self-esteem following personal difficulties. The park is a vital green lung in the Inner Area.

#### **East Pines Park, Anchorsholme**

This small greenspace had become prone to antisocial behaviour and drug use until parents joined forces with the local councillor and parks officers to improve security, replace hedges with railings and create better managed play facilities. The group made grant applications to local businesses and charities and the park is now an active hub for the local community.

## Key Policy Links and Partnerships

1. *Resilience*
2. *Local Plan Core Strategy (2012-2027, updated April 2023) - Objectives 4, 5, 8, 11, 12.*
3. *Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy for Blackpool (2016-2019)*
4. *Blackpool Better Start (N.D)*
5. *“Steps to Health” – Blackpool’s community health walking scheme and Living Streets: Walk to 2017-2020*
6. *Active Lives Strategy (2021-2026)Lancashire Rights of Way Improvement Plan (2015-2025)Solaris Centre and links to nature-based health initiatives explored by Lancaster University*

## Goal 2: Enhancing the Visitor Experience

### Our Goal

Blackpool is renowned for the quality of its parks and public realm which have become visitor destinations in their own right. Landscape quality is enhanced along the main road and rail corridors and at gateways into the town centre. The town becomes a hub for coastal walking and cycling tours.

### Our Priorities

These are our implementation priorities:

#### **Stanley Park, Zoo and Marton Mere**

Now the park is recognised as the Best in the UK we can promote it widely within the town and also to broader audiences across the UK. The park development plan will maintain a focus on quality and continuous refreshing of its visitor offer, including events, attractions, festivals, performances, art and horticulture. Connectivity with the town centre, the promenade and other principal parks in Blackpool, Fleetwood and Lytham St Annes will be promoted, with their own park development plans, which will help visitors navigate throughout Blackpool and encourage a longer visitor stay. The newly approved Marton Mere Management Plan will ensure the site is well maintained as a visitor hub, and this idea can be shared and put into practice at other nature reserves.

#### **Horticultural Excellence**

The town’s tradition of horticultural excellence has been under threat due to public sector funding cuts but the popularity of Royal Horticultural Society Bridgewater Gardens in Salford and the anticipated Eden Project North in Morecambe shows the economic value of having a horticultural attraction. This could be centred on Stanley Park, but in any case maintaining horticultural excellence is critical for the landscapes of our corridors and gateways.

#### **Walking and Cycling**

The promenade is already a national cycle route, part of the England coastal path and the Lancashire Coastal Way. Blackpool is a possible Trans Pennine trail starting route and we will bring benefits of tourism to local businesses by encouraging additional bike hire and café businesses. Implementation of greenways along corridors radiating from the town centre would also add to the visitor experience.

#### **Beside the Seaside**

The Central Business District, the Leisure Quarter and the Resort Core are all areas where green and blue infrastructure would uplift quality and sense of arrival. As noted earlier, the dense and compact urban fabric means innovative and sometimes artist-led approaches are

needed to ensure street trees, planters and green walls are seen as assets rather than maintenance liabilities.

### **Arrival Experience**

There is scope for significant uplift in the presentation and consistency of green infrastructure along the central corridor and some scope for inserting additional greening within the main parking areas without affecting overall capacity (for example pleached trees). This would improve visual quality, civic pride and sense of arrival.

### **Volunteering, Sponsorship and Partnership**

We can do more to connect local environmental volunteers with additional human resources, finance and equipment that can be provided by the many businesses, expatriates and groups that have a special affinity with the town.

### **Case Studies – to be updated**

#### **Stanley Park and Zoo**

As Blackpool's largest and most prestigious Park, Stanley Park provides a wide variety of events and activities throughout the year generating income for the town. In summer 2017 the Park hosted a Dinosaur Festival, the first outdoor festival of its kind in the UK. Life sized replica animatronic dinosaurs were placed around the Park as well as a simulated archaeological dig scene. Other events at Stanley Park and its visitor centre include pumpkin carving, Macmillan coffee mornings, Christmas carols, high ropes course, music events at the bandstand, weekly Parkrun and an annual motorcycle show.

Blackpool Zoo is an award winning zoo housing over 1,500 animals ranging from sea lions to orangutans to giraffes. In 2017, the Zoo celebrated its 45th anniversary which was marked with a number of celebrations including welcoming its 15 millionth visitor.

### **Bank Hey Street Improvements**

Merlin Entertainments who operate the Blackpool Tower complex partnered with the Council to fund streetscene enhancements near the Tower.

### **Key Policy Links and Partnerships**

1. *Town Centre Strategy (March 2022)*
2. *Destination Blackpool: Resort Place-Making (2015-17)*

## **Goal 3: Greener Housing and Infrastructure**

### **Our Goal**

New housing has ready access to high-quality green spaces. The historic trend of loss of greenery in the Inner Area and South Shore is reversed and new multifunctional green spaces are opened up for locals to enjoy. Blackpool's transport corridors and built-up areas use green infrastructure to improve the town's resilience to pollution, flooding and climate change.

### **Our Priorities**

These are our implementation priorities:

#### **New Housing**

Blackpool is determined to improve the quality of its overall housing offer. Blackpool is to deliver 4,200 new homes between 2012 and 2027<sup>xx</sup>. New housing offers opportunities to create pocket parks, play areas, civic trees, community food-growing areas and other imaginative landscapes. Robust arrangements for long-term landscape management are just as important as good design of housing areas. The 'Greening Blackpool' SPD and developer checklists stimulate creative approaches to GBI provision.

A key development as an exemplar for other housing developments will be the Whyndyke Garden Village, one of NHS England's Healthy New Towns, where GBI is designed into the masterplan from the beginning to promote health and wellbeing.

#### **Housing Area Transformation**

Several established residential areas will be renewed over the next decades. Our Core Strategy is clear that the town's housing mix must be rebalanced to make the Inner Area, South Shore and certain other housing estates more attractive for family life. The Inner Area has a significant deficiency in all types of green infrastructure which depresses property values and discourages family life.

The urban fabric can be restructured so it is fit for 21<sup>st</sup> century family life with new green spaces created in areas of deficiency. Elsewhere new development can release funds to make existing green spaces more versatile and user-friendly. All possible policy instruments and funding streams should be deployed to direct resources towards a comprehensive renewal of these neighbourhoods. Foxhall Village and Queens Park are examples of radical housing transformation resulting in much better GBI.

#### **Corridors and Gateways**

The three principal road corridors into the town and the designated Quality Corridors into the town centre are our "shop window" and each has scope for tree-planting and green infrastructure enhancement to create a distinctive and mature setting for the town.

### **The “Green Line”**

The car parks and public spaces, including George Bancroft Park, that form a pedestrian movement corridor from Blackpool South station towards the town centre could be further enhanced with vegetation, green walls, pleached trees and pocket allotments.

### **Weather Proofing**

Blackpool’s dense urban fabric means we have too many “sealed surfaces” which cause flash flooding after heavy rain. In the public realm, parks and road verges can be remodelled slightly to act as rain gardens, soakaways and swales. Gardeners and landowners can play a part in ‘de-paving’, and weather-proofing the town through retaining greenery and planting trees.

### **Involving Residents**

Blackpool’s people are proud of the town. Long grass and wildflower verges can be designed and labelled so they are understood as ‘natural’ rather than unkempt. Alongside physical transformation of our housing areas, we should involve residents in design and management of green infrastructure on their doorstep and in the principal parks.

### **Case Studies – to be updated**

#### **Queens Park and Layton Rec.**

The redevelopment of Queens Park has enabled the enhancement of Layton Rec, a Blackpool Council owned greenspace. The landscape improvement works are being carried out alongside the second phase of development. Layton Rec now has new pedestrian and cycle paths along with soft and hard landscaping. Within the housing area, quality greenspaces and play facilities are provided.

### West Rhyl Housing Regeneration Project and the Gerddi Heulwen Park

Rhyl's Victorian-era housing in neighbourhoods behind the promenade has similarities to Blackpool in terms of a dense urban fabric, patterns of transient occupancy, and a fierce neighbourhood loyalty amongst long-established residents. In consultation with residents, a new green space, Gerddi Heulwen, was created in 2014 after demolition of a hundred properties, as part of a programme of neighbourhood renewal.

### Manchester City of Trees

Over a sustained period, spanning several transport and public realm projects, Manchester City Council has invested in civic trees, street art and furniture and roadside raingardens to uplift the environmental quality and user-friendliness of Oxford Road and the Town Hall environs.

#### Key Policies and Partnerships

1. *Local Plan Core Strategy (2012-2027, updated April 2023) - Objectives 2, 5, 7, 8, 9, 16, 18, 19, 20, 21 and future SPD on design quality*
2. *Financial Inclusion Strategy (2022-2027)*
3. *Blackpool's Built Heritage Strategy 2016-2020*
4. *Lancashire Flood Risk Management Strategy (2021-27)*

## Goal 4: Enabling Productive Businesses and Workers

### Our Goal

High quality Green Infrastructure adds value to business environments, notably in the Enterprise Zone, the Central Business District and the Leisure Quarter. Our parks are a setting for people to learn skills and gain self-confidence to enter the workplace.

### Our Priorities

These are our implementation priorities:

#### Town Centre and Leisure Quarter

In this dense and compact setting, green infrastructure needs to be carefully designed into the public realm and sometimes artist-led approaches can turn street trees and planters into an asset rather than a maintenance liability (see London case study). Comprehensive redevelopment can create an opportunity for a rooftop park which can be a versatile space for events or rest and relaxation (see Chavasse Park case study). As part of the Town Centre Action Plan 2022 a 'greening audit' is being undertaken which will provide the foundation for measurable improvements and additions to central green spaces.

#### Quality Enterprises

Attracting and retaining quality enterprises to Blackpool is an important component of growing and diversifying the local economy. High-value businesses have an expectation of high-quality premises and business environments from which to operate, in order to attract the best staff and to project a leading corporate image. Green spaces within a business environment enable businesses to operate in an attractive setting and allow staff to have an outdoor breaktime/recreation location.

Attractive business environments can add a premium to the value of business premises, which benefit the economy and help spur investment in development projects that support employment.

#### Enterprise Zone

The Blackpool Airport Enterprise Zone is the principal node for industrial and commercial office growth in Blackpool. This important business park aims to be a leading destination for advanced manufacturing and energy-related businesses. The masterplan for the EZ includes opportunities for green infrastructure along boulevards within the business park and the redevelopment of sporting fields. Using green infrastructure to highlight messages about the circular economy and to create a prestigious environment can attract creative start-ups and mature businesses.

### **Key Corridors and Gateways**

Green infrastructure can create a sense of arrival and prestige, important in attracting and retaining businesses. Much depends on the quality of landscape management. Fortunately, Blackpool has considerable horticultural expertise and interventions such as wildflower verges, street trees and hedging can all create a sense of destination. Inconsistency of existing roadside landscapes currently creates a slightly disjointed visitor experience on arrival.

### **Business Involvement**

Volunteering days and corporate social responsibility links can help engage more people in Blackpool's great outdoor spaces. From clean-ups to nature reserve management, volunteering can be promoted widely, to the benefit of the Council and local businesses.

#### **Benefits of Employee Volunteering**

A well-structured business volunteering programme benefits individuals and employers<sup>xxi</sup>

- 97% of volunteers said activities help develop a strong team
- 95% felt that volunteering had a positive influence on them
- 76% said it had a positive influence on how they feel about their employer
- 87% felt that volunteering improved their understanding of issues affecting their community
- 98% rates enjoyment as excellent or good – volunteering has to be fun!

### **Skills Development**

Working with local colleges, our parks can offer apprenticeships along with horticultural and construction skills training which boost confidence amongst people seeking to re-enter the workplace.

### **Green Travel Routes**

Investment in and promotion of the 'Living Streets' routes and greenways to and from the town centre will enable more people to commute on foot or bike.

### **Case Studies – to be updated**

#### **London: Bringing Creativity and Green Infrastructure Together**

In Oxford Street, London some shops have sponsored illuminated tree guards which provide an attractive feature while protecting the tree from vandalism. At London Bridge, a group of

young architects designed a pop-up bench/planter system which brought seating and greenery to a busy public space.

### **Chavasse Park, Liverpool One**

As part of the Liverpool One retail development, a new park was created over an underground carpark. The park features grassed areas for general use along with hard surfaced areas for events, Christmas markets, pop-up restaurants, etc. Situated on rising ground it forms a visual gateway into the retail area from the waterfront and provides vistas over the Albert Dock.

### **Business Improvement Districts**

Businesses in several towns and cities are establishing Green Infrastructure Strategies for town centres e.g. Northwich, Stockport and Winckley Square, Preston. Greening initiatives, public realm improvements and sustainable drainage schemes are seen as contributing to economic growth and retail footfall.

### **Key Policies and Partnerships**

1. *Local Plan Core Strategy (2012-2027, updated April 2023) - Objectives 3,8,15,17,21*
2. *A Better Blackpool (prospectus for transformation of the Town Centre and transport links)*
3. *Financial Inclusion Strategy (2022-2027)*
4. *Walk 2017-2020: Walking and Cycling Access for everyday journeys*

## **Goal 5: Promoting a Green Image and Culture**

### **Our Goal**

Blackpool will be known for the quality of its parks and public realm, and they host events and public art of which its townspeople are proud. Green Infrastructure provides a setting for the best of the town's Victorian and Twentieth Century architectural heritage.

### **Our Priorities**

These are our implementation priorities:

#### **Parks Development Plans**

We are rightly proud of Stanley Park as the Best UK Park for the third time in 2022. We can continue to build on its reputation as a centre of excellence through encouraging niche businesses, education facilities, sports and events that add social value, income streams and training opportunities. By linking Stanley Park to other parks in Blackpool, Lytham St Annes and Fleetwood, we will build civic pride. Park Development Plans for all our parks would include attention to boundaries, gateways, railings, civic trees and other measures which enhance their contribution to quality of place. Achieving Green Flag Awards for all our parks over the next 5 – 10 years will highlight the increasing value of green spaces to both residents and visitors.

#### **Arts in the Public Realm**

Parks, public realm and the promenade headlands can provide a setting for public art, performance, theatre and community activity.

#### **Townscape**

Particularly in the Inner Area, policy should resist removal of vegetation and encourage new development to incorporate significant green infrastructure and street trees to improve quality of place and contribute to climatic resilience of the urban fabric.



## Gateways and Transport Corridors

Green Infrastructure approaches such as green walls at the main point of arrival and civic trees, hedging and wildflower verges alongside road corridors can enhance the sense of arrival.

## Exemplary Coastal Regeneration

Blackpool is one of many coastal towns in Britain and Ireland addressing long-term decline through physical re-structuring of the urban environment and building a strong cultural brand. As the UK's leading coastal resort, Blackpool can export its expertise in creating and managing Green and Blue Infrastructure as part of a transformation programme.

## Small Town Big Profile

Blackpool is a small town with a big profile. Millions of people come from all over the United Kingdom every year to enjoy our unique environment and attractions, and tourism continues to dominate our town like no other place in the country. The Council's Plan (2015-2020) embraces this fact, recognising the increasing contribution which our cultural and creative economy can make to pulling in new types of visitor and providing the fun and spectacle for which we are renowned.

### Case Studies

#### Green Walls

Green walls have been established near two British railway stations, Birmingham New Street and Deansgate, Manchester. These help to obscure some unattractive facades and also create a sense of arrival and a point of interest in a confined urban space.

#### Stanley Park

The park is known for its national role in various sports and was voted the Best Field Day 2017. It is served by a management team which actively seeks opportunities for revenue generation and involvement of national sports and leisure bodies. More locally it encourages culture and educational events such as the Wordpool Festival aimed at stimulating children's interest in poetry and reading.

### Key Policies and Partnerships

- 1.
2. *Local Plan Core Strategy (2012-2027, updated April 2023) - Objectives 5, 12 and 14*
3. *A Better Blackpool*
4. *Blackpool Town Centre Strategy (March 2022)*
5. *Blackpool's Built Heritage Strategy 2016-2020*
6. *Fields in Trust – Guidance for Outdoor Sport and Play, Beyond the Six Acre Standard (2020)*

## Goal 6: Improving Habitats and Benefiting Pollinators

### Our Goal

Blackpool's Wildlife Sites are well-managed and used by volunteers and wildlife-watchers, led and supported by the Council's Wildlife Officer. Our parks, school grounds and main road verges are biodiverse, supporting bees, butterflies and other pollinators which in turn sustain the Fylde's arable farming economy. Vegetation in the town and rural fringe helps filter pollution and improve quality of water before it reaches the Irish Sea. Our parks have healthy soils. Our townspeople can easily get to the coast and countryside. The rural fringe

is of high visual quality, with well-managed field edge ditches, verges and hedges typical of open farmland.

## Our Priorities

These are our implementation priorities:

### Wildlife Sites and Green Corridors

Marlon Mere Local Nature Reserve and Site of Special Scientific Interest is the hub of much nature conservation activity and can act as a centre of excellence, and it's newly approved Management Plan can be used as a template for all our Biological Heritage Sites (BHS) to ensure they are well-managed and linked to community volunteers who help with site stewardship. BHS's, urban wildlife, green corridors and coastal habitats are designated in planning policy and new development ensures that their continuity and educational value is protected.

### Contributing to Biodiversity Net Gain Priorities

Blackpool and Lancashire's Local Nature Recovery Strategy is being developed and will set out the habitat and species priorities for the town and the wider Fylde area, and the areas of strategic significance which are the preferred locations for off-site BNG activity where developers cannot achieve BNG on site. The LNRS will inform the way the Council considers the Biodiversity Gain Plans required from new development under the Environment Act 2021. It is likely that wildflower-rich grasslands, trees and wetlands will be prioritised and the Council's parks and greenspaces, particularly those in areas of LNRS priority, can be used to deliver the enhancements. The Council will need to investigate the most appropriate delivery vehicle if it chooses to offer its land as a long-term "Registered Off-Site Biodiversity Gain" (ROBG) Site.

### Bugs Life!

We will develop a pollinator strategy with actions for main road verges, parks, school grounds, places of worship, farmland and private gardens. The Fylde's agricultural economy is very important with over 3000ha of arable and cereal crops<sup>xxii</sup>, all dependent on pollination. The UK agricultural economy receives £430m benefit from bee pollination<sup>xxiii</sup>.

Urban environments and private gardens can be a refuge for bees and butterflies. At a local scale, deficiencies in allotments and community orchards are addressed, particularly in the Inner Area. Stanley Park Zoo and Forest Schools curricula offer the opportunity for learning about invertebrates and their value to society.

### Fylde Farmland Edge

Blackpool's rural edge is visually disjointed and is losing its distinctive landscape character<sup>xxiv</sup>. Restoring "typical" field boundaries such as ditches, reedbeds, hedges, flower-rich verges and shelterbelts would also improve wildlife connectivity and water quality by filtering diffuse source pollution from farmland and roads.

### **What is Natural Capital?**

**Natural capital is 'the stock of our physical natural assets (such as soil, forests, water and biodiversity) which provide flows of services that benefit people (such as pollinating crops, natural hazard protection, climate regulation or the mental health benefits of a walk in the park). Natural capital is valuable to our economy. Some marketable products such as timber have a financial value that has been known for centuries. In other cases (e.g. the role of bees in**

**pollinating crops), we are only just beginning to understand their financial value.’ (Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, 2011)**

### **Retrofitting green and blue infrastructure into the urban fabric**

Blackpool has a high proportion of “sealed surface”. Development and estate regeneration offers the opportunity to protect existing vegetation and introduce new green infrastructure, swales and soakaways, thus improving biodiversity, reducing local flood risk and improving the quality of water flowing into the Irish Sea, helping maintain our Blue Flag beach status.

### **“Greening in-house”**

The Council has made great progress embedding green infrastructure in the planning process with the ‘Greener Blackpool’ Supplementary Planning Document. The Council needs to ensure a coordinated internal project management process so that the Council’s own assets and activities don’t miss any opportunities to deliver great green spaces.

### **Case Studies – to be updated**

#### **Green Infrastructure Action Plan for Pollinators (GIAPP) in South-east Wales**

The GIAPP is a landscape-scale project addressing the decline in biodiversity and providing benefits to the economy and communities through creating the environments that favour the creatures that help to pollinate plants.

### **Marton Mere and North Blackpool (Kincraig) Pond Trail**

Marton Mere is literally the “natural gateway” to Blackpool. It has a dramatic lake and reedbed with a very diverse birdlife and views of the Tower and the Fylde Countryside. With a Visitor Centre and an adjoining Holiday Park, it is a hub for wildlife-watching and outdoors volunteering. It has walking and cycling links to Stanley Park. With the future development of the nearby Whyndyke urban village its role in the environmental consciousness of the area will increase.

Rangers based at Marton Mere co-ordinate volunteering in many of the town’s other parks and also manage the Kincraig Pond Trail, a locally important wildlife corridor which provides accessible semi-natural greenspace for residents in the north east of Blackpool.

The GIAPP produced long term action plans for publicly-owned land, focussing on how public organisations can embed sustainable management principles in their daily activities. The GIAPP places an emphasis on the intrinsic value of pollinators to the public, aiming to provide a more colourful, artistic and functional environment.

#### **Key Policy Links and Partnerships**

1. *Local Plan Core Strategy (2012-2027, updated April 2023) - Objectives 5,6,11 and 20*
2. *National Pollinator Strategy (2014, updated April 2019)*
3. *Lancashire Landscape Strategy (Lancashire City Council) (2000)*
4. *Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens*
5. *Lancashire Wildlife Trust (e.g., Living Seas and Living Landscapes projects)*
6. *Lancashire Ecological Network Approach and Analysis (2015)*
7. *Fylde Peninsula Water Management Group (2019)*

## 5.0 Next Steps

### Roles and Responsibilities

The Strategy diagrams in Chapter 5 show the many opportunities for GBI to transform the quality of the urban environment, the seascape and the countryside of Blackpool. The proposed comprehensive and connected networks of GBI will deliver many benefits to residents, employees, investors and visitors to the town. Some actions will be led by the Council, some by the community, some by the third sector, some by developers, some by health and regeneration specialists and all will need partnership working.

### Detailed Action Plan

More detailed actions, funding and stakeholder responsibilities based on the Objectives at Chapter 5 are listed in the GBI Action Plan 2024 - 2033.

### Green and Blue Checklist

We have set out below a checklist of requirements for planners and developers to help ensure that GBI is considered in all decisions affecting Blackpool's environment.

GBI should be seen as critical infrastructure in the same way as utilities or local transport networks. If it can be incorporated at the start of a development project it is possible to achieve substantial cost savings in the delivery of environmental enhancement through combining uses and creating multifunctionality. It can also improve the design, layout and appearance of a scheme.

Developers should be engaged in early discussions with the local authority regarding on site GBI provision so the costs of the expected high standards of quality and quantity of GBI can be accounted for by the developer in their land purchase negotiations.

### GBI Checklist

The checklist provides a summary of the Green Infrastructure (GBI) requirements for development in Blackpool. It consists of strategic and site specific considerations. These requirements will contribute to the greening of the urban area and in particular new development. This will stimulate investment and economic growth; contribute to an attractive and healthy living and working environment; enhance biodiversity; and increase opportunities for tourism leisure and recreation. Maintenance of any new and enhanced GBI is integral to its success and implementation plans need to detail how maintenance will be secured in the long term.

### Overseeing the Implementation of the Strategy and Plan

#### Resourcing the Plan

In such difficult financial times for Local Authorities and other Public Sector bodies, we will need to be innovative and work in partnership with business and other funding bodies to piece together resources, action by action, to deliver the Strategy.

<p><b>Step 1: Consider the GBI opportunities and benefits that the proposed development could bring to Blackpool</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is important to consider the users of the development and the of GBI benefits that could be provided.</li> <li>• Different types of development provide different opportunities for GBI (including SuDS).</li> <li>• <b>Examine opportunities to deliver BNG onsite, and refer to the LNRS when available</b></li> <li>• Residential development provides the opportunity for open space creation for recreation, connectivity to wildlife and flood resilience.</li> <li>• <b>Consider how GBI onsite could benefit vulnerable users in the local community</b></li> <li>• Other types of development may present opportunities to link to strategic cycle routes and footpaths to encourage visitors and workers use sustainable modes of transport.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Step 2: Identify the GBI assets within and near the proposed development</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify GBI assets within 1km of the proposed development, including aquatic and terrestrial habitats, ecological designated sites, heritage sites, Public Rights of Ways (PRoW), cycle routes.</li> <li>• Maps of all GBI assets can be found in <a href="#">the GBI Technical Report</a>.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Step 3: Review the Local Plan and it's evidence base e.g. Blackpool GBI Strategy, Blackpool's Open Space Assessment, the "Greener Blackpool" Supplementary Planning Document, Fylde Coast LCWIP, and North West Inshore and North West Offshore Marine Plan.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review the Blackpool Council's local plan and evidence base to understand development requirements as well as opportunities to contribute to projects within local plans and strategies.</li> <li>• Planning policies and strategies can be found here: <a href="https://www.blackpool.gov.uk/Residents/Planning-environment-and-community/Planning/Planning-policy/Planning-policy.aspx">https://www.blackpool.gov.uk/Residents/Planning-environment-and-community/Planning/Planning-policy/Planning-policy.aspx</a></li> <li>• The evidence base is saved here: <a href="https://www.blackpool.gov.uk/Residents/Planning-environment-and-community/Planning/Planning-policy/Blackpool-local-plan/Evidence-base.aspx">https://www.blackpool.gov.uk/Residents/Planning-environment-and-community/Planning/Planning-policy/Blackpool-local-plan/Evidence-base.aspx</a></li> </ul>
<p><b>Step 4: Identify opportunities for meeting Blackpool's GBI goals</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider the information gathered from Steps 1 - 3 to understand how the proposed development can deliver the following GBI goals for Blackpool:</li> <li>• Engaging People in Health and Wellbeing</li> <li>• Attracting Visitors and Tourists</li> <li>• Greener Housing and Infrastructure</li> <li>• Enabling Productive Businesses and Workers</li> <li>• Habitats for Wildlife and Pollinators</li> <li>• Promoting a Green Image and Culture</li> </ul>
<p><b>Step 5: Carry out pre-application discussions with Blackpool Council</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Blackpool Council recommends applicants engage with the Council prior to submitting a planning application so that they can provide feedback and advice regarding the type of development, design and layout. Pre-application discussions provide the setting to discuss opportunities to improve the quality of GBI where low quality GBI assets are reduced in size due to proposed development. Post implementation maintenance arrangements for GBI schemes should be discussed.</li> <li>• Details about pre-application discussions can be found here: <a href="https://www.blackpool.gov.uk/Residents/Planning-environment-and-community/Planning/Planning-applications/Pre-application.aspx">https://www.blackpool.gov.uk/Residents/Planning-environment-and-community/Planning/Planning-applications/Pre-application.aspx</a>.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Step 6: Carry out pre-application community involvement if the proposed development is significant</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consulting with the local community early on in the design stage of significant developments provides the opportunity for feedback about the development and GBI proposals.</li> <li>• Further details about public consultation can be found here: <a href="https://www.blackpool.gov.uk/Residents/Planning-environment-and-community/Planning/Planning-applications/The-planning-application-process.aspx">https://www.blackpool.gov.uk/Residents/Planning-environment-and-community/Planning/Planning-applications/The-planning-application-process.aspx</a></li> </ul>
<p><b>Step 7: Submit planning application</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• GBI proposals should be clearly outlined within the planning application.</li> <li>• Information about what to submit with your application form is here: <a href="https://www.blackpool.gov.uk/Residents/Planning-environment-and-community/Planning/Planning-applications/Local-validation-checklist.aspx">https://www.blackpool.gov.uk/Residents/Planning-environment-and-community/Planning/Planning-applications/Local-validation-checklist.aspx</a></li> </ul>

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- <sup>i</sup> [Blackpool Council Blackpool Local Plan Part 1: Core Strategy \(2012 – 2027\) p23 J118003 \(107575\\_2016\)\\_ updated 17 Feb 2016\\_High Res \(blackpool.gov.uk\)](#)
- <sup>ii</sup> HM Government (2018, updated February 2023), A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment. Defra.
- <sup>iii</sup> [Green Infrastructure Home \(naturalengland.org.uk\)](#)
- <sup>iv</sup> [National Model Design Code - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)
- <sup>v</sup> [National design guide.pdf \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)
- <sup>vi</sup> TEP (2017) Blackpool's Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy: Technical Report (report reference 6272.030) produced for Blackpool Council)
- <sup>vii</sup> TEP (2018) Updated Open Space Assessment (report reference 6272.067) produced for Blackpool Council)
- <sup>viii</sup> Adapted from Department for Communities and Local Government, Planning Practice Guidance on the Natural Environment (Paragraph: 006 Reference ID: 8-006-20190721)
- <sup>ix</sup> Lancashire County Council Local Authority profiles, at <https://www.lancashire.gov.uk/lancashire-insight/area-profiles/local-authority-profiles/blackpool-unitary/>
- <sup>x</sup> TEP (2019) Updated Open Space Assessment – as reference 5 above
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- <sup>xii</sup> [UK Ward Canopy Cover | UK Ward Canopy Cover | Forestry Commission \(arcgis.com\)](#)
- <sup>xiii</sup> Better Start Blackpool [www.blackpoolbetterstart.org.uk](http://www.blackpoolbetterstart.org.uk)
- <sup>xiv</sup> Destination Blackpool: Resort Place-Making 2015-2017
- <sup>xv</sup> Blackpool Local Plan: Core Strategy (2012 to 2027): Policy CS1 Strategic Location of Development
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