

Report to:	Blackpool, Fylde and Wyre Economic Prosperity Board
Report Author:	Nick Gerrard, Growth and Prosperity Programme Director, Blackpool Council
Date of Meeting:	17th July 2018

BUSINESS INVESTMENT MARKETING PERCEPTIONS STUDY

1.0 Purpose of the report:

- 1.1 To inform the Board of the work undertaken by Mickledore on behalf of Blackpool Council to assess the business investment perceptions of Blackpool (and the Fylde Coast) to inform the development of a Business Investment Marketing Strategy to support economic growth in Blackpool and the Fylde Coast.

A presentation will be given by Nigel Wilcock, MD of Mickledore setting out their findings.

2.0 Recommendation(s):

- 2.1 To note the report and to comment on issues raised by the presentation to inform the Business Investment Marketing Strategy.

3.0 Reasons for recommendation(s):

- 3.1 The rationale for this work and its subsequent development is set out in extracts from the brief for which Mickledore successfully tendered (Appendix A)

Appendix A

BLACKPOOL BUSINESS INVESTMENT MARKETING RESEARCH BRIEF EXTRACTS

Introduction

Blackpool already has a very powerful brand and is the best known seaside resort in the UK and one of the best known across Europe/the globe. It attracts 18 million visits a year to world famous attractions including Blackpool Tower, Blackpool Illuminations, Blackpool Pleasure Beach and the Winter Gardens. It has long-established, extensive and very effective marketing and promotion activity that supports this.

Blackpool, however, is also well-known in the UK as a place of social deprivation and poverty with a wide range of social problems which detract from this image, and often reinforced by Blackpool being stereotyped.

When it comes to marketing and promotion of Blackpool as a business investment location there are a number of challenges arising:

- Blackpool is so well-known as a holiday and visitor destination that its attractiveness as a business investment location is not well-known
- The social deprivation challenges and the prejudice that this helps to create detract from Blackpool reaching new markets and new audiences
- Hitherto, the efforts to support business investment marketing have had a limited effect

Combined, these challenges seriously detract from the positive perceptions that Blackpool has and act, in our view, as a major drag on Blackpool's attractiveness as an investment location.

Yet these negative perceptions belie the truth of what has happened in recent years and what is now being done further to develop Blackpool as a business investment location whilst continuing to support its major visitor economy.

Over £570million of investment in the past decade has helped to transform Blackpool with major schemes including:

- First phase of Talbot Gateway CBD £80M
- Renewal of the Promenade & Sea Defences & 17 km New Tramway - £285M
- Blackpool Tower & Winter Gardens - £50M
- Hounds Hill Shopping Centre - £150M
- Public Spaces - £12M

and many more schemes now being actively developed or in the pipeline as part of Blackpool's £1billion Growth and Prosperity programme including:

- Blackpool Airport Enterprise Zone and Blackpool Airport
- Talbot Gateway Phase 2 including a tramway extension and transport interchange
- Blackpool Conference Centre - a new £25m Conference centre now under construction
- Central Leisure Quarter
- Quality Corridors
- Blackpool Museum
- Electrification of the Rail link to Preston
- £100M Blackpool Business Loans Fund
- New Hotels under construction/in the pipeline

Many of these projects have required intensive intervention by the very ambitious Council in order to facilitate further private investment. In addition, Blackpool has a thriving business sector, the strength of which is not widely understood outside of the Fylde Coast.

To support our Growth and Prosperity Programme we want to make sure that we maximise the potential of this programme through effective marketing. We are delivering the product but we want to reinforce our strengths, address any deficiencies, challenge false perceptions and increase our market penetration across the North West, UK and internationally to maximise future investment and job creation. We also want to ensure that this work dovetails with and capitalises upon Blackpool's extensive tourism marketing.

Whilst our focus is very much on Blackpool, we are not an island. Blackpool is a critical part of the Fylde Coast and Lancashire and we are working with Marketing Lancashire to ensure that we integrate what we do with their work to promote Lancashire on the national and international stage. This includes specifically Blackpool Airport Enterprise Zone being promoted by Marketing Lancashire as one of 4 Enterprise Zones under the LAMEC brand (Lancashire Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering Cluster) to be launched at MIPIM 2018, and the broader work that they are developing to promote the sectoral strengths of Lancashire following recent research that they have undertaken. Having regard to this work is an important part of this brief.

1. Objectives:

- a) To assess the overall business investment **perceptions** of Blackpool as a place to invest and actual and perceived barriers to investment
- b) To assess the current Blackpool **investment offer** (both in terms of product – opportunities, skills etc and process) and what needs to be done to overcome actual and perceived barriers to investment
- c) To identify the priorities and make recommendations to feed into the subsequent development of a marketing strategy.

2. Outcomes:

Key outcomes from the study are to identify:

- a) how the **Blackpool investment product/opportunities** are perceived on the Fylde Coast, North West and nationally/internationally including what is known of each of the main projects, the economic opportunity and the overall plans for Blackpool;
- b) the **priority investments, actions and support offer** that will be most effective in enhancing the Blackpool investment offer
- c) which **sectors** to prioritise and the best opportunities for Blackpool to pursue to maximise private sector investment and job creation.
- d) how best to harness the **private sector** and the business voice in enhancing Blackpool's investment marketing
- e) how best to harness and complement the power of the extensive marketing campaigns focused on the visitor economy and the strength of the visitor economy
- f) how best to harness and complement the Marketing Lancashire activities
- g) the essential components of the support environment for investors to ensure that there is a customer-focused approach