

**REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR REGENERATION**

**COUNCILLOR MAUREEN  
BATESON**

**PORTFOLIO CO-ORDINATING  
DIRECTOR:  
BRIAN BAILEY  
DATE: 24.04.2014**

**CATHEDRAL QUARTER UPDATE**

The boulevard site is now almost cleared with demolition of the toilet block completed and as much of the materials salvaged as possible. Demolition of Jubilee House will be completed by the end of May after some delays due to asbestos. The contractors are using Bridge House as the site office.

The culvert works are underway starting at the Dandy Walk end of the site. The culvert roof is in a very poor state of repair and this section will be strengthened first in order for construction vehicles including cranes to access the area and construct the office and hotel at that end. The construction of the office and hotel is due to start in July and complete September 2015.

The listed railings and balustrading around the Queen Victoria statue have been removed and are now in secure storage. This will enable the levels of the Cathedral Grounds and the Boulevard to be aligned to create a seamless public space. A scheme to relocate the listed railings within the Cathedral's grounds will come to Planning and Highways Committee in due course. The Queen Victoria statue will be refurbished by a specialist contractor in situ. The World War 1 memorial originally from St Michael's and All Angels will be refurbished off site (once all the names have been identified) and relocated back into the scheme in a more prominent place in 2015.

The Bus Interchange Works have been delayed slightly due to negotiations with United Utilities on a drain diversion. These works will begin at the end of April and be completed in August. We continue to work with Network Rail to ensure that the Station Concourse works are co-ordinated with the Bus Interchange.

Marketing to promote the retail and office units for the scheme will be launched at the end of April.

**BLACKBURN TO MANCHESTER RAIL IMPROVEMENTS**

The Council is in the process of finalising the planning part of the project and hopes to sign the contractual arrangements for Network Rail to deliver the scheme in June 2014. The estimated total cost of the scheme stands at £13.6m and will deliver a half hourly all day train service between Blackburn and Manchester, station enhancements on the route, improved reliability of the service and reduced running times between Pennine Lancashire and

Manchester. The project is being funded by Transport for Lancashire and the Council with scheme construction starting in Summer 2015. Implementation of the half hourly service will be included within the December 2016 timetable.

### **PENNINE REACH**

The project is now in its delivery phase with corridor works and the construction of Blackburn Bus Station now underway. Starting in Darwen, bus stops and shelters have been upgraded to Pennine Reach standards and all will have level access and brand new shelters and furniture. Traffic signal works are also well underway on the A666 with improvements to the Hollins Grove Street junction being delivered. Pedestrian facilities have been upgraded and a new traffic light communication system has been installed to improve traffic flows on the A666. Over the coming months Blackburn Bus Station will take shape with Ainsworth Street being pedestrianised and public realm on Railway Road improved to link in with Cathedral Quarter investment.

### **FORMER BLACKBURN MARKETS SITE**

The interim bus station will operate from the northern part of the site until January 2015 following relocation from the Boulevard, which has allowed works to start on the Cathedral Quarter scheme. The terms for the leasehold disposal of the site to CTP, the Council's preferred developer, were approved by the Executive Board on 13th March and solicitors are now instructed. CTP are working up an outline planning application and continuing discussions with potential food-store operators.

### **BLACKBURN MARKET**

Blackburn Market occupancy is now at 82% and in the last two months we have welcomed three new traders including a sports shop, pizza stall and the return of a seafood stall, in addition to a Jamaican food stall. Lease renewals on all stalls are effective from 1<sup>st</sup> June and with the exception of a few Artisan Row traders we only have three traders who haven't requested new leases.

We have a new marketing brochure which runs through to the end of April to capture the Easter trade and to promote the Queen's Maundy visit. We took part in The Great Days Out event at Event City, Trafford to promote coach parties to Blackburn and have a marketing brochure and video to promote the market and partner attractions. We are also attending Best of Britain and Ireland at the NEC to forge further links with tour operators. Philippa James Chef and Writer for Lancashire Life will start as our Resident Chef from April.

The website has been developed further to add an e-commerce platform and we plan to roll this out to other traders with funding support from Regenerate Pennine Lancashire.

### **DARWEN MARKET**

Darwen Market occupancy levels are at 78%. Improvement works to the Annex at Darwen are due to start shortly.

Social Media has seen almost double the amount of activity on both Facebook and Twitter and the new website will also be launched soon. We also have a

number of events planned including a buskers' day, cookery demonstrations and events to promote Easter

We have been working with Students from DACA to develop the Darwen Market brand which should provide us with a great opportunity for some PR. This will enable us to promote the Market more aggressively over the coming months.

### **BLACKBURN TOWN CENTRE**

As part of the Council's 12 point plan and commitment to improving Blackburn Town Centre the Council is running a 12 week public consultation beginning on April 2<sup>nd</sup> to seek views on access and movement into and within the town centre. With new destinations, (Cathedral Quarter, Leisure Centre, Former Market Site) being developed and town centre vitality being addressed it is important that shoppers, residents and businesses are engaged and asked for their ideas about improving town centre access.

The Blackburn Town Centre BID Steering Group has been active in engaging with partners and interested parties by holding Thursday morning breakfast sessions in Liz n Lil's on Northgate with a view to seeking views on the future of the town centre.

### **BUSINESS CENTRES**

The 3 Business Centres are currently operating at 90% occupancy and conference room bookings continue to improve including interest in weekend bookings. Further ongoing reviews are taking place around efficiency savings and the potential to increase rental income.

### **CORPORATE BUILDING TEAM**

The majority of the Corporate Building Team's resource is focussed on completing the Adults Disabled Facility Grant programme. From the 1st April, the team will also be undertaking the DFG programme for Children's Services where the team have the appropriate trade mix. The workload programme for 14/15 is in place and includes a number of DDA improvement schemes, works to the Old Town Hall quadrangle and the investment estate planned programme.