

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR REGENERATION

COUNCILLOR PHIL RILEY

**PORTFOLIO CO-ORDINATING
DIRECTOR:
BRIAN BAILEY
DATE: 28.01.2016**

CATHEDRAL QUARTER

The Cathedral Quarter construction works are all practically complete with Cathedral Court now likely to be completed in the spring. A new brochure has been produced for the office accommodation which has been mailed out to potential occupiers and the property market.

The transport interchange is bedding in and signage has been amended to delineate bus areas.

PENNINE REACH

Work is now in the final phases of construction with Earcroft works scheduled to complete at the end of January and Furthergate/Burnley Road by Easter.

Blackburn Bus station has seen significant progress made in relation to roof soffits, seating and public realm areas adjacent to Salford and external glazing, the latter of which is now substantially complete. The Council is working closely with the main contractor to ensure a late March/early April completion.

FRECKLETON STREET

Work continues on the construction of the new link road, joining the bottom of Montague Street to Wainwright Bridge, which is due to open by the end of February 2016. The King Street reversal is working well and has significantly improved accessibility into Blackburn Town Centre.

BwD CONNECT

The Department for Transport's (DfT) Local Sustainable Transport Fund (LSTF) which is supporting the work of the BwD CONNECT project will come to an end on 31 March 2016. The DfT has announced a new "Access Fund" which will replace LSTF monies. The Council is awaiting further details from the DfT in relation to the bidding process.

RAIL STATION INVESTMENT

As part of the recently completed Lancashire LEP funded major rail scheme, improvements to the passenger waiting environment at Ramsgreave and Wilpshire, Langho, Whalley and Clitheroe stations will begin in January.

BUSINESS ENGAGEMENT AND GROWTH

Assistance to Industry – 6 new projects received approval in 2015/16 with a combined grant value of over £50,000, with over £20,000 claimed to date. Enquiries continue to be received and the borough's businesses are also benefitting significantly from the assistance available through the Lancashire Business Growth Fund. Up to November 2015, 7 businesses in Blackburn with Darwen had been awarded a grant with a cumulative value of £425,000 (15% of all funds awarded across Lancashire).

Growth – the Council has been shortlisted in the Driving Growth category of the Local Government Chronicle's 2016 awards. There were 90+ entries into this category, with other authorities shortlisted including Birmingham, Glasgow, Leeds and London boroughs. A presentation will need to be made in January with the winner announced in March.

BLACKBURN TOWNSCAPE HERITAGE

A summary of project proposals will go to February's Executive Board for decision, prior to the application being submitted to the Heritage Lottery Fund by 26 February 2016.

If successful, the 4-5 year project could see the full restoration of the Blakey Moor Terrace, renovations to the exterior of King George's Hall and former Baroque public house. It also includes a comprehensive environmental improvement scheme to the public space and grant funded refurbishments of up to 20 other historic shop frontages along Northgate and Lord Street West.

Options work for the wider area including the Waves development site and the College's Blakey Moor building are expected to be finalised in the New Year.

CHRISTMAS EVENTS PROGRAMME

The Christmas lights switch on in both Blackburn and Darwen town centres attracted crowds of visitors with a huge line-up of stars including Alesha Dixon, Jake Quickenden, Henry Gallagher, Ella Shaw, Ted Robins, Carl Fogarty, Peter Gunn, Alex Bain and The Clangers.

The annual Lantern Parade and Cathedral Fireworks took place on Thursday 10 December and this year included lighting up of the Victoria Building and a series of fire performances and street theatre. Holy Trinity Church was lit up on 12 December for the Blackburn People's Choir concert.

TOWN CENTRE GATEWAYS

Work on improving town centre gateways continues with the focus currently on the Whalley New Road gateway. The route has been audited and an action plan developed. A group of local businesses have come together to look at keeping the area clean and tidy and officers will be meeting with local Councillors and residents to encourage further engagement in the project.