

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR REGENERATION

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DIRECTOR:
BRIAN BAILEY
DATE: 06-11-14**

CATHEDRAL QUARTER UPDATE

The Cathedral Quarter construction works continue to progress well with a target completion date of September 2015. Works in the ground are now practically complete and pavement and infrastructure works are continuing. Traffic management is being co-ordinated with the National Grid gas replacement works. There will be additional works on site after Christmas shut down to complete the highways works along Salford up to the Bus Station, including improvements to the Penny Street Junction. Works in the Railway Station and on the external canopy are underway. Piling works for the hotel and office are complete and steelwork is being erected. Marketing brochures for both the office and the ground floor retail and restaurant units are now available and a launch event for the development took place on the 23rd October at Blackburn Rovers. The Clergy Court programme has now been finalised and is due to be completed in the first week of October 2015.

PENNINE REACH

Blackburn bus station works are progressing well with all loops in place and roof section completed. Works to the internal hub building are well underway as are highways works to Salford. Programme completion date is the end of March 2015. Elsewhere, Hollins Grove Street lights are much improved and Branch Road ducting works are due to complete in December. At Earcroft, demolition of Lancashire Laminators is complete and construction of the new car park has commenced. A666 Bolton Road will be yellow lined once the car park is constructed. The compound at Ewood is set up and groundworks have started for the new link road, with a completion date of July 2015. Car parking arrangements for BRFC have been resolved and are working well. At Furthergate, contractors are on site widening a 700m section of road between Copy Nook and Furthergate to provide public transport priority into and out of Blackburn town centre with a new 1.1km link road between Burnley Close and the Red Lion roundabout. The new Siemens urban traffic control (UTMC) system is being upgraded and will link traffic junctions on the Pennine Reach route. Bus lane enforcement is being progressed with the DfT. Display Screens for Accrington and Blackburn Bus Station are now ready for testing.

COMMUNITY RAIL

At the recent National Community Rail Awards, a joint first place in the 'Involving Young People' category was awarded to Community Rail Lancashire. Congratulations go to all of our partners and particularly to the primary school children who were involved and who made the award possible.

DRAFT LOCAL PLAN (SITES ALLOCATIONS DEVELOPMENT PLAN)

The Government appointed Planning Inspector has now confirmed that the public examination into the Draft Local Plan will take place in Blackburn Town Hall from 2nd – 11th December 2014. All respondents will be notified of the timetable and process.

TOWN CENTRES

Delivery of the Blackburn town centre 12 point plan has seen retail core vacancy rates fall to 17% which is the North West average. This is down from 20% in the last quarter 2013 and a further reduction is expected by the end of this year. In the Northgate and King William Street areas, vacancies were at their highest in late 2012 at 27% and this is now down to 17.5% and dropping.

Christmas plans are well underway for this year's Festive programme in both town centres. In Blackburn, the Council is working with Blackburn BID and The Mall to promote and deliver an exciting yet traditional feel for visitors this Christmas. Key events include the Lights Switch-On on December 20th hosted by Rock FM with celebrity guests Jedward and Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles and the annual Lantern Parade and Firework display on December 11th. A programme of festive activities and attractions on the four Saturdays in the run up to Christmas will link with festive activity taking place at other Council venues. The Darwen Christmas Lights Switch On will take place on Saturday 22nd November with Jai McDowall, Britain's Got Talent winner. The build up will begin with the Darwen Market Christmas tree being decorated by local children then the annual nativity procession will commence at 3pm. Rock FM will present the stage show beginning with cheque presentations to community groups hosted by Crown Paints. The main show begins at 4pm with lights switch on at 6.30pm.

Blackburn Visitors Centre has reached the finals of the Lancashire Tourism Awards in the Customer Services Award category. The winner will be announced on Thursday 6th November. Congratulations to all those involved in the successful Darwen Food Festival on Saturday 4th October.

MARKETS

Blackburn Market occupancy is now at 82.2%. There has been firm interest in two further food units which will take occupancy levels to 85%. Darwen Market occupancy levels remain at 75%. The anticipated completion of the Annex is now mid-November and three new traders are already signed up for units. On-line interest has picked up over the last month since the website was improved. The 1940s day helped gather shopper feedback on the Market which will help shape future developments and ideas for targeting new traders.