

# **BLACKBURN AND DARWEN EVENING & LEISURE ECONOMY**

**BLACKBURN**

# Blackburn Town Centre Evening Economy Plan

## Background



- Blackburn town centre's night time economy has suffered from a lack of investment over the last 20 years.
- A period of ASB linked to the rise of binge drinking and zero tolerance enforcement impacted on the commercial viability of the businesses
- Perception of safety and negative press



# Blackburn Town Centre Evening Economy Plan

## Background



- Development of the Vue cinema and leisure complex edge of centre doesn't benefit the core town centre
- Lack of good quality restaurants and bars
- Strong competition from nearby towns including Darwen, Whalley and Clitheroe as well as Manchester and Preston has meant a wide and quality choice is elsewhere.
- Sits within a wider strategy to encourage further retail, employment uses and town centre living.



# **Blackburn Town Centre Evening Economy Plan**

## **Strategy – 3 Objectives**

- 1. To improve perceptions of the town centre and tackle any issues**
- 2. To improve the current offer by supporting independent operators and encouraging cultural events**
- 3. To invest in the longer term development of the town centre and providing quality sites and spaces for new restaurants, leisure and bars**

# **Blackburn Town Centre Evening Economy Plan**

## **Progress So Far – Perceptions and safety**



- The successful vote and 5 year investment programme of Blackburn BID from 2013 has supported a professional marketing campaign, coordination of town centre stakeholders' efforts, delivery of a strong events programme and environmental and safety initiatives to support the retail offer



# **Blackburn Town Centre Evening Economy Plan**

## **Progress So Far –Perception and safety**



- **Effective Multi agency working to address problem Shisha Bars, top 20 offenders , Blackburn Business Against Crime, waste enforcement, under age drinking and investment in CCTV.**
- **Investment in infrastructure; New Bus Station, safer car parking, environmental improvements and renovation of heritage buildings, e.g. Library and Town hall**





# **Blackburn Town Centre Evening Economy Plan**

## **Progress So Far – Improving the Offer**



- Improvements in programming of King George's Hall attracting wider audiences who can now also get high quality accommodation in the town centre
- Additional evening events organised by Blackburn Museum, Holy Trinity Church, Blackburn Cathedral including the Tourism Awards, Hive Awards and the Flower Festival
- Putting the conditions in place to encourage investment – working with property agents, business support and financial incentive packages, more flexible approach to Planning on change of use



# Blackburn Town Centre Evening Economy Plan

## Progress So Far – Improving the Offer



Supporting The Bureau to develop as an arts & cultural centre with business and property support and A2I financial assistance



Strong programme of Night at the Museum  
Events all sold out



Encouraging community events  
– lantern parade

# Blackburn Town Centre Evening Economy Plan

## Progress So Far – Improving the Offer



Encouraging cultural interests –  
Blackburn Film Club, Drink n Draw



Supporting Holy Trinity Church  
to open as an evening cultural venue  
with financial assistance from A2I



Providing venues for new events  
organisers and promoters – Gypsy  
Carrot



Promoting Blackburn Cathedral as  
a venue for major events – Hive  
Business Awards, Flower festival,  
Tourism Awards



# **Blackburn Town Centre Evening Economy Plan**

## **Progress So Far – Improving the Offer**



- Strategic acquisition of 35 Northgate to prevent undesirable use and ensure control of future use for evening economy



# **Blackburn Town Centre Evening Economy Plan**

## **Progress So Far – Supporting Independents**



- Supporting the reopening of the Sir Charles Napier by the community with business advice and financial support through A2I – now trading well

## Blackburn Town Centre Evening Economy Plan

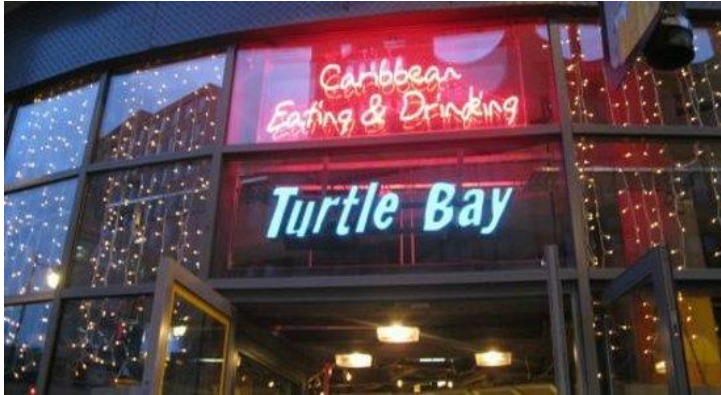
# Progress So Far – Supporting Independents



- Providing the right condition to encourage new businesses – reduced rents, property improvement grants, business rates relief and support with Planning
- The Drummers Arms micro pub – opening soon with financial support from A2I

# Blackburn Town Centre Evening Economy Plan

## Progress So Far – Providing new high quality space for operators



- Cathedral Quarter has provided the high quality spaces needed to attract branded leisure and restaurant operators. Premier Inn and Café Northcote up and running and trading well. Turtle Bay opening February 2017. Strong interest in office restaurant unit.





# **Blackburn Town Centre Evening Economy Plan**

## **Progress So Far**

- **Emerging clusters of activity - Cathedral Quarter area and King William Street/Northgate area**
- **Clear areas of development and growing commercial interest from operators and developers**
- **Significant increase in Visitor economy year on year – Best ever visitor numbers in BwD in 2015 - with 4 million visitors in 2015, up 2.5% on 2014, generating £160 million value to the local economy, an increase of 7.5% from 2014**

# **Blackburn Town Centre Evening Economy Plan**

## **Priorities 2016 Onwards**

**Continue to deliver the activities which have been successful, including:**

- **Empty property rates incentives and small grants**
- **Deliver Blackburn Fab Lab/Making Rooms**
- **Making the most of our existing assets – Museum, Library, Market, College, Businesses, Public Space**

**Working in partnership with Blackburn BID to :**

- **Support BID to deliver exciting programme of events**
- **Support BID to deliver commercial marketing campaign to promote the town centre offer to visitors**
- **Deliver improved town centre environment and safety initiatives**
- **Support development of BIDs business plan for next 3 years**

# **Blackburn Town Centre Evening Economy Plan**

## **Priorities 2016 Onwards**

### **Encourage Further Development:**

- **Support developments that attract new occupiers and maintain investment and encourage Mall to open later to encourage dwell time**
- **Bring forward new council sites for development through an Investment and Growth Strategy e.g. Former Waves Site, Former Markets Site**
- **Support partners and the private sector to invest in the town centre e.g. Thwaites site, Blakey Moor Building, The Mall, Blackburn College**
- **Deliver Northgate Townscape Heritage Project to improve heritage building including King George's Hall, Blakey Moor shops, independent shops on Northgate and surrounding public realm**

# Blackburn Town Centre Evening Economy Plan

## Priorities – Former Waves development site





# **Blackburn Town Centre Evening Economy Plan**

## **Priorities – Townscape Heritage Project**







Blackburnpast.com  
Photo courtesy of John Eddleston





# **Blackburn Town Centre Evening Economy Plan**

## **Priorities – Blakey Moor Building (Blackburn College)**





# **Blackburn Town Centre Evening Economy Plan**

## **Priorities – Former Markets Site**





# **Blackburn Town Centre Evening Economy Plan**

## **Priorities – Simmons Street Site**



# **Blackburn Town Centre Evening Economy Plan**

## **Priorities – Thwaites Site**



**DARWEN**



# Darwen Town Centre Evening Economy Plan

## Background

- Darwen town centre's night time economy suffered from a lack of investment and growing competition from nearby attractions
- The town's evening offer mainly consisted of traditional pubs and a handful of smaller low quality clubs
- Impact of the smoking ban and general downturn in the pub trade left existing businesses struggling and many pubs closed.



# **Darwen Town Centre Evening Economy Plan**

## **Strategy – property and public realm**



- Darwen Townscape Heritage Initiative delivered historic property improvements and public realm scheme
- Major investment also delivered a new Health Centre, £12.7m Leisure Centre and £49m Darwen Academy
- The investments massively improved the environment and confidence in the town.



# **Darwen Town Centre Evening Economy Plan**

## **Strategy – Events and Marketing**



- Development of strong events programme based on music
- Darwen Music Live expanded to include satellite venues
- Development of Darwen Jazz and Blues Festival
- Improved programme of music, theatre and film at Darwen Library Theatre



# Darwen Town Centre Evening Economy Plan

## Progress So Far – Private Investment



- Improvements acted as a catalyst for private sector investment
- New businesses opening
- Whetherspoons acquired and renovated the Old Chapel
- Bridgewater makeover and re-launch



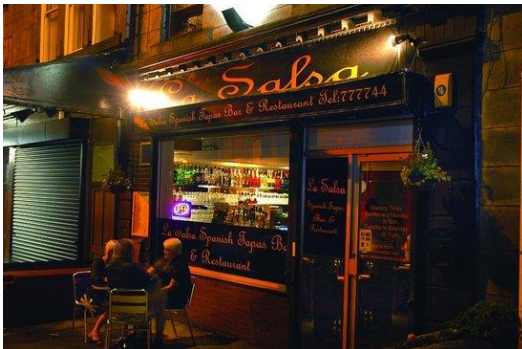


# Darwen Town Centre Evening Economy Plan

## Progress So Far – Reputation



- Darwen starts to establish a reputation for food, drink and music
- Attracting positive PR and marketing create a buzz about Darwen's booming nightlife
- Growing interest in opportunities from developers and new operators



# Darwen Town Centre Evening Economy Plan

## Progress So Far – Support



- Continued development of quality evening offer encouraged with A2I property improvement grants and support to gain Planning approval
- Recent financial grant support given to Cin Cin Gin Bar, Sunbird Records venue and Eddies Wood fired Pizza





# Darwen Town Centre Evening Economy Plan

## Progress So Far - Thriving and Vibrant



- Darwen now has a strong and vibrant evening economy
- Previously vacant buildings have been revived and are being reused for a complementary variety of evening offer – pubs, clubs, bars, restaurants and venues.
- Support is still being offered where necessary, but in most cases development is organic and private sector led
- The Old Chapel, H2O Bar, Level One nightclub, Essence Mediterranean, the Esco Bar and Level One Live are just some of the venues opened recently without any financial incentives.



# **Darwen Town Centre Evening Economy Plan**

## **Priorities 2016 onwards**

- Focus on improving Darwen's day time trade which lags behind the evening economy
- Continue to offer A2I grants and support for projects that will complement the town centre offer
- Ensure the quality of offer is maintained and Darwen continues to be a safe and enjoyable destination for visitors in the evening
- Work with partners to build upon Darwen's improving reputation through positive PR and marketing
- Develop key sites – 3 day market, former petro station site and Church Street site

# **Darwen Town Centre Evening Economy Plan**

## **Priorities – Former 3 Day Market Site**





# **Darwen Town Centre Evening Economy Plan**

## **Priorities – Former Petrol Station Site**



- 0.218 Acres at Duckworth Street for development

# **Darwen Town Centre Evening Economy Plan**

## **Priorities – Church Street Site**



- Private site recently granted planning permission for boutique hotel with ground floor retail, now on the market for sale