



Heritage Strategy 2006-10



2004-2005
Benefits Administration

Foreword



Councillor
David Owen



Paul Walker

Blackpool Council is proud of Blackpool's matchless heritage as the epitome of the British holiday resort. Everyone has heard of Blackpool, and the town holds such golden memories for so many people nationally and internationally.

As we regenerate and rebuild our town for the future, we must remember our past as well, and celebrate the best of it. We want to ensure that our exceptional heritage is recognised, valued, enhanced, explained and made accessible to as many people as possible. This will take time, and the efforts of many people, not just the Council.

This Heritage Strategy sets out how we intend to undertake this task over the next five years or so. We have consulted widely on these proposals and have revised the draft Strategy, published in March 2006, to reflect the comments made. The warm welcome it received is a good omen for the future of heritage in Blackpool.

We now need to take these principles and proposals through from strategy to action. We shall work with local residents and the heritage community to establish the Blackpool Heritage Forum in July 2006 to take forward these proposals. The Forum will bring together all the key players to ensure that our heritage projects can be planned coherently and without duplication of effort to maximise the benefits which will accrue to the town.

We shall also continue to put forward our case for the recognition of Blackpool's unique place in history through its inscription as a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

These are exciting times for Blackpool, and it is essential that we move forward with an increased awareness of the value of our heritage.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'David Owen'.

Councillor David Owen,
Portfolio Holder for Culture and leisure

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Paul Walker'.

Paul Walker,
Director of Leisure, Culture & Community
Learning

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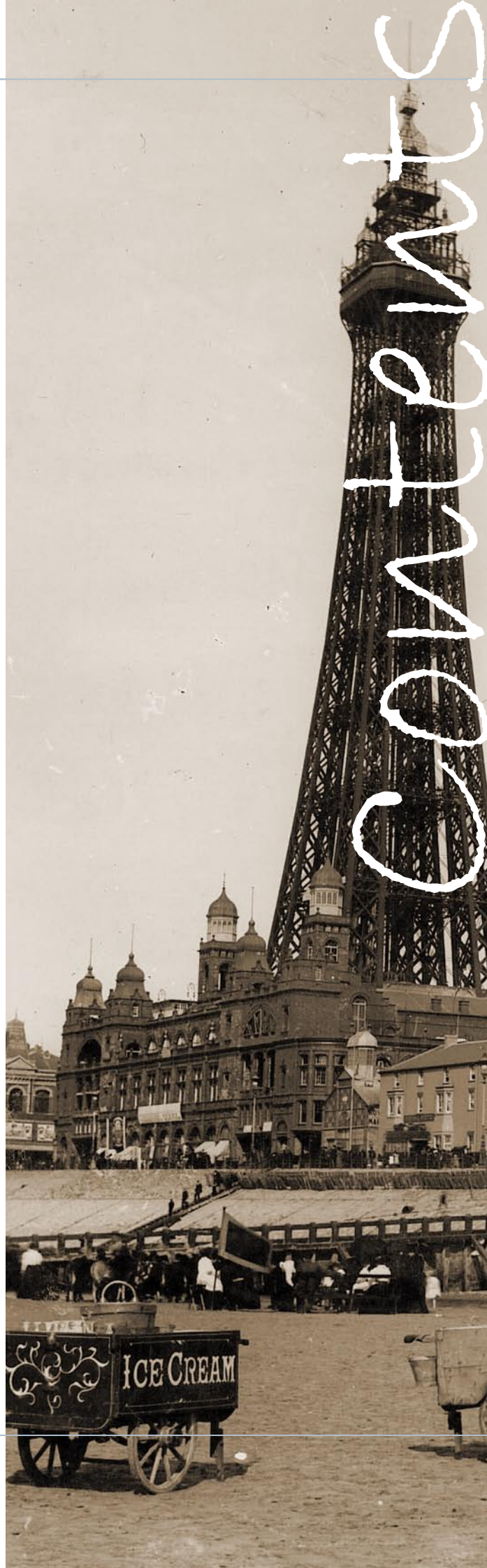
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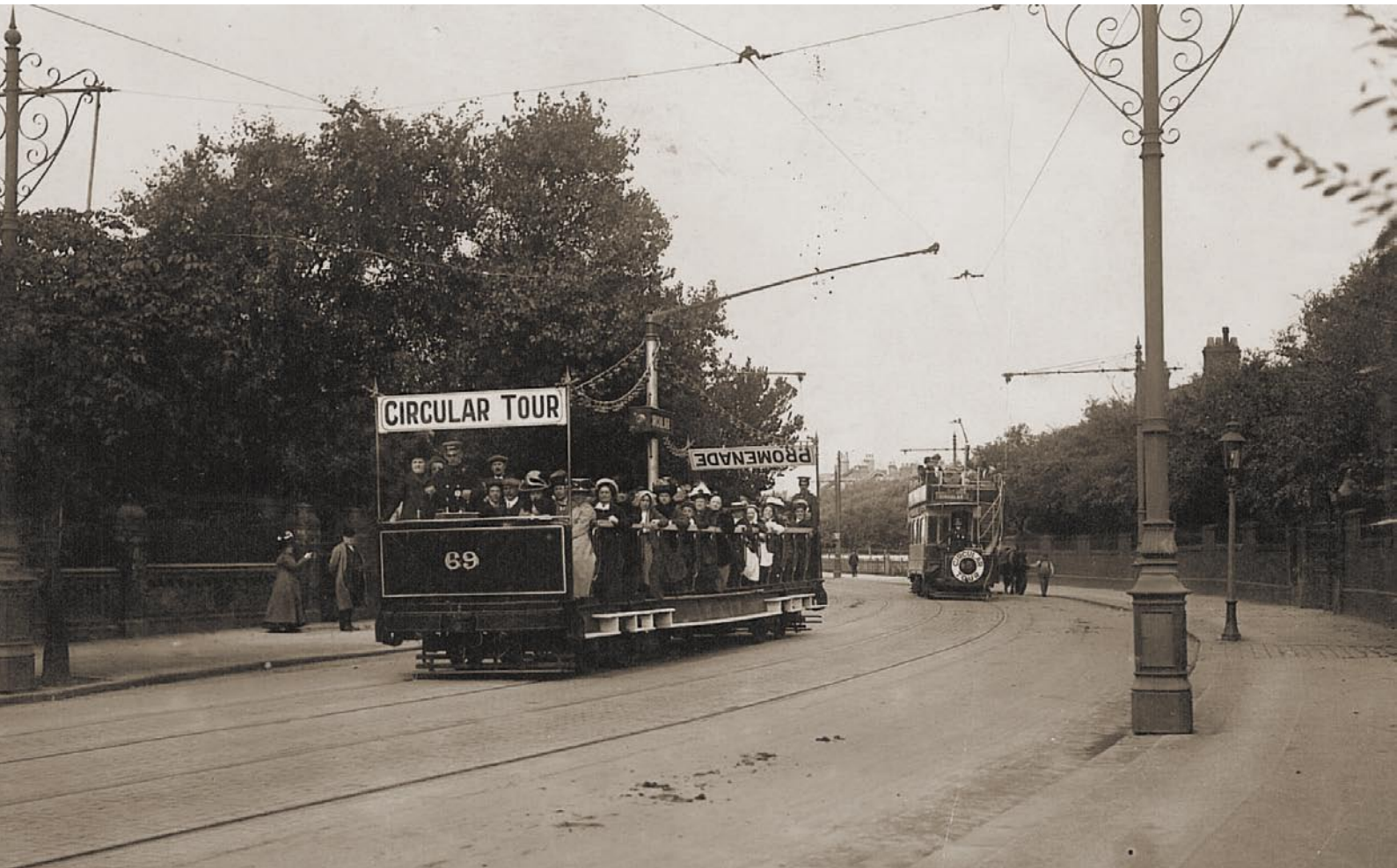
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Sustainable



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Section 1:

Introduction to the Strategy

1.1 Introduction

The importance of much of Blackpool's heritage has not yet been externally acknowledged because we as a town have been slow to recognise its importance ourselves. We have always been proud of our achievements, of Blackpool's tradition of providing golden holiday memories for millions of visitors, but have somehow failed to recognise this as a heritage equally as valid and unique as that of York or Chester or other towns more commonly associated with 'heritage'.

This may well be related to Blackpool's endless capacity to re-invent itself in response to social change. In its heyday Blackpool was too busy looking to the future - anticipating market changes, constantly re-designing visitor attractions and improving visitor facilities - to be self-conscious about its past. Visitors came in their millions to enjoy the here and now and were interested in the heritage infrastructure only if it offered them something to enjoy today. Residents shared a single common purpose, to give the visitors what they wanted, and if the visitors were not interested in the town's heritage then neither was most of Blackpool.

However, attitudes have changed in Blackpool as they have changed nationally. There is an increasing recognition of the intrinsic value of celebrating our heritage, and also of the contribution that heritage can make to the achievement of national, regional and local strategies across the whole gamut of public policy. Heritage is a key economic sector within tourism, with the choice of tourist destination increasingly influenced by heritage provision. Heritage is no longer regarded as appealing only to a small and homogenous group of affluent people but has become an indicator of local prestige and well-being, increasingly used as a force for change and cohesion in urban regeneration.

There is an added impetus in Blackpool because we are at a critical point in our historical development and are looking to re-invent ourselves through our Masterplan. This ambitious vision will transform the resort yet again by re-defining Blackpool's future as a top-quality, world-class resort destination. It will improve the quality of life for Blackpool residents over the next 10 or 15 years by uplifting the quality of the resort's urban environment, improving transport networks and linkages to local communities and delivering new economic opportunities that are accessible to local people and businesses, and attractive to new investors and potential residents.

The Masterplan will change the physical and social face of the town, so a well-informed appreciation of the rich heritage context in which the Masterplan will operate will be essential. The Council recognises the strategic importance of Heritage as a key driver in the sustainable regeneration of the town and has developed this Strategy to set out our priorities over the next 5 years. We invite the Blackpool community to join us in partnership to achieve these aims.



1.2 Blackpool: the uses of Heritage

John K. Walton, Professor of Social History, University of Central Lancashire

Let me begin by emphasizing that Blackpool has a history, and a unique and exciting one. It also has, despite inevitable losses, abundant and accessible surviving evidence of that history, which is there to be presented and made use of at a time when history, heritage and **authenticity** are prized commodities in competitive tourism markets. Why go to Blackpool when you could get guaranteed sunshine, warm pellucid seas, theme park entertainment and state of the art accommodation and services in Spain or Florida, or on the Red Sea, to give a few examples of the current global competition? One answer, and increasingly the best one, is that Blackpool is a unique place, with a unique history that can be experienced at first hand. It has authenticity, which comes from the lived continuity of its past into its present, not least through its surviving Victorian, Edwardian and inter-war entertainment complexes and built environment. As (for example) the Victorian Society and the Twentieth Century Society (all of which have plenty to offer to Blackpool Council) would tell you, this is history, and important history. **The popular seaside holiday is something of global importance that originated in Lancashire**, alongside the Industrial Revolution and professional football; and Blackpool's authenticity lies in the enduring evidence and accessible experience of that globally influential past. **That authenticity comes out of a process of continuous change, which must continue; but it must build on that past, respect it, acknowledge it, work with it and exploit it as a unique asset.**

Blackpool's unique identity is clear-cut: it was **the world's first working-class seaside resort**, attracting more than a million visitors a

year by the early 1880s, three million by 1900, four million by the First World War and seven or eight million by the 1930s. The only place to surpass these numbers was New York's Coney Island, but that was a day- and half-day tripper resort without Blackpool's unique accommodation system, with its endless streets of boarding-houses and legendary landladies. And Blackpool's tourism investors built to last: almost all of their work (apart from the railway stations, the work of outside companies) is still there and can be seen and experienced in adapted but recognisable guise. It's still there because Blackpool has been successful and continued to innovate in ways that have allowed its historic icons to continue to attract visitors, and because many of the visitors themselves value Blackpool's history and traditions. At Coney Island or Atlantic City, for example, the tangible past has almost all gone: Coney Island tries to celebrate its history, but has to fall back on blue plaques showing what used to exist on derelict sites. Blackpool can do all this for real: it doesn't even need replicas, nice (and impossibly expensive) though it would be to reconstruct the Gigantic Wheel of 1896, the Alhambra of 1899 (next to the Tower) or the full paddle-steamer excursion programme from the piers. Nowhere else can hold a candle to the unique riches of Blackpool's Victorian and post-Victorian history 'on the ground'.

What form do these riches take, and how do they compare?

- **The Tower.** This has to come first because it is so deeply identified with Blackpool as a unique and distinctive place. It also has a dramatic history, not least in its origins, which deserves to be better known. But it built on a century of earlier development and a quarter-century of growing evidence of Blackpool's popularity among the Lancashire working class.
- **The Winter Gardens.** This originates fifteen years before the Tower and has

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a more complex history, not least in the late Victorian transition from the posh to the popular, around which there are some good stories. It also offers a distinctive and attractive pleasure architecture, and historical associations connected with the party conferences.

- › **Three Piers.** Nowhere else still has three piers and nowhere else has such vital survivals of these iconic Victorian seaside constructions, complete with various continuing additions and amendments and a tradition of pier entertainment that combines the comic, the vulgar and the traditional with acknowledgement of the contemporary. Traditions in entertainment are themselves to be cherished and marketed.
- › **The Pleasure Beach.** This is a unique historic asset in itself, and it has been managed with an eye to the value of its historic assets in terms of amusement machinery, landscapes and experiences. Its 1930s architecture is particularly impressive, and its archive contains a remarkable collection of historic images, in which Blackpool is generally rich. Since the loss of Coney Island's Steeplechase in 1964 and the decline of the Californian seaside amusement parks, there is nothing across the world to match the Pleasure Beach. Here again, as everywhere in Blackpool's entertainment past, there are some marvellous stories to tell.
- › **The Grand Theatre.** The Grand Theatre (built 1894) is an important landmark of cultural heritage for the twenty-first century. One of only twenty surviving theatres (out of 150) designed by theatre architect Frank Matcham, this 1,100-seat house is a product and symbol of the late nineteenth-century boom in theatregoing and the expansion of live entertainment at Blackpool, Britain's biggest show town after London's West End. At Blackpool, Matcham also designed the interior of the

Tower Ballroom and Circus, and the first Opera House. The Grand is one of his finest designs: 'Matcham's Masterpiece' is in the top 8 per cent of all listed buildings in England, one of thirty listed buildings in Blackpool, and is nationally significant as one of only nine large theatres listed Grade II* or above, north of London. In the 1970s, the theatre was saved from the brink of demolition by the volunteer efforts of the Friends and the present proprietors, Blackpool Grand Theatre Trust. Its rescue and rebirth was the start of a preservation movement that swept across the nation, reviving many old theatres and demonstrating how theatrical heritage contributes to the regeneration of their town centres. In 2005, the Grand Theatre was designated National Theatre of Variety, and is progressing exciting plans for conservation, archives, learning and improvement to theatregoer amenities.

- › **The Promenade.** The 'Seven Golden Miles' of Blackpool's Promenade, and the sea defences associated with it, are the biggest visible tribute to the Corporation's past investment in support of the popular holiday industry, beginning with the Local Board of Health in the late 1860s. It will need to be renewed, of course, and there are important questions of how to convey a sense of surviving past authenticity, the ghosts of past promenaders if you like, after the necessary work has been done. But make no mistake: the Promenade is a vital historic artefact, the main artery of the popular seaside holiday, and the gardens and features of the inter-war extensions should not be forgotten here.
- › **The trams.** These are an extraordinary survival, lasting just long enough to become an identifiable if controversial asset and difficult to get rid of. They are another important aspect of Blackpool's historic uniqueness, and let us not forget the earliness of the promenade



electric tramway's origins (1885), and the importance of the new investment of the mid 1930s, about which there are also interesting stories. The enthusiast constituency among the visitors may itself not be negligible. It will be important to keep as many of the old trams running as possible, and the use of replicas is increasingly acceptable to museum people (cf. Beamish) as well as potentially reducing the obvious problems if a modernised service (attractive in its own right) is to be introduced alongside the existing one. But there are interesting problems of perceived authenticity as well as traffic organisation here, as well as those of balancing running a transport museum against providing an excellent transport service.

- › **The Illuminations.** This is another unique asset, and a remarkable survival; and note how the municipal portfolio is building up here. This is another aspect of Blackpool's pioneering role in municipal electricity, which can legitimately be celebrated, although the Illuminations really began in 1912: the demonstration of electric light along the central promenade in 1879 doesn't really count. The publicity derived from the switching on ceremony, especially from the 1930s through the 1970s, reminds us of the pioneering role played by Blackpool in seaside advertising and publicity, from the innovative posters of the 1880s onwards. Here is another theme that should be exploited, alongside the remarkable collections of the Illuminations Department.
- › **Stanley Park.** Blackpool has lost a disturbing number of its iconic inter-war assets, which makes the Park all the more significant, telling as it does (along with the Promenade extensions to north and south) the story of Blackpool's efforts to go up-market and follow the fashion for the healthy open air in the 1920s and

1930s (see its advertising brochures). T.H. Mawson was a really important international landscape architect, and Stanley Park is a work of art in its own right. Sensitive restoration work is vital, as is making full use of the surviving archives and artefacts to convey a sense of the Park's own history to current users, who at the same time must be encouraged to want to use it on contemporary terms.

- › **The boarding-house districts.** The streets of boarding-houses, Victorian around the old railway stations and along the central promenade, Edwardian and inter-war at the extremes, form a unique industrial landscape, the landscape of the accommodation industry. Their architecture (terraced houses built large and with ostentatious bay windows, gables, etc.) and adaptations (new bedrooms in the eaves, etc.) stand out as something that reinforces the uniqueness and northernness of Blackpool and ties in with all the popular culture allusions to landladies (music-hall jokes, comic postcards, dialect stories...) They are at the core of the story of Blackpool as a women's town that will appeal to at least half the visitors, especially those who read the hugely popular northern saga novels about the struggles of strong women in industrial settings in the early twentieth century. They must be allowed to adapt to new markets without damaging these unique urban landscapes that conjure up hard work and pleasure in equal measure

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Section 2: Strategic Context

2.1 The National context

The **Department of Culture, Media & Sport** (DCMS) is one of the two government departments which cover Heritage matters, it having a general responsibility for Heritage and a particular responsibility for artefacts, local history, archives and architecture. The Culture Minister has responsibility for heritage matters. **The Department for Communities and Local Government** is the other government heritage department, enacting planning laws and defining the regulations under which the historic environment is preserved.

In 2001, these two departments jointly published a groundbreaking document which took the government much further along the road of actively recognising the importance of heritage than had previously been the case. In **'The Historic Environment: a Force for our Future'** in 2001 the government looked to a future in which

- › public interest in the historic environment is matched by firm leadership, effective partnerships, and the development of a sound knowledge base from which to develop policies;
- › the full potential of the historic environment as a learning resource is realised;
- › the historic environment is accessible to everybody and is seen as something with which the whole of society can identify and engage;
- › the historic environment is protected and sustained for the benefit of our own and future generations;
- › the historic environment's importance as an economic asset is skillfully harnessed.

These national aspirations are clearly articulated in and supported by this local strategy for Blackpool.

The **Heritage Lottery Fund** (HLF) enables communities to celebrate, look after and learn more about our diverse heritage. From museums and historic buildings to parks and nature reserves to celebrating traditions, customs and history, the HLF has awarded over £3 billion to projects that open up our nation's heritage for everyone to enjoy.

The HLF's priorities are :

To encourage more people to be involved in and make decisions about their heritage

To encourage communities to identify, look after and celebrate their own heritage

To promote a greater appreciation of the value and importance of heritage for our future well-being and sense of identity

To conserve and enhance the UK's diverse heritage

To promote heritage conservation as an integral part of urban and rural regeneration

To help conserve and sustain heritage at risk

To ensure that everyone can learn about, have access to and enjoy their heritage.

To increase opportunities for learning about heritage

To open up heritage resources and sites to the widest possible audience



English Heritage is a not for profit organisation responsible for protecting England's cultural heritage. This includes safeguarding our built environment, preserving ancient artefacts, rescuing and discovering important archaeological sites and enabling people to understand and enjoy their past through education, exhibitions, events and publications. It is the largest source of non-Lottery grant funding for historic buildings and ancient monuments, conservation areas, archaeology, cathedrals and churches.

English Heritage is the Government's statutory adviser on all matters concerning the conservation of England's historic built environment, and also advises the Government on the priorities for UNESCO World Heritage Site status. The organisation works in partnership with the central government departments, local authorities, voluntary bodies and the private sector to:

- › Conserve and enhance the historic environment
- › Broaden public access to the heritage
- › Increase people's understanding of the past

English Heritage meets those responsibilities by :

- › acting as a national and international champion for the heritage
- › giving grants for the conservation of historic buildings, monuments and landscapes
- › maintaining registers of England's most significant historic buildings, monuments and landscapes
- › advising on the preservation of the historic environment
- › encouraging broader public involvement with the heritage
- › promoting education and research

- › caring for Stonehenge and over 400 other historic properties on behalf of the nation
- › maintaining the National Monuments Record as the public archive of the heritage
- › generating income for the benefit of the historic environment

The priorities of English Heritage are:

- › Adapting historic buildings to new economic purposes
- › Revitalising communities and neighbourhoods
- › New cultural facilities and visitor attractions

2.2 The North West context

The Department for Culture, Media and Sport, the Heritage Lottery Fund and English Heritage all have **North West Regional** Offices whose officers have been very supportive of Blackpool's developing local heritage agenda. The new activities and priorities resulting from our adoption of this strategy are closely aligned with the organisational priorities of these key partners.

The North West Development Agency's **Regional Economic Strategy 2006** identifies 3 key success factors pertinent to, and supported by, this strategy:

- › Developing Culture and Image
- › Develop the sense of Community in the Northwest
- › Improving the Environment – including capitalising on our natural assets, the quality of the visitor experience and the quality of the physical environment

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Under the key factor 'Improving the Environment', a key objective is

- › Realise and nurture the natural and built heritage assets' leading to
- › Deliver sustainable growth through use of the region's heritage environments and assets (Action 115)

MLA North West (Museums, Libraries and Archives) is the regional strategic development agency for museums, libraries and archives in the North West of England. MLA North West works to promote and develop the social, cultural and economic potential of the sector and its contribution to learning, inclusion, and community cohesion. It collaborates with other regional partners to ensure that museums, libraries and archives contribute to, and are recognised within, strategic plans and policies for the North West.

In September 2004, MLA North West published its five year strategy for museums and galleries. Called '**Celebrating our Cultural Heritage: investing in a future for all**', it is intended to put our regional museums and galleries at the leading edge of cultural life in the United Kingdom. Its priorities reflect those in our local heritage strategy:

- *Outstanding collections*
- *Catalysts for regeneration*
- *Resources for learning*
- *Working in partnership*
- *International networks*

Culture NorthWest is our Regional Cultural Consortium which is a partnership of all the region's agencies, covering arts, heritage, museums, libraries, archives, media, sport, tourism, creative industries. It has representatives from local authorities, visitor attractions and other private sector interests including Granada Television and the BBC. Its '**Cultural Strategy for England's Northwest**' identifies **Dynamic Heritage** as one of its foremost priorities, because 'Our heritage in both urban and rural settings offers considerable potential for development linked to wider issues'.

Actions planned for this priority which will add value to our own strategy include:

- › Making the most of our diverse industrial and technological heritage and ensuring it is valued and understood by residents and visitors so that it illuminates the past and the present; this will include a region-wide assessment of and strategy for local community volunteer programmes
- › Supporting the increase of the number of World Heritage Sites in the region as part of image and tourism promotion and their role in public and community life



2.3 The Blackpool context

Our Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) agreed its Community Plan - 'Vision for Blackpool: Blackpool's Community Plan 2004-2020' in 2004. The Plan's Vision Statement is that Blackpool will have inclusive, healthy and safe communities, living in a regenerated, attractive and prosperous resort.



The Plan then goes on to expand this statement to give more detail of the LSP's vision of changes in the town by 2020, demonstrating its increasing recognition of the strategic importance of heritage in our local regeneration agenda – 'it is important to regenerate and innovate to make Blackpool a modern resort but we also recognise the importance of our heritage, which in itself attracts visitors. The heritage of Blackpool has a place in the whole nation's consciousness.'

The Council's **Corporate Performance Plan 2006 -07** establishes the Council's strategic direction over that period. Blackpool is in transition. A vibrant, modern coastal town is about to emerge from a period of steady decline. Over the next decade, the Council and its partners will have made significant and visible progress in making Blackpool a better place to live and visit. The role of the Council will be important in this revitalisation, and the Plan details the Council's role.

The Council has three Corporate Goals:

- › The New Blackpool – moving towards a world class resort destination that is 'a great place to visit, a better place to live'.
- › Quality Services – to deliver services which are of high quality, effective and offer value for money. In particular, prioritizing services which deal with our young people, vulnerable people and our street scene services which impact on our quality of life..
- › Stronger Communities – we will enable people to live healthy lives in strong and safe neighbourhoods.

The Corporate Performance Plan acknowledges the strong contribution offered to the regeneration of the town by heritage –

'By developing the local economy, building on our heritage and improving the quality of our tourism offer we will deliver the New Blackpool'

This Heritage Strategy provides the underlying strategic framework and detailed analysis for the heritage aspects of the New Blackpool's first priority, Resort Regeneration.

The Local Plan (2006) devotes a whole chapter to 'Conserving the Natural Environment'. The aim of chapter 8 is 'to maintain and improve open land and natural environments within the Borough through protecting and enhancing landscape quality and nature conservation value.' Three of the chapter's five objectives add particular synergy to this heritage strategy

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- › To protect areas of ecological importance and conserve other important natural features
- › To minimize and mitigate any adverse impacts of development on the natural environment
- › To enhance the nature conservation and landscape value of open land resources and sensitive habitats by actively managing their restoration and improvement

This strategy is also very much in tune with **Local Agenda 21**. This process originated at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development or 'Earth Summit' held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. It is the name given to a global plan of action for achieving an improvement of the quality of life for everyone living on the planet (ie sustainable development). In Blackpool, this programme is led by the Blackpool Environmental Action Team (BEAT) one of whose subgroups is Blackpool Naturewatch, with a remit to promote wildlife and habitat conservation and protection

The **Masterplan** was developed for Blackpool's Resort Core in 2003. A team led by consultants, Jerde and EDAW, proposed a vision of radical, comprehensive change that retains the historic form and pattern of land use, builds on the key assets of the Tower, Pleasure Beach and Winter Gardens, emphasises the seafront and increases the town's capacity to accommodate car, coach, train and air travel into the resort.

An Urban Regeneration Company, **ReBlackpool**, is now charged with further developing and implementing the Masterplan which introduces a strategy to bring nature into the heart of the town. New gateways will transform first impressions and lift investor confidence. The Illuminations will be retained but spread throughout the resort using a mixture of the traditional and hi-tech to introduce drama and spectacle along the Promenade.

A number of high capacity car parks will peel off traffic as it enters the town, delivering visitors and residents to their preferred destinations, minimising internal traffic volumes. Within the town, there will be sustainable travel, based on walking and public transport, notably a fully modernised tram which will connect North Station and the town centre to the airport and North Beach to the central seafront attractions and hotels in South Beach. In parallel to the revitalisation of the resort core, there is a firm intention to spread the benefits of regeneration to the inner residential neighbourhoods and the traditional holiday areas.



Section 3: Strategic Context

3.1 Our Vision

The New Blackpool: towards a world class resort destination – a great place to visit and a better place to live.

3.2 Our Mission

Our mission is to discover, conserve, learn from and celebrate the past in order to inspire a better future for the town and people of Blackpool.

3.3 Our Aims

1. Establish and celebrate Blackpool's unique role in history as a place for fun, laughter, entertainment and enjoyment. A masterpiece of human creative genius: the first and largest popular seaside resort and a monument to Northern and especially Lancashire character and sense of humour.
2. Exhibit the important effects of the evolution of the first popular seaside holiday on developments in architecture, modes of transport, monumental arts, town-planning and landscape design in Blackpool over the last 250 years.
3. Bear a unique testimony to the historical, social and cultural tradition of holidays by the sea: past, present and future.
4. Demonstrate Blackpool's unique role as an outstanding example of a landscape and collection of buildings which illustrate the birth, evolution, maturity and re-invention of popular destination tourism, and seek to ensure funding is available to conserve this living landscape.
5. Show how Blackpool remains an outstanding example of a traditional seaside holiday resort which will be revitalised and how the Council's Masterplan over the next 20 years will



respond to and respect the resort's built heritage and character.

6. Celebrate the outstanding universal significance of the living traditions of popular culture and live entertainment which are so directly associated with Blackpool.
7. Inform the Masterplan and prioritise development opportunities.
8. Engage local people in discovering, presenting and conserving Blackpool's heritage.
9. Enable our communities to take an active interest in and encourage the widest possible access to Blackpool's heritage as a learning resource.

3.4 Key Outcomes

- › Our heritage, including the living environment, is maintained and secured for future generations.
- › Blackpool becomes a UNESCO World Heritage Site.
- › Our memories, artefacts and documents are conserved locally and made widely available.
- › More people are enabled to interpret them and recognise their relevance to their own lives.
- › Local residents and communities are engaged in discovering, presenting and conserving our heritage.

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3.5 Key Issues and opportunities

3.5.1 Our seaside holidays

Britain's seaside heritage currently lacks a single focal point where it can be celebrated nationally. As a consequence, public access to the many heritage treasures in Blackpool and nation-wide is much more disorganised and difficult than it need be. However, our seaside heritage infrastructure is still here. It is waiting to be conserved and used again, from early Pleasure Beach rides to vintage trams.

Blackpool should take the lead and establish a **National Seaside Centre** to celebrate our place in popular heritage on a grand scale. The Centre should make everything that is unique to Blackpool and the traditional seaside holiday entertaining, enjoyable, and exciting. It must be easily accessible to our residents and to our 11 million visitors yet educational, academically sound and robust in a curatorial sense. Its offer should be constantly refreshed, to encourage repeat visits, because it will need to be financially self-sufficient. Funding will be needed to employ world class imagineering consultants to establish a design concept for the Centre as soon as possible to provide a safe home for our heritage infrastructure.

3.5.2 Our built environment: conservation and renewal

Few of Blackpool's buildings are currently listed. The Tower is Grade 1 and our four Grade 2* listings are the Grand Theatre, the Winter Gardens, Sacred Heart Church on Talbot Road and the Thanksgiving Shrine on Whinney Heys Road. Our Grade 2 listed buildings are an eclectic collection, ranging from Bispham Parish Church and its Sundial, the cottage at Blowing Sands, the North Pier and the Abingdon street GPO frontage to Little Marton Mill and the telephone kiosks on Talbot Rd.

However, Blackpool's appeal is not dependent on individual outstanding buildings and the paucity of formally classified buildings cannot be taken as indicating lack of overall interest and merit. The variety of the wider streetscene, some very attractive interiors, as in the Tower Ballroom and our Art Deco heritage, such as the former Odeon cinema and the Stanley Park café, are particularly noteworthy.

Much of our built heritage is in need of regeneration. The authentic core is there, but unsympathetic accretions and alterations over the years have detracted from their historic character. We need to protect our built heritage, find new uses for it where necessary, ensure the public retain access to it, and provide better interpretation of it so that the public can better understand and appreciate it. Some conservation and regeneration initiatives are already underway, for example, the Townscape Heritage Initiative programme for the Talbot Square Conservation Area, and, externally to the Council, St John's Church and the Grand Theatre, all of which have received funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund.

Public access to our iconic buildings is not usually a problem; little has been built in Blackpool over the years that has not been intended for public use.

However, the key issue here is that many of our most important historic buildings are in private ownership, and therefore severely restricted in applying for public funding for conservation purposes.

We wish to work in partnership with the owners of our heritage buildings and the relevant heritage bodies to explore ways to conserve and renew our built heritage. The partnership will need to commission detailed site surveys and analyses of need to inform a conservation and regeneration strategy which respects and renews our heritage buildings yet safeguards their commercial viability. Additional funding



will be sought for the resulting multi-million pound programme to be phased over a number of years, initially prioritising conservation work on Blackpool Tower, the Grand Theatre, Winter Gardens, all three piers and the Pleasure Beach's Casino building.

We also intend to raise our profile by seeking international recognition of Blackpool's outstanding universal value, unique identity and historical significance. We shall apply to the Department of Culture, Media and Sport for inscription as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in the category of a Cultural Landscape. These are selected on the basis 'both of their outstanding universal value and of their representativity in terms of a clearly defined geo-cultural region and also for their capacity to illustrate the essential and distinct cultural elements of such regions'. Such an inscription will not impose severe new planning restrictions nor constrain the Masterplan's aims of high quality redevelopment. World Heritage Sites nominated under this category are recognised as living and working places which must be allowed to grow dynamically and organically in response to their local environment and society as they have in the past.



3.5.3 Transport

The country's first electric street tramway began in Blackpool and the town continued tramway operation long after every other UK system had closed down. Blackpool is probably as famous for its tramway as it is for its Illuminations, and many transport enthusiasts visit every year to enjoy the unique experience of travelling on Britain's last surviving 19th century tramway. The Council has applied to the government for funding to replace the current tramway infrastructure and upgrade it into a modern light railway system so that trams will continue to run along the Promenade.

Blackpool Transport, a Council-owned company, have retained ownership of some 30 vintage and illuminated trams. Some of these still occasionally carry passengers on the public tramway system, but most are mothballed. Commercial pressures ensure they are less and less in daily use, so not only is the opportunity to enjoy a genuine heritage experience becoming less frequent, but the tramcars themselves are becoming more vulnerable to decay as they receive less daily maintenance.

The famous illuminated trams, of course, provide a superb opportunity to enjoy both attractions at once, and attract the greatest interest from the general public. Blackpool Transport has submitted a bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund seeking funding for the restoration of the two-car illuminated tram, the Western Train, to allow it to be operated again as a public transport vehicle whilst providing a genuine traditional heritage experience. We will support Blackpool Transport in this project, especially in their provision of more information and educational opportunities on tramways and their history.

The tramway is not the only way in which transport makes a significant contribution to Blackpool's heritage. The railways played an essential role in the development of Blackpool as a mass holiday resort, by bringing in the working class visitors in their millions. Sir William Lyons began the firm that became Jaguar Cars in Blackpool as Swallow Sidecars, and the town has also been the home of bus and coach building, through Burlingham and Duple, and aircraft production, particularly during World War II.

This is reflected in the collections of the Lancastrian Transport Trust which owns more than 40 public transport vehicles, mainly from the Fylde Coast, of which six are Blackpool trams, including the illuminated Rocket tram. The members are currently restoring a 1924 tram with funding from HLF's Local Heritage

Initiative. The Trust has identified the need for a heritage transport strategy to identify and conserve particular types of vehicles representing the tramway's heritage.

3.5.4 Our natural heritage

Blackpool is the second most densely populated local authority area in England and is characterised by an intensely urban nature and lack of open countryside. This increases the importance of safeguarding the remaining areas of open land and attractive landscaping that still exist within the Borough. This key issue has already been recognised in our Local Plan which confirms the Council's intention to conserve what already exists, improve its quality and manage access to it for the benefit of all sections of the community.

Marton Mere was declared a Site of Special Scientific Interest in 1979 and evolved into the town's only Local Nature Reserve in 1991. It is one of only two natural lakes in Lancashire, located in a deep kettle hole formed at the end of the last ice age around 10,000 years ago. The Mere contributes to Blackpool's biodiversity as an oasis of wildlife with its reed beds, grassland, trees and scrub and wet grassland area.

We recognize the need to raise awareness of the special qualities and importance of this substantial area and to increase both the volume and quality of its heritage activity. We will seek funding to improve the site's infrastructure such as the footpath links and interpretation facilities, including a Visitor Centre to encourage the general public and provide proper accommodation for school visits. We will work with the Friends Group to exploit the site's heritage opportunities and increase environmental awareness through audience development work.

The Local Plan also records 13 **Biological Heritage Sites** across the town, many of them ponds and nearly all of them within public open space or other areas of land allocated to remain open. Biological Heritage Sites are derived from a County-wide project undertaken by officers of English Nature, the Lancashire Wildlife Trust and the County Council. The Council has committed itself in the Local Plan to maintaining the biodiversity and local distinctiveness of sites of nature conservation interest and endeavouring to safeguard, conserve and enhance any further sites that are identified as adding to the wildlife and amenity value of the Biological Heritage Site network.

The Heritage Lottery Fund is already contributing £3.8 million towards the £5.2 million cost of restoring and revitalising **Stanley Park** whose facilities and fabric have deteriorated over the years. Work has begun to preserve its historical and ecological heritage and return the Park as closely as possible to the original layout which represents some of the architect and landscape designer W.H.Mawson's finest late work. We are preparing Improvement Plans for our other 15 Community Parks, and Watson's Road Park has already achieved Green Flag status.

We also aim to increase public awareness of the tremendous importance of the sea and seashore as part of our natural heritage. Adverse publicity about the cleanliness of the sea locally has in recent years led to a reduction of interest in the ecology of this enormous natural heritage. Our **"I do like to be beside the Seaside"** Project will comprise a number of related measures, which could include the installation of interpretive panels about marine conservation and the ecological and historical significance of key seafront buildings and features and information panels on the longevity of everyday litter, for example. The provision of a beachfront Visitor Education Centre and the employment of seasonal Seafront Rangers to undertake water safety demonstrations and education sessions and talk to the public informally about ecological and conservation issues will also be considered.



3.5.5 Community projects

Blackpool already benefits greatly from the dedication of an active local heritage community. We shall support that community in preserving and enhancing our heritage assets and shall seek to increase the number and skills of the people involved. We shall also raise the public profile of our heritage, improving access and removing barriers to its enjoyment. We shall build on Blackpool's tradition of fun by adopting innovative ways of involving the community in heritage activity.



Little Marton Mill is listed as grade 2, a magnificent example of one of the few surviving Fylde Coast windmills. It is currently maintained by the Council but is rarely open to the public. Funding will be sought to offer fixed term contracts to suitably qualified staff to prepare the Mill for a new role as a viable public facility, possibly as a Gateway to our heritage. The project staff will establish the substantial and well trained volunteer workforce needed to maximise community engagement and sustain regular public access to the Mill, at least on a part-time basis.

Oral and Community History programmes are already underway in Blackpool: one large scale project is ongoing and others are planned to illustrate the history of Blackpool's former villages and original communities, Marton, Claremont, Bispham, Layton etc. A key issue is that these projects identify and record unique sources of primary historical information, and must be conducted to the highest professional standards. Adult and community learning courses will be established to teach the skills and techniques required. We shall also investigate ways of helping our local and community historians to disseminate and market the results of their research, to take it to a wider audience.

Some potential Community Project topics are the Blackpool landlady & boarding house, the important role of the resort in wartime, and Blackpool's place in political history during the long years of the Party Conferences. Other projects could focus on people's memories of visiting Blackpool, and living in Blackpool, and the documents and memorabilia that survive. For example, we could partner heritage or community organisations in Blackpool's traditional catchment area to help them capture their residents' stories of visiting Blackpool.

3.5.6 Collections

This strategy seeks to ensure that Blackpool's memories, artefacts and documents are preserved and conserved locally. We want to give local people, in particular, easy access to them and help people to interpret and use them and recognise their relevance to their own lives. Considerable quantities of documentary and audio visual evidence have been preserved and collected, although they are not always easily accessible.

The Lancashire Record Office in Preston holds a significant amount of material relating to Blackpool which is well organised and safely preserved for posterity. Blackpool Council has shared the annual operating costs of the Record Office with Lancashire County Council and Blackburn with Darwen Council since 1998 in a Joint Arrangement whose benefits, terms and conditions should now be reviewed. The Council will also wish to explore the benefits and opportunities likely to ensue from the development of a partnership with the Lancashire County Museum Service and the new Lancashire Conservation Studios.

Locally, the Central Library and the Grundy Art Gallery house substantial collections of Local Studies and Heritage-related materials, somewhat constrained by limitations of space. Other major collections of primary material, ephemera, artefacts etc. exist, some in Council

or other public ownership, like Blackpool Transport, others still in the hands of the businesses whose story they tell. Leisure Parks and the Pleasure Beach, in particular, have retained material in large quantities over the years which records their own commercial development whilst vividly illustrating Blackpool's history. Some of this material is more or less permanently on display, for example, the Tower's Charlie Cairoli exhibition, and some is intermittently exhibited on special occasions, as for the VE/VJ day celebrations in 2005.

The Council's **Illuminations** Department's depot still houses an irreplaceable collection of plans, working drawings, photographs etc. Not only does it illustrate the history of Blackpool Illuminations, it is also a marvellous practical demonstration of the changing face of popular art and illustration, and the impact of technology. The Tourism Department has a substantial collection of holiday brochures which are outstanding primary historical sources, but need to be properly organised and made available. Similarly, we have already discussed with the Grand Theatre the desirability of our housing and managing their historical collection for them; this arrangement would secure proper storage for the collection but still make it easily available locally. Several of the best collections are owned by private individuals whose collections reflect their lifelong interest in the history of the town.

Most of these major collections of historical documents and memorabilia, the Council's among them, require new accommodation and management arrangements to safeguard them and provide public access. They need a protected environment for assessment, cataloguing, conservation, digitisation and storage. The collections should then be stored locally and made accessible to the public in the Council's new **Heritage Exhibition Centre** in the Central Library and Art Gallery.

An application has been made for listed building consent to convert the former Lecture Hall occupying much of the first floor space between the Central Library and the Art Gallery (listed Grade 2), incorporating within it some of the Town Hall old oak furniture. The space and facilities available for researchers would be much improved by the collections being removed from the current cramped conditions. In addition, museum standard showcases would be provided in which members of the community could be encouraged to curate their own heritage exhibitions.

In this first phase, the high priority accorded to improving public access facilities means that storage space will still be at a premium. The Heritage Exhibition Centre will not be able to accommodate all the material that should potentially be brought together, so the Council intends to dedicate the whole Central Library building to these purposes when the Central Library is relocated as part of the Masterplan. This, however, is a project for the longer term, and the production of a practical and sustainable **Conservation Management Plan** for the local accommodation of our important heritage documents and memorabilia will be a key issue for this Strategy.

Clearly, a **digitisation project** is also essential, and some of the images should be digitised to a high level of definition because of the quality of much of the artwork. The Blackpool4me project has begun this task on a small scale by digitising 501 of the Central Library's historical photographs and publishing them at www.blackpoolimagegallery.org.uk.



3.5.7 Infrastructure

Several Council departments already support the Heritage Agenda through a series of action plans which will be better co-ordinated through this Strategy.



The post of Head of Heritage has now been developed to focus on this increasingly important agenda and to support the necessary internal and external partnerships.

The Blackpool Heritage Forum will be established in July 2006 to take the proposals in this Strategy forward. The Forum will bring together on a regular basis all the local organisations interested in Blackpool's heritage to develop this Strategy and move it on. This document is the start of a process, not an end in itself, and is intended to act as a framework and point of reference. We shall work together to ensure that our heritage projects can be planned coherently and without duplication of effort to maximise the benefits which can be delivered by a well founded Strategy with full stakeholder support.

A constant theme in this strategy has been the need for considerable additional financial resources to fund the ambitious projects we are planning. The Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) has already recognised that Blackpool has not received as much heritage funding as have other similar towns, and has prioritised support for a time-limited period. An HLF Development Officer has been working in partnership with the Council and the voluntary sector to raise residents' awareness of Heritage funding programmes and to encourage applicants, especially from community and voluntary groups.

Council officers and voluntary sector representatives have been supportive of this work but recognise that more will need to be done to maximise external funding, which should be sought from as wide a range of sources as possible. Further staffing resources are needed locally to help applicants develop suitable projects and write successful bids, and to support the Council and Blackpool's Heritage community in achieving these strategic aims.

3.6 Monitoring and evaluation

The implementation of the actions listed in the following Action Plan will be regularly and systematically monitored through the Council's Performance Management Framework. Each action in the Implementation Plan will be logged and tracked to completion through Performance Plus, the Council's performance management system. Reports will be generated and monitored quarterly, and presented to the Department's Management Team every six months.

Each of the projects will incorporate an evaluation process so that the impact and benefits of the Strategy overall can be assessed.

3.7 Conclusion

We hope that this Strategy will encourage more people to take an interest in our heritage, both residents and visitors. Blackpool is already proud of its history, and will be prouder still when our town's unique heritage is better understood and more widely appreciated. The New Blackpool must openly recognise the value of the old, and crucial decisions about the future shape of the town are more likely to be well founded if they are informed by a knowledge of its past structure, purpose and way of life.

Celebrating Blackpool's Heritage

Section 4: The Action Plan

Heritage Strategy Reference	Corporate Performance Plan 2006-07 Reference	ACTION	WHEN	WHO
Our Seaside Holidays				
HS1	NB1.15	Develop the concept of a National Seaside Centre in Blackpool	March 2007	Paul Walker and Reg Haslam
Built Environment				
HS2	NB1.14	Implement the Town Centre Heritage initiative	Ongoing	Tim Brown
HS3	NB1.16	Make the case to Government for the award of World Heritage Site status	March 2007	Pat Hansell
HS4		Seek funding to audit the condition and occupancy status of our historic buildings, parks and gardens	January 2007	Head of Heritage
Tramways				
HS5		Assist Blackpool Transport to develop and disseminate information and learning resources about the tramway and its history	September 2006	Heritage Development Officer
Natural Heritage				
HS6		Submit Development Plan application for Marton Mere	July 2006	Kevin Garrity
HS7	NB1.18	Submit full project application Restore and revitalise Stanley Park	March 2008	Paul Walker
HS8		Develop a partnership and a plan to raise public awareness of the ecological importance of the Sea and Seashore	June 2007	Heritage Development Officer
Community Projects				
HS9		Enhance and develop Little Marton Mill for heritage purposes in partnership with HLF	October 2006	Pat Hansell
HS10		Establish Adult and Community Learning courses on Oral and Community History Skills	September 2006	Head of Adult and Community Learning

Heritage Strategy Reference	Corporate Performance Plan 2006-07 Reference	ACTION	WHEN	WHO
Collections				
HS11		Apply to HLF for planning grants for Illumination Archive	Oct 2006	Pat Hansell
HS12		Establish a Heritage Centre in Central Library Lecture Hall (in partnership with HLF)	May 2007	Pat Hansell
HS13		Review the benefits, terms and conditions of the Lancashire Record Office Joint Arrangement	October 2006	Mark Lewis/Pat Hansell
HS14		Audit local heritage collections and develop a Conservation Management Plan	December 2006	Head of Heritage
HS15		Develop and implement a digitisation audit, strategy and action plan.	December 2006	Head of Heritage
Infrastructure				
HS16		Establish Blackpool Heritage Forum to implement the Strategy and develop it further	July 2006	Pat Hansell
HS17		Launch a cross sector strategy to gain support to promote heritage in Blackpool	July 2006	Pat Hansell
HS18		Appoint Head of Heritage	Sept 2006	Pat Hansell
HS19		Secure funding to appoint a Heritage Development Officer	December 2006	Pat Hansell

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