

Project: Blackpool Tourism Strategy

Client: Blackpool Council

Date: 2004 - 2005

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Blackpool's tourism is in decline - visitor numbers, length of stay and spend are all reducing, and this has accelerated since the year 2000. The number of accommodation businesses has shrunk by 40% in the last 15 years, but the resort still has an unsustainably high number of low-quality bed spaces - with average occupancy estimated at below 30%. There has been little investment in the visitor infrastructure in recent years, and the decline is visible.

L&R had been commissioned by Blackpool Council's Director of Tourism to produce a new Tourism Strategy 2005 - 2015 about 6 months before the project started. Blackpool had already produced its Master Plan, and had just won significant funding from NWDA to set up an Urban Development Company.

The Master Plan for Blackpool is ambitious and focusses on the bricks and mortar - the 'hardware'. TEAM's Tourism Strategy made recommendations for developing Blackpool's tourism 'software' - i.e. destination management, visitor services, branding, marketing, events, quality, and skills. We recommended a three-stage approach: the Maintenance Stage up to 2010; the Transition Stage from 2010-2013; the New Blackpool Stage from 2014 onwards.

The Maintenance Stage recognised that the core Blackpool tourism product would be largely unchanged till 2010. TEAM recommended that Blackpool focusses on building existing customer loyalty and putting quality and skills initiatives into place, but should not be going out to new, higher spending markets until 2010 at the earliest.

Detailed recommendations for the Maintenance and Transition Stages for both marketing and for developing the events infrastructure and events programme were provided.