

Written evidence submitted by Christine Hodgson CBE, Chair of the Blackpool
Pride of Place partnership (LRS0030)

Executive Summary

- Allow the creation of local organic structures that create longer term visions, which cut across political and funding cycles
- Encourage local people, business leaders and local government to make decisions collaboratively
- Ensure that the Shared Prosperity Fund is sufficiently flexible to support physical transformation of 'left behind' places
- Use Project Speed to drive jobs and wealth into poor areas – especially civil service jobs from Whitehall
- Support the economic potential of Blackpool's ultra-high-speed cable connection to New York

Introduction

I am Chair of the Blackpool Pride of Place Board, which is a unique partnership made up of people from the business, local government and the voluntary sectors, who have come together to promote economic development and tackle the area's challenges. In 2017 the partnership was established and backed some early activity to tackle immediate problems and opportunities. Over five years we intend to tackle more complex challenges. By the end of ten years we hope Blackpool and the Fylde coast will be known as a place which is definitely "on the up". The partnership has been created under the umbrella of Business in the Community as its national blueprint for Place regeneration.

The partnership now has a strong bond between the public, private and voluntary sectors with a passion and belief that we can make a difference to Blackpool's future. In November 2018, we developed the Town Prospectus – An Agenda for Action <https://www.bitc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/bitc-report-place-blackpooltownprospectus-july2030-compressed.pdf>, which we have used as a 'calling card' by the Pride of Place partnership with national government. We are asking them to enter into a strategic partnership and work with us on our social and economic plan. The Pride of Place has spent considerable time lobbying national government for Blackpool to be the second 'Town Deal' after Grimsby.

Headline outcomes by 2030

- Create and safeguard at least 10,000 jobs and grow the economy by £1bn through turbo-charging tourism, building on existing and emerging economic strengths and innovating
- Tackle the concentration of deprivation in the inner area (the worst in England) raising it out of the bottom decile and creating 3,000 new quality homes
- Achieve top quartile employment rates for 16-24 year olds compared to other Lancashire Local Authorities through a particular focus on health and well-being and work readiness.
- Establish the national perception of Blackpool as a 'can do' place with a buzz, attracting graduates, families and business visitors, recognised as an established and credible business investment location, with increased local pride.

Evidence

Local Structures

The Blackpool Pride of Place structure works well. Its long-term vision and strategy purposely cuts across political and funding cycles to bring out the best in a Place. The partnership is intentionally business-led and has brought together all three sectors to agree the best way forward way to collaboratively regenerate a Place and deliver growth. The partnership has strong Leadership (independent private sector chair – with no vested interest) and works incredibly well with the local (unitary) authority and with the LEP. This local structure acts in the best interests of local stakeholders and should be a model of good practice to support growth locally. If the composition of the Partnership is right, then you have a local Place strategy, created and driven by those who care and are closest to the issues.

The Blackpool Pride of Place has been pioneering this work for three years and is seeking a Town Deal with national government to develop the economy and tackle deprivation. There is an amazing collaboration of people, business, and politicians, all working together to transform Blackpool. A great example of success with this type of structure is Greater Grimsby, who have been the first Town to secure a Town Deal from government.

The House of Lords Regenerating Seaside Towns Committee recommended that Government should secure a Town Deal for Blackpool (and other deprived seaside

towns). The Government acknowledged in its response to consider this approach for Blackpool (and others).

Government should focus its post-Covid-19 levelling up and get behind partnerships such as the Blackpool Pride of Place. Many of these partnerships should start to emerge as part of the Towns Fund work.

Targeted Regional Investment

By investing (influence and money) in 'shovel ready' projects such as; a Civil Service Hub (job relocation and creation), Blackpool Central Development (£300m private sector investment and up to 1,000 jobs), and supporting the economic potential of Blackpool's ultra-high-speed cable connection to New York, are all key examples of how government could drive local growth and jobs (*note details of all three are found in the Town Prospectus link shared previously in this submission*).

UK Shared Prosperity Fund

The UK shared prosperity fund should work in tandem with the government's 'levelling up agenda' and look to address the regional inequalities that exist. It needs to be sufficiently flexible to support the physical transformation of 'left behind' places such as Blackpool.

Local structures such as LEP's should be given greater freedoms to work directly with structures such as the Blackpool Pride of Place partnership model and be encouraged by central government to turbo-charge their local visions and strategic plans for jobs and growth.

The Lancashire LEP is a partner in the Blackpool Pride of Place and is represented on the partnership Board by the Chair, to facilitate LEP contribution and to advise on partnership activity.

Project Speed

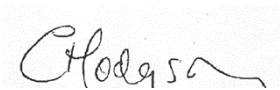
Blackpool has been disproportionately affected by the Covid-19 pandemic and given the dependence of jobs in the local economy that depend on the tourism and hospitality sectors, this increases the pressure on Blackpool given the existing deprivation.

Project Speed should look at growth opportunities in communities, and focus where poverty and disaffection are most stark – doing this will uncover high unemployment and income challenges, the offspring of which are chronic health conditions and high

rates of crime (amongst others). An example of how this might work is the proposed review to distribute some Whitehall Civil Service jobs, for example into places like Blackpool, would be a great driver of growth and jobs to the local economy.

Project Speed should first and foremost identify local stakeholder groups where they exist, such as The Blackpool Pride of Place. A good example of where this has been successful is Greater Grimsby, who were the recipients of the first Town Deal, and came up with a plan and structure to work with government. This seems to be a good balance between Whitehall and local decision makers.

The capacity exists at a local level to do the decision making on behalf of central government, through partnerships like the Blackpool Pride of Place. As you have noted in the Town Prospectus – 2030 Agenda for Action, there is a team, a plan and locally designed solutions.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Christine Hodgson', is centered on the page. The signature is fluid and cursive.

Christine Hodgson CBE, Chair, Blackpool Pride of Place partnership

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