

BITC's Blackpool Pride of Place partnership leads refresh of Digital Vision for 2030

Blackpool is a place shaped by reinvention. From railways and electric trams to global tourism and entertainment, adopting new technology early has long played a central role in how the town works and grows. This includes early computing used to support national infrastructure and the Illuminations introducing electricity as a shared public experience.

That approach now shapes the next phase of Blackpool's digital development. The refreshed

Digital Vision sets out how digital will drive economic growth, expand opportunity and support long-term social prosperity, while strengthening resilience and supporting the transition to net zero.

Central to the vision is Silicon Sands, an initiative that positions Blackpool and the Fylde Coast as a hub for technology and innovation. Anchored by the development of a digital-led campus at the Blackpool Airport Enterprise Zone, it brings together global connectivity, renewable energy and digital capability to support high-performance computing and artificial intelligence, while delivering local benefits such as energy reuse for homes, businesses and public buildings.

Blackpool is connected locally, nationally and internationally, and is well placed to play a significant role in the UK's digital economy, including ambitions to support future AI growth, while contributing to the transition to net zero.

Together, the refreshed Digital Vision is shaped around three priorities: being smart in how technology improves productivity and services, safe in how data and systems are protected, and sustainable in how digital growth supports long-term environmental and social outcomes.

Connectivity and Infrastructure

Blackpool sits on the North Atlantic Loop, a high-capacity subsea data network linking the UK,

Europe and North America, with direct connectivity to New York in around 60 milliseconds. This is reinforced by full-fibre networks across the Fylde Coast, expanding 5G coverage, and Enterprise Zones at Blackpool Airport and Hillhouse. Combined with access to low-carbon and renewable energy, this creates a strong platform for secure, resilient digital infrastructure aligned with the demands of AI, data-intensive services and national requirements around data security and sovereignty.

By 2030, Blackpool's digital and energy infrastructure will support economic growth, modern public services and data-intensive industries, including the requirements needed to support future AI activity. Digital Communities and Digital Citizens

Infrastructure alone does not deliver opportunity. Impact depends on how safely and confidently people and organisations can use it.

Blackpool's digital ambition includes building trust in digital systems, strengthening cyber resilience and ensuring people, businesses and public services can operate securely online.

Alongside this, the town will continue to address digital exclusion by improving access to skills, training and support, so residents can take part in education, work and services without risk of exclusion or isolation.

Business

Blackpool's digital ambition is to build a stronger, more innovative business base. Fast global connectivity, access to renewable energy, competitive operating costs and a growing local talent pool support activity across AI and data, cyber security, fintech, gaming and shared digital services.

Silicon Sands will form part of this approach, strengthening the local digital ecosystem by anchoring secure data infrastructure and enabling businesses to cluster around digital, cyber and clean-energy capability. As organisations place increasing emphasis on data security and sovereignty, Blackpool is well positioned to offer trusted, resilient UK-based infrastructure to support digital investment and growth.

Alongside this, partners have developed a recommendation for a Blackpool Tech Hub to provide a focal point for digital entrepreneurship, innovation and skills, supporting start-ups, scale-ups and inward investment.

Delivery to date has shown that Blackpool can host digitally enabled organisations operating at scale, while continuing to support start-ups and growing firms through access to space, skills that support business growth, job creation and strong peer networks.

Tourism

Digital technology plays an increasingly important role in Blackpool's visitor economy. Smart infrastructure along the Promenade can improve safety, accessibility and visitor experience, supported by a more connected digital offer, including a Resort App. There is also scope to test interactive and low-carbon technologies in public spaces, building on Blackpool's long history of innovation along the Promenade.

Blackpool has already shown what's possible through digitally enabled events such as the

Europa Halo E-sports tournament in 2023. Building on this, E-sports and other digital formats offer opportunities to grow business tourism and support year-round activity through venues such as the Winter Gardens.

Health

Health and wellbeing are a core part of Blackpool's digital priorities, reflecting long-standing health inequalities and pressure on frontline services. Digital tools offer clear potential to support earlier intervention, proactive monitoring and better coordination across health, housing and community services.

Used responsibly, data and digital technology can help shift the focus from reactive care towards prevention, including addressing issues such as loneliness, poor housing conditions and long-term health needs while improving outcomes and reducing demand on acute

services. This creates a strong opportunity for place-based digital health innovation in

Blackpool, supported by improved digital inclusion, health literacy and workforce skills.