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**£300m LEISURE DEVELOPMENT REVEALED FOR BLACKPOOL CENTRAL STATION SITE**

Plans for the biggest single investment in Blackpool’s tourism industry for more than a century are unveiled today.

The £300m Blackpool Central development will bring world-class visitor attractions to a landmark site on the famous Golden Mile along with new hotels, restaurants, food market, event square, residential apartments and multi-storey parking.

The masterplan for the long-awaited redevelopment is inspired by Chariots Of The Gods, a global publishing phenomenon, written by Swiss author Erich Von Däniken, that explores alien encounters and unsolved mysteries of ancient civilisations.

Chariots Of The Gods will be the main theme for Blackpool Central including the anchor attraction - the UK’s first “flying theatre”, a fully-immersive thrill ride that will create the incredible sensation of human flight.

It is estimated that the development will attract 600,000 additional visitors a year with a combined annual spend of £75m. It will also create around 1,000 new jobs.

Today, the Leader of Blackpool Council, Cllr Simon Blackburn, described the Blackpool Central project as a potential “game changer”, creating a unique, first-class leisure destination in the heart of the resort.

The 17-acre development site, which currently includes one of Blackpool’s biggest surface car parks alongside the magistrates’ court building and the former police station, was once earmarked as the site of a Vegas-style super-casino.

The Blackpool Central project name relates back to the days when the site housed the resort’s main railway station. At its peak, Blackpool Central Station was the busiest in the world.

The project is a collaboration between UK-based development company, Nikal Ltd, and Media Invest Entertainment, which owns the intellectual property rights to Chariots Of The Gods. Blackpool Council is working closely with both parties to help “unlock” the development opportunity which is currently envisaged to be delivered in several phases over an eight to nine-year period, with work starting as early as 2020.

The first major phase of the project will incorporate several key components including:

**Enabling Work**: This will provide a new multi-storey car park with more than 1000 spaces replacing the existing open air car park as well as new coach-drop off facilities.

**The UK’s first Flying Theatre**: An extraordinary attraction that will provide an unparalleled flying sensation. The indoor theatre will be fully immersive with on-board special effects including wind, fog, water and scents, with state-of-the-art projection and surround sound.

**Virtual Reality Experience:** The most advanced VR experience on an epic scale with free-roam, multi-player capability, body tracking, and motion simulators for unmatched realism in game-play.

**Greatest Mysteries:** The world’s first multimedia exhibition of its type exploring extra-terrestrial influences on the great ancient civilisations. A fully-immersive educational and entertaining experience created with leading-edge technology.

**Adventure Land:** Expansive indoor family entertainment centre incorporating a series of physical and mental challenges including free-fall hang gliding, rope courses, adventure trails and interactive climbing walls.

**Thrill & Gaming Zone**: Fully-themed gaming zone, with thrill and family rides, arcade games, laser tag arena, bounce park and bumper cars.

**Alien Diner**: Themed bar and event restaurant concept with “roller coaster” service, hourly special effects shows and exploration tours.

This first phase, due to open in Spring 2024, will be complemented by the development of an Artisan Food Hall accommodating up to 30 outlets and an event square incorporating a stage and video wall which will be used to host themed markets, open-air concerts and events. A new 150-bedroom promenade hotel is also planned.

Phase Two will include apartments, further food and drink outlets, a second hotel comprising 250 bedrooms, with additional landscaped public open space.

Future phases to the southern end of the site will include further leisure attractions, residential apartments and a music venue and nightclub.

Cllr Blackburn added: “I am delighted to be able to announce this hugely significant milestone in the redevelopment of the Central Station site. This really is a once-in-a-generation opportunity that has the potential to alter the face of our town.

“Over more than fifty years, many ideas for this site have come and gone. The difference this time is that we have worked very hard with our fantastic partners at Nikal and MIE for almost two years to create a scheme that is not just aspirational, but highly deliverable.

 “These new attractions are of ground-breaking international quality and their cutting edge technology will take Blackpool’s tourism offer to another level.

“We already have, to my mind, the best amusement park in the UK, in the form of Blackpool Pleasure Beach.  These new attractions will allow thrill-seekers to enjoy their visit even more, will attract new visitors, and encourage existing visitors to stay longer. They will create jobs, regenerate a part of the town that is in need of love and attention, and boost trade.

 “This new development, alongside the other investments taking place in the town, represent a game-changer for our visitor economy. We have long stated that a key objective is to create a year-round destination that delivers year-round employment. Blackpool Central will play a major part in that ambition.”

Nick Payne, Managing Director of Nikal, said: “Blackpool Central is a hugely important project for the town and the region and it is an honour to be on board. Place-making and regeneration are the DNA of our business and we thrive on creating dynamic new spaces that inspire, excite and engage.

“It’s taken almost two years and a lot of hard work to get to this point. We know that the masterplan fully maximises the site’s potential and will deliver a unique and ground-breaking, entertainment destination with global appeal that will revitalise and underpin Blackpool’s growth and regeneration.”

Norbert Reichart, CEO of Media Invest Entertainment, said: “The unique theme of Chariots Of The Gods will merge entertainment, culture, and history – an enthralling ‘Edutainment’ experience for the whole family – that can be enjoyed all year round.

“Together with some of the best companies in the industry, we have developed a one-of-a-kind, exciting indoor entertainment concept with truly world-class attractions which will integrate perfectly into Blackpool's pre-existing leisure cluster.

“This well-balanced mix of top attractions for all ages will significantly enhance Blackpool’s reputation as one of the UK’s top entertainment destinations.”

Kate Shane, Head of Blackpool Cluster for Merlin Entertainments, said: “We welcome any scale investment that drives further visitation to Blackpool and helps generate greater economic activity for the resort.

“It’s good too that we have a clear, well-supported plan for this area. The vision is an exciting prospect and we look forward to working with Nikal and Media Invest Entertainment to incorporate our Madame Tussauds and SEA LIFE Centre in the new development.”

**Ends**