

New plans to level up Blackpool unveiled

- New funding and beefed-up measures to improve housing standards and drive out unscrupulous landlords
- Blackpool selected as one of 20 areas in England primed for King's Cross-style levelling up regeneration and investment
- Plans will see derelict areas transformed and more good quality homes

Levelling Up Secretary Michael Gove has today (17 March 2022) unveiled new measures to help improve the lives of people in Blackpool by turning the tide on deprivation in one of the UK's most iconic seaside towns.

Blackpool, which has 8 of the 10 most deprived neighbourhoods in England, will now receive support to deliver a root and branch transformation of the town.

The package includes a crackdown on rogue landlords by scaling up the local enforcement team to deliver more action on those not meeting current standards and a transformative King's Cross style regeneration programme to create beautiful new homes and turbocharge tourism in the area.

The plans have been developed by government, local leaders, businesses and community groups who are working together to tackle the entrenched inequalities that have held the town back, as part of a new strategic partnership.

Levelling Up Secretary Rt Hon Michael Gove MP said:

For too long great British towns like Blackpool have been held back by deeply entrenched problems that impact the everyday lives of local families – and we are working to put that right.

Our levelling up plan will help transform this proud coastal town and deliver real change for thousands of families across Blackpool.

Secretary of State for Work and Pensions Rt Hon Thérèse Coffey MP said:

We are working to protect vulnerable people in Blackpool and beyond, and to ensure that everyone has somewhere safe they can call home, which is why this announcement sets out the government's clear intention to stop the small minority of poor landlords who don't do enough for tenants.

I'm particularly pleased that Blackpool will be benefiting from this vital investment as we continue to level up, and proud we are one of the town's biggest employers.

Cllr Lynn Williams, Leader of Blackpool Council, said:

We are very pleased that the government is putting Blackpool at the forefront of its Levelling Up agenda.

Locally, we have developed a unique partnership with business and the voluntary sector. Our ask of government was to work with this partnership to help deliver a step change that will transform the lives of our residents and our communities.

As a local authority, we have already achieved a great deal and demonstrated that we can deliver real and lasting change if we have the required funding and support from central government.

We are hugely encouraged that Ministers have recognised that potential and our ability to deliver, and are willing to commit to a long-term partnership that will support the regeneration of this wonderful town. We look forward to starting that journey together in the weeks and months ahead.

Christine Hodgson CBE, Chair of Blackpool Pride of Place Partnership:

I am so pleased to see the government's commitment to Levelling Up, and really grateful that Blackpool has been chosen as the exemplar.

Business in the Community's commitment to Blackpool five years ago led to the creation of Blackpool Pride of Place, a partnership across business, voluntary and public sectors.

From this work, we saw at first-hand the slum housing conditions in the centre. Through collaboration, we have made a lot of good progress on Blackpool's opportunities and challenges but we believe the only way to tackle the town's entrenched social challenges is now to work together with national government.

Tackling rogue landlords

Longstanding neglect by some local landlords has led to Blackpool experiencing some of the worst housing conditions in the country, with at least 1 in 3 properties classified as 'non-decent'.

An expanded local enforcement team will take tough action against those not meeting existing standards and measure landlords against future national standards. This beefed-up inspection regime will tackle exploitation in the local private rented sector and supported housing market driving up housing quality and protecting the most vulnerable.

Alongside this enforcement drive, Homes England will join forces with Blackpool Council, using additional funding of £650,000 to explore

regeneration opportunities to improve Blackpool's housing stock and quality of place.

And there's support for residents in supported housing as well with a portion of a further £20 million, over 3 years, to improve standards of support and drive out unscrupulous providers.

A plan to regenerate Blackpool

In a further boost, Blackpool has also today been named as one of 20 areas in England to receive a King's Cross style transformation through an ambitious regeneration programme.

These plans for regeneration will build on Blackpool's strengths, helping to create more vibrant spaces for the whole community.

Homes England will work at pace with local leaders on the ground to find exciting new opportunities for regeneration, delivering new homes and jobs for the community.

And the area will have access to the £1.5 billion Brownfield Fund, to kickstart regeneration of unused land and build new homes and communities.

This builds on plans to relocate 3,000 Work and Pension jobs to the town centre by 2024, and other significant government investment in Blackpool including a £39.5 million Town Deal to improve skills and training in the town and £4.5 million to transform the iconic Blackpool illuminations.

The plans unveiled today underline the government's commitment to work with local leaders, the private sector and communities to level up opportunity and prosperity across the country.

Further information

Supported Housing Improvement Programme will provide £20 million. This fund will be shared between four areas which participated in the supported housing pilots, Blackpool, Birmingham, Blackburn with Darwen and Hull, with the rest open to bids from other local authorities in May. This programme will be vital to drive up quality in the sector in some of the worst affected areas immediately, while government develops and implements a package of measures that will tackle poor quality and poor value for money in supported housing and improve outcomes for individuals, while preserving good quality provision run by responsible providers.