

VETERANS WEEK BLACKPOOL 2008

Introduction

Blackpool Council, in partnership with the Fylde Ex-Service Liaison Committee is committed, through the annual celebration of Veterans Week, to 'Honour and Unite All Who Served'. Building upon the successes achieved over three previous years, Blackpool has created the most ambitious and diverse programme of events to date, which will take place over nine days from Saturday 21 – Sunday 29 June 2008.

The programme is designed to provide an exciting range of activities appealing to veterans of all ages, as well as their families, friends, members of the Armed Forces and the wider general public. Veterans' Week will begin with military role demonstrations, exhibitions and recruitment opportunities by the Armed Forces, followed by a huge choice of activities throughout the week, building up to National Veterans' Day 2008 and an exciting weekend of entertainment and celebration. Much of the activity is created for and by veterans.



National Veterans Day Programme – Friday 27 June 2008

(This information is included to provide a provisional outline plan for the day).

Blackpool's Victorian North Pier will be a focal point and meeting place for veterans, their families and friends, providing a centre for entertainment, socialising, information sharing, and contact with welfare services. Free golf buggies will be provided to transport visitors along the pier, should they require assistance. Notice boards will be erected which will enable individuals to notify others of their presence at the event, and to assist in the creating of personal reunions. Training will be provided to representatives of veterans associations to assist with sourcing funding and submitting bids. This will be delivered by official bodies for example Awards for All. An outdoor stage and screen will be sited on the promenade adjacent to the pier, providing a location for badge presentations, speeches and further entertainment.

Veterans Badge Challenge

Providing a dynamic launch to National Veterans Day 2008, Veterans who have accepted challenges in and even on the major attractions in the resort will put their skills to the test to receive their Veterans Badge in a truly unique way.

This media opportunity is designed to highlight that there are many young veterans with transferable skills which they can apply to the workplace, and encourage individuals to have a sense of pride when receiving their Veterans Badge.

For example, Veterans will be challenged to climb Blackpool Tower, dive to the bottom of the shark tank at SeaLife Blackpool, ride the Big One at Pleasure Beach Blackpool or put their hand in the snake pit at Blackpool Zoo, to retrieve their Veterans Badge.

Those who successfully complete their challenge will be congratulated by a VIP or celebrity and offered the opportunity to have the Badge presented more formally at the event later in the day. Young veterans in the emergency services have already shown great interest in participating in these challenges.

Veterans Badge Recreation on the Beach

In order to achieve maximum exposure and national media coverage for the Veterans helpline and website, school children and cadets will be involved in the recreation of images of the Veterans Badge, Veterans Helpline number and website address by positioning themselves in blocks of colour on Blackpool's Central Beach which can be then viewed, filmed and photographed from the top of Blackpool Tower.

Cenotaph Rededication & Veterans Service

Following extensive restoration of Blackpool's Cenotaph carried out over the past 18 months, a rededication service will be held incorporating the unveiling of a new statue designed around the theme of Freedom.

Invited to the multi faith service of celebration and rededication will be veterans, cadets, serving military, including 12 Regiment RA and 103 Regiment RA (v), and the general public. To ensure accessibility, seating will be provided for those who require it and a British Sign Language interpreter will be present. The interpreters will be present at other events during the day.

Schools Veterans Day Service

As the product of research undertaken by school children throughout Blackpool, a Schools Service will be held at the Cenotaph. The content of this will be entirely chosen by the children allowing them to highlight what they have learnt through their interaction with local veterans.



Tree Planting

Leading up to Veterans Day, schools will research the conflicts since World War II and develop an exhibition from their work. Throughout the week, trees will be planted in memory of each conflict by a child and a veteran. Each tree will display an identifying plaque. On Veterans Day, a tree or trees will be planted as a media opportunity and to promote the project.

Public Badge Presentation

To publicly thank Veterans for their service, a ceremonial badge presentation will take place on the outdoor stage on Blackpool's Promenade. Qualifying veterans from all forces (including the Merchant Navy), of all ages, and who have served in locations throughout the world, will be invited to receive their badge. This will also be shown on the big screen.



Aero GP (Grand Prix)

Seen for the first time in the UK, Aero GP is an exciting new air race which will wow the crowds in Blackpool during Veterans Week. To mark National Veterans Day, the pilots, many of whom are veterans themselves, will race and perform demonstrations of dog fighting and target bombing.

The event, which continues through the weekend is unlike any other air race in the UK. The disciplines featured in the events demonstrate the true skills of the pilots as the more commonly seen single plane time trials, are replaced with multi-aircraft, high speed action.

Aero GP is run by Jeff Zaltman, a former American Air Force pilot and Iraq War veteran. Pleasure flights will be offered to veterans attending the celebrations. Through the installation of cockpit cameras, large screens will bring the audience closer to the action, providing all with a pilot's view of the skies.

Military Demonstrations

Military Displays and exhibitions will be offered by serving military personnel throughout the day. In addition, Clive Evans from CJ Evans International, himself a veteran, who has vast experience of working with the Armed Forces will assist by providing additional combat equipment and assets for military displays.



Badge Presentation & Afternoon Tea

To enable the presentation of a larger number of badges to veterans, a second ceremony will be held in the magnificent Tower Ballroom. This will include afternoon tea and provide the opportunity for socialising and time to relax.

Veterans Parade

To allow visitors to the resort, and residents of Blackpool to turn out to support the veterans, a spectacular evening parade has been scheduled into the programme. Marching along the famous Golden Mile, past the iconic Blackpool Tower, will be veterans with their Associations, the Armed Forces, cadets, reserves, the emergency services and marching bands.

Outdoor Concert

Ensuring that veterans of all ages are drawn to the celebrations, the entertainment will include traditional military bands alongside contemporary pop stars, creating an intergenerational experience for all. Programmed into the concert will be short speeches by invited celebrities and veterans which will maximise the potential to reach new audiences and spread awareness of veterans and Veterans Day. To ensure that all veterans are able to take part, there will be a seated area and platform for those with disabilities.

Night Time Parachute Drop & Firework Display

An illuminated, night time parachute drop is planned (subject to the successful securing of assets) followed by a spectacular firework display. An element of the display will include the raising of national flags recreated in fireworks, to represent the international veterans associations with whom we will be working, providing a stunning grand finale to the event.

Providing the display will be Kimbolton Fireworks, who stage Blackpool's World Fireworks Championships and were responsible for the most watched firework display of all time: the celebration of the handover of Hong Kong.

Veterans' Skills Display

Working with the emergency services and other bodies including Mountain Rescue, PADI and Beach Patrol, demonstrations of skills which can be gained during a career in the Armed Forces including first aid, hose running, diving, search and rescue skills will be made to the public, to highlight that these are vital to society.

These organisations will also be invited to exhibit and promote their services on North Pier.

The Forces Come to Town

Visitors to Blackpool's town centre will be treated to an interactive history lesson as the forces roll into town.

To inform the general public of the Veterans Week events, and to encourage involvement, actors will be employed to interact with the public providing them with information about experiences of being in the Armed Forces and the skills that can be gained.

The town centre will be dressed with all kinds of military memorabilia including jeeps, sentries on buildings and regimental exercises, all beneath miles of red, white and blue bunting festooned around the town.



Veterans Week Activity

Creation of Dedicated Website and Social Networking Sites presence.

A dedicated website: www.veteransweek.co.uk will be launched to promote National Veterans Day leading up to the celebrations. This will link to the service Personnel and Veterans Agency website, and provide a mechanism to reach veterans of all ages and backgrounds.

Profiles of individual veterans will be posted onto the sites, detailing their service background and their contributions to society.

Social networking sites will be useful as a tool for informing individuals about former colleagues, regiments and associations who will be present at the celebrations, and arranging reunions.



1 April – 29 June School Workshops & Presentations

Workshops will begin in schools for the exhibitions, the schools Cenotaph service and other activity in which children will be involved. Veterans will also present to schools on their experiences both in and out of the Armed Forces.

21 – 29 June 'I am a Veteran'

Working with Blackpool transport providers, veterans who now work as taxi drivers, bus and tram drivers will be identified and provided with stickers and 'I am a veteran' badges to raise awareness among the public and visitors to the town. Taxi drivers will also be briefed about the significance of Veterans Day, forthcoming events and Blackpool's links with the Armed Forces so that they are able to provide information to visitors.

21 – 22 June Military Display

Building on Blackpool's annual air show and launching the celebrations, the Military Display will include the Royal Marines display team conducting a beach assault, beach landing and hostage situation demonstration. Requests for assets have already been lodged with the RAF, Army and Royal Navy and confirmation of involvement will be known by February 2008. In addition to displays, the event will provide recruitment opportunities for the Armed Forces, as the show will be promoted to the general public.

21 – 29 June Pleasure Beach Blackpool

Pleasure Beach Blackpool will erect a huge banner (Wind Loading allowing) displaying the Veterans Helpline number on "The Big One" Europe's tallest roller coaster. Working in partnership with Blackpool Council to promote Veterans Week, a Pleasure Beach 2 for 1 promotion will also be available for veterans during the celebrations helping to attract a younger audience.



21 – 29 June Talks and Readings

Veterans will be invited to deliver talks and readings recounting their experiences. These will be hosted in local bookshops, the library and appropriate public venues.

21 – 29 June Going to the Flicks

A variety of films will be screened by the local Odeon Cinema during Veterans Week. In addition, there will be free screenings of films depicting life during World War II specifically created as an education tool for Primary School children. A simple display will be erected in the foyer to provide additional information for cinema goers on Blackpool's Veterans Week activities.

21 – 29 June Veterans' Skills Displays

Working with the emergency services and other bodies including Mountain Rescue, PADI and Beach Patrol, demonstrations of skills which can be gained during a career in the Armed Forces including first aid, hose running, diving, search and rescue skills will be made to the public, to highlight that these are vital to society.

Wednesday 25 June Veterans Gala Dinner

A celebratory event featuring a five-course dinner, military band and gala entertainment in the impressive setting of the Empress Ballroom. This event has proved highly successful in previous years, attracting hundreds of veterans.

Thursday 26 June Organ Concert, Tower Ballroom

World renowned resident organist Phil Kelsall will play the Mighty Wurlitzer in an concert in the magnificent surroundings of Blackpool's famous Tower Ballroom. The programme of music will include recognisable military themed pieces.

Thursday 26 - Sunday 29 June Aero GP

The launch of an air race for veterans delivered by veterans! Two days of exhibition flying followed by the main air race competition, in this brand new event for Blackpool and the UK. The event highlights Blackpool's history of hosting air races and its links with national and international air forces. This spectacular event will draw crowds to the town who would have not previously have engaged in the veterans celebrations. The partnership with Aero GP is long-term, helping to build on future Veterans Week celebrations and ensure sustainability.

Friday 27 – Saturday 28 June Pleasure Beach Veterans Show

For 2 nights only, the Pleasure Beach will produce a brand new show full of music, dance and humour especially for Veterans Day. The show will appeal to veterans of all ages and backgrounds.

Saturday 28 June Veterans Cricket Match

Involving both veterans and invited Armed Forces teams, Blackpool Cricket Club will host this fun day for all of the family complete with afternoon tea in the club house for non-players. St Dustan's will also be invited to participate and receive training from the England Blind Cricket team (to be confirmed).

Sunday 29 June Veterans Golf Day

An inter-generational golf day will be hosted at Stanley Park Golf Course. The rules of the tournament will state that: At least one member of the team is a veteran. The two players must have an age gap of at least 10 years, encouraging interaction between veterans of all ages. Linking with the Armed Forces promoted sports; this will be a gentle wind down from 9 days of exciting activity.

Please note: this information is for guidance only, dates, times and details may change. for the latest news click on www.veteransweek.co.uk or phone Visit Blackpool Tel. 01253 478222

