

Lights Fantastic!

It's not every day you have a celebrity drop by the office to help you with your work.

But for a team of Illuminations staff that's exactly what happened when interior design guru Laurence Llewelyn-Bowen recently travelled to Blackpool, and more specifically the Illuminations depot.

He was in the resort to meet the hand picked Illuminations Team that will work with him to bring his designs to life for the 2007 Lights display. Together they will create a unique section of lights to be positioned alongside Blackpool Tower right in the heart of the resort.

It's the first time that the authority has invited an internationally acclaimed designer to contribute to the much loved, annual spectacle.

Laurence, who once said he was "totally seduced by Blackpool's high-kicking glamour and historical reputation for giddy glitz", is delighted to have been asked to provide designs for the illuminations. He said: "I am extremely excited about this project and it's a huge accolade to be involved. Blackpool is somewhere I didn't know as a child but I have historical and professional links with the town and it fascinates me as a place that uses design as a tool for entertainment."



Laurence chats with Illuminations artists Colette Halstead and Sarah Myerscough.



Laurence Llewelyn-Bowen talks through some of his initial concepts with members of the Illuminations team, in the presence of the BBC's Culture Show which is charting the project's progress for screening later this year.

He admitted the project wasn't something he's ever done before, and joked that his professional counterparts in the design world are 'dead jealous'.

Although Laurence isn't ready to unveil his initial designs to the public just yet, he informed the staff that he's taking his inspiration from the art deco period. His concepts are based on 'deco-dance', and communicate the elegance and glamour and eye-catching spirit of the 20th Century, married with the 21st Century. They are very cheeky and sexy, he said.

Illuminations Manager Richard Ryan said the team was raring to go, and that the whole project had instilled them all with a lot of enthusiasm. "It's a brilliant start to 2007".

Illuminations artists Colette Halstead and Sarah Myerscough will be two of the team working closely with Laurence. Colette said it was really exciting to be involved on a different, but more integrated, level to which they're used to.

Sarah was equally enthused: "We know Laurence is a great designer and it will be great to work with him. However, this is going to be a team effort, from the artists to the engineers".

Laurence is so keen to be involved that he waived usual design charges and even donated his nominal fee to the NSPCC - one of the charities he supports nationally, and which the Council works closely with locally.

The £3,000 donation will specifically help the Acorn Centre in Blackpool which offers a therapeutic service to children who have suffered significant, physical, sexual and emotional harm. It's a partnership for which Dawn Lang, Area Manager for the NSPCC said she was 'very grateful'.

After this initial meeting, Laurence will meet the team on further occasions to help fine tune the designs - which will ultimately be carved and brought to life.