



## **NEWS RELEASE**

### **It's Lights, Camera, Action For Well Known Hospitality Personality**

Renowned hospitality expert Kerian Barnes, Group Operations Director of hotel owner/operator Starboard Hotels, is set for television stardom this week when she appears on a major smash hit Channel 5 network documentary series, Bargain Lovin' Brits in Blackpool.

Kerian, who heads up operations for Starboard Hotels, UK wide portfolio which includes the award-winning Holiday Inn Express Burnley, the Best Western Carlton Blackpool and Ibis hotels across the country, faced the cameras together with celebrity TV presenter and interior design guru Laurence Llewellyn Bowen, after this dynamic business woman enlisted Laurence's creative help in designing bespoke illuminations for the Best Western Carlton Hotel in Blackpool.

When network broadcaster Channel 5 who were in the resort filming for the network series, heard of Kerian's project with Laurence, producers leapt onto the story, working closely with Kerian and her team at the iconic North shore Best Western Carlton Hotel.

Now the film of the epic story of the hotel's innovative project to launch their own bespoke illuminations, is being told to the nation's television audience this Thursday evening on Channel 5 at 8pm.

In the series, which is attracting upwards of two million viewers, Kerian, 57, who came up with the idea of the illuminations hotel project, is shown in creative meetings with Laurence and hotel assistant general manager Andrew Lester, discussing the art deco designs Laurence created.

In a spectacular finale to the programme, Kerian is filmed helping Laurence switch on the Carlton illuminations helped by children from a local scout group. "That was such an

amazing night,” explained Kerian. “To have our own illuminations switch on with the official team there to help was quite incredible and the cameras were there to capture it all.”

The hotels co-operation in allowing the cameras in gave the Best Western Carlton the perfect opportunity to showcase its “new look” following a million-pound investment, demonstrating commitment to Blackpool’s hospitality sector.

Kerian explains: “It is important for the Best West Carlton hotel to work closely with the different stakeholders in Blackpool to demonstrate our commitment to the success and prosperity of the resort. More people than ever are deciding to holiday at home and Blackpool is a shining example of one of the country's most popular seaside towns, moving with the times and growing through innovation. This project was an important investment for Starboard. We are fully committed to developing relationships with the local community, with other businesses and of course the tourism organisations.”

Of working with Laurence and the programme makers, Kerian had this to say: “It has certainly been an amazing experience working with the television crew and Laurence. I have had experience with broadcasters in the past, particularly when I was GM at the Holiday Inn in Burnley, but this was on a different level. The attention to detail by the film crew was very impressive and we worked closely with the producer over the summer period.”

It was Kerian, who has more than 30 years’ experience in the hospitality industry and her team who introduced Laurence into this popular series which takes an affectionate look at Blackpool, its people and the businesses who help give the resort its unique personality.

Laurence, who is well known for his creative flair and his love of Blackpool, worked on the top secret project with Kerian and the Best Western Carlton team, to produce a set of bespoke fountain light sculptures as part of this year’s Blackpool Illuminations.

“Laurence was brilliant to work with,” explained Kerian, “a real pro and yes he did give me one or two helpful tips on being in front of the cameras. To be honest, we got so used to the film crew being around at the hotel that we all became quite relaxed.”

The documentary series which is on air until the end of November, is receiving rave reviews for its witty and affectionate look at Blackpool. Executive producer Andrew Nicholson said his team could not thank Kerian enough for all her help and it is hoped a second series will be commissioned for next year and see the film makers return to Blackpool.

Said Kerian: “It has been an absolute joy working with Laurence and the film crew. I am really proud of the hotel team for the way they approached this challenge. It is not easy being filmed whilst you go about your daily work. The illuminations project was very important to us and we had to get this right, particularly as we had let the cameras in.”

“We wanted to bring back childhood memories from years ago with the illuminations which truly reflect Blackpool’s uniqueness and history. The fact that we were able to gain network television coverage has made it even more important for the marketing of the Best Western Carlton.”

**Ends.**

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**About Staroard Hotels:** Starboard Hotels is an award winning owner and operator of franchised hotels under the world's leading brands such as Holiday Inn Express (IHG), Days Inn (Wyndham), Best Western and ibis/ Accor hotels.

With 13 hotels in key UK locations and over 1,200 bedrooms Starboard is a specialist in small and medium size UK based hotels ranging from limited service hotels to full service properties. Hotels in Starboard's operating portfolio include the Best Western Carlton Hotel Blackpool and Best Western Plus Epping Forest Hotel, Days Inn Wetherby, Holiday Inn Express Greenock, the multi award-winning Holiday Inn Express Burnley, the Holiday Inn Express Leeds Armouries, Holiday Inn Express Tamworth, Holiday Inn Express Ramsgate and a number of Ibis Hotels in key UK cities such as Birmingham, Sheffield, Leicester, Plymouth and London Gatwick.

Starboard Hotels has been recognized with a number of industry awards. In 2014 the Holiday Inn Express Burnley was presented with the IHG's Developing People award for its outstanding achievements in encouraging people to pursue a career in the hospitality industry. The hotel also won the category of Best Small Group Hotel Employer in Hospitality in 2013 and placed fourth in the Top 50 Best Employers in Hospitality at the Best Employers in Hospitality Awards the same year. In 2010 the Holiday Inn Express Burnley has been awarded with the IHG Torchbearer EMEA Hotel award.

Starboard Hotels is accredited with Investors In People (IIP) and ISO 9001 and 1400 and has a number of ongoing active business projects in key UK locations.