

2nd December 2021

ECONOMY TEAM SUMMARY

Supporting West Northamptonshire Businesses

The Economy Team have been dealing and responding to a number of business enquiries recently and engaging with local businesses at events, such as the Northamptonshire Chamber of Commerce Back 2 Business Expo, the West Northants Business Forum and most recently the Motorsport Industry Association's Conference Technology Showcase to promote the business support provided by the team.

The WNC website has also been updated with information about the business support provided by the Economy team and a dedicated contact form for enquiries is now available. www.westnorthants.gov.uk/free-business-support

WNC Employment Support Activities

The Economy team have been actively promoting and providing employment support to a number of West Northamptonshire businesses and residents looking to fill vacancies/find local work.

This month the team were involved in hosting a DWP Kickstart event in Towcester, which focused on supporting businesses based in Towcester and Silverstone with filling their Kickstart vacancies.

The employment support provided by the WNC Job Club includes access to professional experts who provide free confidential advice and support to help find local employment, latest information on local vacancies, CV, application form and covering letter advice, support with on volunteering and training opportunities as well as money, debt and welfare advice. www.westnorthants.gov.uk/free-employment-support

Developing a West Northamptonshire Prospectus

The development of a West Northamptonshire Prospectus is progressing and the Economy team are engaging with key external stakeholders to support its preparation. Partners include the University of Northampton, University of Cranfield, Prologis, Visit England, Silverstone Park, and others, all of whom are endorsing the developing document and are keen to build partnership working with WNC. A final draft of the Prospectus is currently under development to then be approved internally and taken to Government soon. The Prospectus will steer a future strategy development and be used to input how WNC addresses business support, inward investment, skills development, climate change and more.

Celebrating West Northamptonshire businesses – Small Business Saturday

This year Small Business Saturday will take place on the 4 December 2021. The national campaign celebrates small business success and encourages consumers to 'shop local' and to support businesses in their communities and reinforces the message of utilising local assets, which in turn benefits the local economy.

Now in its 9th year in the UK, the campaign has grown significantly year on year with 15.4 million people spending a record £1.1 billion with small businesses on Small Business Saturday in 2020.

The Economy team have been working pro-actively with the Town Councils, Northampton Bid, FSB and Northamptonshire Chamber and local partners to ensure that all of West Northamptonshire is aware of Small Business Saturday and ready to celebrate our fantastic local businesses.

Small Business Saturday activities the Team are delivering include a robust marketing campaign in partnership with the Communications Team, focused towards both residents and employers. An informative Business Pack, delivered to businesses surrounding each local High Street, including information on a Shop Window Competition for employers to decorate the High Street, attract customers in and to be in with a chance of winning some free marketing publicity and a custom box of chocolates to use in their own marketing.

To engage residents, the Economy Team are running a Selfie Competition, whereby residents are invited to show their love by taking selfies on Small Business Saturday outside their favourite High Street businesses. Not only does this nurture community spirit and enforce the key message of supporting local, but it generates marketing content to celebrate all of our local businesses to residents and visitors. A winner will be chosen for the best selfie in Brackley, Daventry, Northampton and Towcester and each will receive a custom box of chocolates to enjoy this Christmas.

To further celebrate Small Business Saturday, the Economy Team have procured West Northamptonshire bags to be given out for free to residents with around 100 available for each High Street.

The efforts of the Economy Team to celebrate Small Business Saturday won't be just focused towards this one initiative, as the benefits of supporting local employers and investing in the local economy apply all year round, so the Economy Team will continue to run initiatives and campaigns to bring residents and visitors back into the High Streets and to showcase the quality local employers on a local, regional and national level.

For more information about the Council's Small Business Saturday campaign visit www.westnorthants.gov.uk/smallbizsat

MAJOR PROJECTS AND REGENERATION

- **Vulcan Works**
Building works to transform the former Vulcan Works site in Northampton into creative businesses with studios, workshops and managed workspaces have now been completed. The £14 million development is located in the heart of the town's Cultural Quarter and involved a combination of renovation and new build that will provide a total of 68 lettable units specifically aimed at start-ups and growing businesses within the creative industry.

An operator for the facility has been selected following the competitive tendering process. Work is now taking place to make the final elements of preparation for the centre ahead of this opening in the new year. Fit out works for the centre are continuing and the new operator will feed into the remaining parts of this process.

- **Northampton Market Square**
Work on developing the design for the market square has been taking place with Planning, Historic England and Market Traders in the consultation to this point. A report on the future of operation of the market has been produced following this consultation with traders and will influence the make up of the new market provision on the square. A wide public engagement event for the works is planned to start in December.
- **78 Derngate**
£400k of Towns Fund monies, as was set out in the Northampton Town Investment Plan, has successfully been approved by the Northampton Forward Board and WNC Cabinet. Following this a grant agreement with the Trust has been entered into.
- **Watermeadows**
Work on the Watermeadows in Towcester continues with Phase 1 works complete and the second phase of works, which will see new footpaths, seating and play equipment created across the site well underway, although delays due to issues sourcing wood have led to the play equipment being delivered later than planned.
- **Old Black Lion**
A business case for the use of £315k of Towns Fund monies, as was set out in the Northampton Town Investment Plan, has successfully been approved by the Northampton Forward Board and WNC Cabinet. The monies will be made available to the Churches Conservation Trust who are managing the project, with enabling works already commenced on the building..
- **24 Guildhall Road**
The first phase of Works to 24 Guildhall Road, that will see the building changed to accommodate a new contemporary art gallery on the Lower Ground Floor and improvements to the Upper Ground and first floors has now commenced. The contractor, Overbury, expect the works to be completed in spring 2022.

Work on the business case for the second phase of works to this building continues and will come to WNC cabinet in due course.

- **Northampton Bike Park**
The procurement for a contractor to deliver the new bike Park in Northampton has been undertaken, with the submission now being scored to determine which contractor will be selected to deliver the project. The former nine-hole course at Delapré Golf Centre will be transformed into the new facility for mountain biking where the natural slopes, undulations, trees and vegetation will be used to create a series of winding trails for users of all ages and abilities.

Councillor Elizabeth Bowen

Cabinet Member for Economic Development, Town Centre Regeneration and Growth