

**Thursday 30<sup>th</sup> June, 2022**

## **Major Projects and Regeneration Summary**

### **Northampton Bike Park**

Specialist contractor On Track starts work this week to create the Northampton Bike Park, providing mountain bike enthusiasts of all levels with an amazing new facility.

Vegetation clearance has already taken place at the former Hard Nine golf course west of Brackmills Industrial Estate and work on the main development begins today (Monday 25 April).

Once complete, the new free-to-use facility will comprise of:

- A multi-user green trail – an easy, dual-direction cycle route across the site, connecting Houghton Hill to the underpass for the A45
- Blue (moderate), red (difficult) and black (severe) off-road mountain bike trails for different abilities - dual tracks will allow head-to-head riding
- Five gathering spots where riders can meet to discuss the next section of track, and coaching can be provided
- A mountain bike skills area

Works on site continue on time and to budget with the bike park due to open later in the summer.

### **Sponne Arcade Car Park**

Jenkins Wier were approved as the contractor to begin works to increase the size of Sponne Arcade in Towcester at Cabinet in June. The works will see the demolition of the former co-op building in Towcester which has become vacant. The building has lay dormant for many years and has been subject to vandalism, break-ins, other anti-social behaviour. The project will see increased car park capacity, which allows for greater accessibility for disabled and family parking, motorcycle bays, a bicycle shelter, as well as landscaped borders, improved lighting, CCTV and seating along the main pathway that joins Richmond Road with Watling Street, a vital pedestrian link for the town

### **Levelling Up Fund**

At June Cabinet it was agreed that 4 project would be progressed as part of the council's submission into the Levelling Up Fund. The four projects that have been assessed as being a good fit for the LUF are Moulton College Development of Animal Welfare Training Facilities, Weston Favell Health and Wellbeing Hub, Maggies Northampton Cancer Support Clinic and Delapre Abbey Stable Blocks and Wellbeing Hub, these are now being worked into applications following the requirements set out by Government ahead of the deadline of submissions which is the 6<sup>th</sup> July. Other projects unfortunately were not developed enough to meet the requirements by government as part of the scheme and these will be considered to be worked up for submissions into the fund next year.

## **Northampton Market Square**

Work on developing the design for the market square has been taking place with the planning application now submitted for the scheme.

A decision on where the traders will be moved, which is Commercial Street Car Park, with traders not being charged pitch fees during their two-year relocation while Market Square undergoes its planned transformation.

The move is necessary as construction work, additional traffic, noise, dust and disturbance make it impractical to keep the market on the square during the redevelopment, plus it would add more than £802k to the project cost and delay completion.

Work on Market Square – due to start by this winter – will include resurfacing, a major new water feature, additional trees, new public seating, redesigned market stalls and a new lighting scheme.

## **Old Black Lion**

Works to restore the vacant Old Black Lion pub in Northampton commenced in June, with the works due to bring the building back to its former coach House splendour adding to the heritage Gateway area of Northampton

## **Watermeadows**

Works on the first 2 phases of work at the Watermeadows in Towcester are now complete, with the third phase, which will be to remove the damaged weir, being progressed.

## **Economy Team Overview – Q1 Update (April-June)**

### **UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF)**

West Northamptonshire has been allocated £5.4m of new funding to develop “pride in place”, focusing on three priorities: Communities & Place, Supporting Local Business and People & Skills. This fund replaces EU funding and requires local authorities to develop an Investment Plan outlining which interventions have the greatest need and will have the greatest impact, from a provided list of 41 recommended interventions.

The UKSPF aligns with the missions outlined in the Levelling Up White Paper and is a community fund, requiring the Economy Team to engage with local stakeholders, partners and community groups, including MPs and Councillors. Once a robust database has been developed, alongside the results of the WNC Big Conversation and the input of the consultation, an Investment Plan will be developed and submitted by the deadline of 1 August 2022. The first year funding is expected to be paid in October 2022, with UKSPF ending in March 2025. This fund is a combination of capital and revenue funding, with each local authority being able to outline however the funding will be best used.

West Northamptonshire has also been offered the opportunity to draw down £1.9m in “Multiply” funding. Multiply is part of UKSP and requires the council to develop a separate investment plan for bespoke adult numeracy programmes, against a national menu of interventions.

The key Objectives of the Multiply fund are more adults achieving maths qualifications courses and an increase in participation in numeracy courses, improved labour market outcomes and increased adult numeracy across the population.

## **Supporting Local Businesses**

Supporting local employers, as well as attracting new ones into the area, is a high priority for the Economy Team. Not only does the team connect businesses of all sizes and scale to support, funding, expert advice, training and recruitment (from internal and external services), but they work with them for as long as the business needs. These services aren't one off's, the team build long-lasting relationships with the local businesses to help them throughout their growth journey, overcoming challenges and realising opportunities.

A recent initiative the Economy supported, was the two WNC procurement events to inform local businesses how they can win contracts and work with West Northamptonshire Council, to demystify the process and inform them of opportunities. The events were highly successful and not only helped employers but showcased West Northamptonshire Council as "Open for Business".

The Economy team's social media accounts and monthly business e-newsletter continues to grow in reach, posting content out which is seen by thousands, of latest news, local initiatives and opportunities, events, information and more. There has been a lot of activity recently around the new category which the Economy Team has sponsored in the Northamptonshire Business Awards 2022 – West Northamptonshire Business of the Year. These awards showcase the best of the County and it is expected that local employers will secure many of these awards, with many local finalists being recognised for their quality businesses. The finalists for these awards will be announced in September, with the winners being announced in early November.

## **Supporting Local Employment**

The Economy Team continue to support local employment, working with residents and employers to ensure local vacancies are filled with local people.

The monthly employment e-newsletter, promoting events, vacancies, training and more continues to grow its database and provide instant access to beneficial information. The Economy Team regularly promote the combined offer of the 25+ partners working in collaboration with them to deliver free, accessible, and innovative employment support across West Northamptonshire. The Team regularly liaise with recruiting employers within the area to ensure their vacancies are highlighted to the local labour market, benefiting the local economy and the community.

The Economy Team attended the Brackley Community Hub event, held at Brackley Library on 10 June, promoting free employment support to residents. During the event, the team were able to talk to Ukrainian refugees looking for employment help and advice. The event was a big success and showed how valuable being accessible within the community is – the Economy Team will continue to support and deliver innovative actions to best support local residents from Brackley, Daventry, Northampton, Towcester and everywhere in between.

## **Supporting the Local Visitor Economy**

The Economy Team continue to support the Visitor Company and work with partners to promote local attractions, events and reasons to enjoy everything West Northamptonshire has to offer.

This included a highly effective marketing campaign for English Tourism Week (18-27 May) in partnership with the Communications Team. The celebration of attractions and reasons to love West Northants included content across all of our social media platforms and the creation of a WNC TikTok to target all audiences and utilise popular mediums for engagement. It may have been English Tourism Week, but this was an innovative showcase of West Northamptonshire to the world.

Ongoing plans are taking place to prepare for Heritage Open Days in September 2022, with a variety of businesses and attractions already signed up to take part, delivering events, tours and more. All of these free activities are publicised on the WNC website and will be built on each year, as the Economy Team celebrates heritage and culture in West Northamptonshire.

The Economy team have been working on an exciting new “*Explore West Northants*” App, funded by the Welcome Back Fund, the App has been developed to showcase local businesses, attractions, events, walking paths and more. It will be a long-term tool to promote everything West Northants has to offer and allow residents and visitors to explore the wide variety of things to see, do and enjoy. The Economy Team are working closely with partners to promote *Explore West Northants* to businesses, so that it can be launched later in the year with a full spectrum of the great things to discover in this area.

Councillor Daniel Lister  
**Cabinet Member for Economic Development, Town Centre Regeneration & Growth**