



Report of Councillor Daniel Lister Cabinet Member for Economic Development, Town Centre Regeneration and Growth September 2022

Major Projects and Regeneration Summary

Northampton Bike Park

The new £725k bike park that has been created on part of the land which was being used as part of Delapré Golf Centre until around six years ago has now opened to the public. Project was funded by West Northamptonshire Council and Sport England and is the only facility of its kind within two hours of the site. The park has been constructed by On Track, one of the top mountain bike park builders in the country who also designed and built Bike Park Wales, the largest Bike Park in Europe.

Aimed at attracting enthusiasts from West Northants and beyond, it features a range of facilities for all abilities of rider, from a skills area for children on balance bikes, up to the most demanding trails for experts in mountain and BMX biking, all free to use.

The new facility offers:

- A multi-user green trail, which is 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 with dual tracks which 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
- Climb sections – which are uphill sections to test endurance
- A mountain bike skills area

The bike park is due to open to the public in the autumn

Vulcan Works

Northampton's revamped Vulcan Works played host to visitors in August for a tour of the newly refurbished site including Andrew Lewer MP, West Northamptonshire's councillors, members of the council's regeneration team, funding partners and operators ahead of the full opening.

Originally a Grade II listed ironworks factory, Vulcan Works was built in 1875 for engineering company Mobbs & Co and was later turned into a leather warehouse. It is considered one of the best surviving engineering works for production of boot and shoe industry machinery. The building has been transformed into a mixture of renovation and new build and is located in the area between Guildhall Road, Angel Street, Fetter Street and St John's Street within Northampton's Cultural Quarter.

Over the past few years it has undergone a £14 million regeneration project which has involved the refurbishment of the old iron stonework factories along Guildhall Road, the refurbishment of the former museum store and the creation of a new three-storey building on the corner of St John's Street and Fetter Street as well as constructing a new block on Angel Street. The development has created 68 lettable units, including office, studio and managed workshop space specifically aimed at start-ups and growing businesses within the creative industry. Units range from 10m² to 100m².

The operators for the hub have been appointed in September 2022 and the mobilisation to get it open has started. It is expected that the hub will be open to businesses in January 2023.

Mulberry Place, Daventry

The new cinema at Mulberry Place, Daventry, is continuing to operate successfully with the operator demonstrating that they are keen to establish themselves as part of the local economy and community. It has been good to see the positive response by the public to the new cinema on social media with the public realm outside the cinema has seen good use in the summer months.

The two restaurant units that sit within the Mulberry Place scheme will have a pizza restaurant and burger restaurant are continuing to progress. The tenant is progressing with the fit out of the units and has announced that they will be opening to the public on the 10th October. WNC are continuing to assist where we can with sorting out issues.

Four Waterside and Marefair

The Council took a report to Cabinet on the 13th September to approve the business cases for Four Waterside and Marefair development sites. The funding secured through the Towns Fund and Enterprise Zone Business Rates Uplift will unlock a cleared 4-acre site opposite Northampton train station, transforming the gateway into the town centre.

Four Waterside will deliver much needed residential, high quality Grade A office space and a four star hotel. Marefair will see the delivery of high quality residential scheme as well as a heritage park celebrating and showcasing the rich heritage and history of the former Northampton Castle and Middle Aged Saxon Settlement.

The Four Waterside site and the residential element of Marefair will be delivered via a Development Agreement and the heritage park element of Marefair will be directly delivered by the Council. Procurement documentation for the Development Agreement has started to be drafted with the launch planned for this winter.

It is expected that works for the Heritage Park will start on site in Winter 2023 and be completed by Spring 2025. Four Waterside will see works finish in 2027.

The Council are also exploring further funding for the Marefair Heritage Park through the National Lottery Heritage Fund with an Expression of Interest submitted on the 16th September and a second application to be submitted in November.

Levelling Up Fund

The submission into the Levelling Up Fund was made on 28th July, the final four projects that were submitted were: 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, this is currently being considered by government with an announcement expected around the time of the autumn budget statement.

Northampton Market Square

Tender submission for the transformation of Northampton Market Square have been received with these currently being evaluated ahead of an appointment being made later this month.

Work on Market Square – due to start in early 2023 – will include resurfacing using high quality natural materials, a major new water feature, additional trees, new public seating, redesigned market stalls and a new lighting scheme. Works are due to complete in Winter 2024.

Work to relocate the market traders while the main works are undertaken continues with a planning application for the temporary location on Commercial Street Car park submitted earlier this month.

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 it 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.

Works are due to start on site in October 2022 and finish in March 2023.

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.

A contractor has been appointed for the works which are due to start on site in early 2023 and finish in Spring 2024.

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 damage weir, being progressed. Phase 3 works are due to be complete in Spring 2023.

Economy Team Summary

UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF)

WNC has developed and submitted the WNC Investment Plan outlining how the WNC allocation of £5,426,224 of UKSPF will be used across 12 government-provided interventions which align with the three investment priorities Communities and Place, Supporting Local Business and People and Skills.

In developing the Investment Plan, WNC engaged with councillors, organisations across the public, private and third sectors, internal services and MPs to identify the opportunities and challenges for the area, to inform the selection of interventions and the allocation of funding.

Multiply Funding

In June 2022, WNC submitted its Multiply Funding Investment Plan to the Department for Education (DfE), to draw down £1.9m funding for 2022 to 2025 to support Adult Numeracy in West Northamptonshire.

Multiply Funding is part of the UKSPF, which replaces the European Social Fund and is one of the first programme areas under the UKSPF People and Skills Pillar. The Multiply funding required WNC to

develop a separate investment plan for bespoke adult numeracy programmes, against a national menu of interventions.

WNC have recently been advised that the DfE have approved the WNC Multiply Investment Plan and have confirmed West Northamptonshire will receive the full first year allocation of Multiply Funding of £574,774.19.

Supporting Local Businesses

Supporting local employers, as well as attracting new ones into the area, continues to be a high priority for the Economy Team. The team have been dealing with a variety of enquiries from businesses looking for new premises in the area, as well as looking for support with accessing funding, growing their business and networking opportunities.

The Economy team's social media posts and monthly business e-newsletter of latest news, local initiatives and opportunities, events, information, and more is seen by a huge number of businesses.

The Economy team continue to actively promote their business support activities and recently attended the Northamptonshire Chamber of Commerce's Business Expo.

Supporting Local Employment

The Economy Team continue to provide employment support and work with residents and employers to ensure local vacancies are filled by local people.

The Economy team produce a monthly employment e-newsletter which promotes the latest jobs fairs, vacancies and training opportunities and signposts to a variety of employment support partners the team works with.

On Monday 15 August, in partnership with DWP, the Economy team delivered a Ukrainian Refugee Employment Support event in partnership with DWP at Northampton Central Library. The event was attended by local employers and support providers including Futures For You and Travis Perkins and provided a variety of free help and support to apply, find work and information of the latest local vacancies.

Supporting the Local Visitor Economy

The Economy Team continue to support the Visitor Economy and work with a variety of partners to promote local attractions, events and everything West Northamptonshire has to offer.

The Economy team have been working with Northamptonshire Surprise and North Northamptonshire Council to develop the 'Go Northamptonshire' Autumn/Winter 2022 marketing campaign to raise the profile of Northamptonshire and attract day and overnights visitors to the area.

The team have also been supporting the annual Heritage Open Days campaign for September 2022, working with a variety of local businesses and attractions to take part, deliver events, tours and more. A dedicated page on the WNC website published the businesses and attractions taking part to celebrate the heritage and culture in West Northamptonshire.

The "*Explore West Northants*" App has been launched to showcase local businesses, attractions, events, walking paths and more. It has been developed 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 have been working closely with a variety of partners and local businesses to promote the app since its launch.

The App was funded through Welcome Back Funding for a two-year period to support residents and visitors back to the High Streets. The Economy Team have been expanding the app capabilities by enhancing its use to beyond focussing on the West Northamptonshire High Streets, to allow every business in West Northants to benefit from the platform. The app includes a growing number of businesses, attractions, events and discounts/offers to showcase everything to explore and enjoy in West Northamptonshire.

Since launching to the public in July, there have already been over 500 downloads of the platform and the Economy Team have long-term plans to engage with residents and visitors to utilise this tool. The app allows businesses, stakeholders and attractions to publicise events and offers, including local libraries, leisure centres and town councils who are all live on ExploreWN. The app has also been converted into a website to increase engagement - <http://explorewn.co.uk/>

There are plans to upgrade the ExploreWN app based on user need, exploring opportunities for loyalty schemes and trails. Currently organisations can offer in-person offers/discounts to attract physical footfall into the town, promote physical events to attract residents and visitors into the area and to utilise local amenities. Organisations can promote themselves, their social media and website, communicate directly through the platform, offer delivery and click-and-collect, plus operate through the app, using it as an e-commerce tool. It is a robust offer focused on increasing footfall and local spend, whilst also offering virtual services. This will also safeguard businesses if there was a need to close or small businesses who don't yet have a physical premise or even a website. The app is a way to allow organisations to be discovered, to drive footfall across all of West Northants and to boost the local economy.

Feedback from one of our local attractions was "Sulgrave Manor has so much to offer residents, visitors and the community. The Explore West Northants app not only allows us to engage with new and existing customers, but we can promote events and offers on there too! This is a fantastic initiative by West Northants Council and we hope every business, attraction, resident and visitor use this innovative tool."

Councillor Daniel Lister

Cabinet Member for Economic Development, Town Centre Regeneration & Growth