



UK Shared Prosperity Fund in North Northamptonshire Newsletter | Mar 2024

From Cllr David Brackenbury, Executive Member for Growth and Regeneration

Welcome

The UK Shared Prosperity Fund is a central pillar of the UK Government's Levelling Up agenda. The fund aims to improve pride in place and increase life chances across the UK by investing in communities and place, supporting local business, as well as people and skills.

We have successfully secured £4.8 million from the Government's Core Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) and a further £1.1 million of funding

for rural areas from the Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF), as well as £1.9 million of funding to support adult numeracy programmes as part of the Multiply scheme.

This newsletter gives more information on one of the key priorities – supporting local business, setting out the range of support being delivered to local businesses through the Shared Prosperity Fund.

Supporting Local Business

Build Your Business – first grant recipients announced

The Build Your Business start-up support programme is being delivered by the Library Service's Business & Intellectual Property (BIPC) Northamptonshire. It is aimed at small businesses, entrepreneurs and anyone thinking of starting their own business, providing support through 1:1s, webinars, workshops, access to specialist business databases, mentoring, networking and a start-up grant programme.

Round 1 of the Build Your Business start-up grant programme received nineteen applicants from across North Northamptonshire. Thirteen applications were shortlisted for the grant panel, which met at the end of January. The panel were delighted to be able to award nine £2,000 grants to businesses under 1 year old. The successful businesses had attended at least three sessions from the Build Your Business programme and had submitted robust business plans. The businesses range from accountancy, marketing and data management to vehicle repair and maintenance.

Congratulations to: • AA Audio Solutions • Selecta Events • Anthem Group Ltd
• Wheat • Sigma 3 Digital • RNS Auto Group Ltd • Little House Accountants Limited
• The Media Type • FND Wellbeing Ltd

The next **round of grants is now open** and businesses under 1 year based in North Northamptonshire have until 3 May 2024 to apply.

The programme also benefits from a dedicated business adviser for North Northamptonshire businesses. James Stancombe joined the team in August, bringing with him over 25 years of experience of working in and around Northamptonshire. James is offering drop-in support, 1:1 sessions and workshops around North Northamptonshire.

Find out more by visiting the **BIPC Northamptonshire** website or social media: **Facebook**, **Instagram** and **LinkedIn**.

BUILD YOUR BUSINESS

in North Northamptonshire

Rural Funding

Rural business grants

In 2023, seven businesses in North Northamptonshire shared over £200,000 of funding through the Rural Business Grant scheme, funded through the Rural England Prosperity Fund. These projects include:

New Lodge Farm - New Lodge Farm, Bulwick were awarded £50,000 rural grant to invest in an extension to the farm shop and café. Construction is underway, with the new building expected to be completed in April.



Cobley Lodge Farm - Cobley Lodge Farm (CLF), Little Oakley were awarded £38,550 rural grant to invest in new machinery to diversify away from the traditional farm business into offering a new groundworks service.



Joel Harker from CLF said: “We would like to thank NNC for accepting our application for the REPF grant. The funds are aiding in our farm diversification expansion, allowing us to offer more services to our clients in the county. The funds have brought forward our future plans and allowed us to accelerate our business growth. The funds have also aided in reducing our carbon footprint with much lower machinery emissions and increased our work productivity substantially.”

With more than £630,000 available in 2024, the rural grant scheme is now inviting new applications, before the 25th March deadline.

Rural businesses can **apply for capital grants of between £5,000 and £50,000** to invest in business resilience and growth. Funding can be used to help businesses invest in equipment or build extensions and alterations. A particular target for the round 3 is rural diversification, including business diversification and projects which support the visitor economy. Each project must involve at least 50% match-funding from the business.

NNDecarb Business support programme and grants

February saw the launch of the NN2NZ Boost for Business (NN2NZ B4B) programme delivered by **Electric Places**. This innovative initiative, aimed at North Northamptonshire (NN) SMEs, is set to help businesses develop tailored carbon reduction strategies and foster a green, thriving local economy.

The NN2NZ Boost for Business programme is designed to assist NN businesses to recognise the benefits of carbon reduction. By formulating comprehensive carbon action plans and assisting with access to grant funds, the programme aims to accelerate North Northamptonshire's transition to a low-carbon future.

Key programme highlights include a series of strategic workshops covering crucial topics such as the financial benefits of decarbonisation, accessing capital grants, and skills development, offering businesses the opportunity to access data gathering toolkits for free, and providing expert guidance to businesses, helping them access, analyse, and interpret the collected data, develop business cases for low carbon investment and receiving assistance with funding applications for available R&D capital grants. More detail of these grants, managed by the Council and funded by the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, will be released in the coming months.

A full public launch is planned in April this year, followed by a series of workshops starting in June and running through to December.

NNDecarbonisation Grants available

Launched at the NNClimate Conference in November 2023, the NNDecarb grants scheme is a new grant where businesses can apply for up to £5,000 of funding to support their business to increase energy efficiency, help the transition to a low carbon economy and reduce local greenhouse gas emissions.

The grant covers up to 50% of the project costs for the installation of low carbon and energy efficient measures with the remaining amount to be match funded by the business.

5 businesses were successful in round 1, including investment in a Coffee shop in Oundle who will invest in a new energy efficient electric powered infrared heating and water system, resulting in a net-zero system and reducing heating bills by 50%, the installation of LED lights to a convenience store in Kettering, and a tourism accommodation provider providing insulation to their ground floor, reducing heat loss and carbon emissions and delivering a 15% saving in energy bills.

This scheme is now open for new applicants – [apply now online](#), with a deadline of Monday, 15 April.



Strengthening the High Street by supporting Retail Businesses

Smarter Society is now delivering a comprehensive **FREE business support programme** for all retail businesses and entrepreneurs. By signing up, retail businesses will get access to a variety of events, mentoring, webinars, networking opportunities and specialist support from industry experts, all designed to help our businesses thrive. This will be supported by a small grant scheme to be launched later in the year.

The first NN Business free event was held on 27th February at the Council Chamber in Kettering. Over 26 businesses participated in person or virtually. The topic was Social Media for Business delivered by Richard Liverman of Richer Solutions.



Supporting the visitor economy

The Discover Northamptonshire Hub promotes the attractions and highlights the unique offering available in and around the local area to the 6million+ visitors at Rushden Lakes each year. It provides invaluable support to the visitor economy and to local businesses.

In 2023, the Hub welcomed an impressive 6000+ visitors and offered support to over 450 businesses through interactive screens, the website, and social media platforms. It also successfully hosted 20 events and activities, adding to the vibrancy of the local community.

It has played an instrumental role in promoting 50 industry jobs and delivering internship opportunities through the Creating Tomorrow's Trust. Successful collaborations have been delivered, such as the recent one with Moulton College to organise an evening drop-in event aimed at inspiring young people to pursue food and drink qualifications.

The Hub has also supported the heritage sector by showcasing six heritage exhibitions through cabinet displays, with a dedicated space for the Northamptonshire Heritage Forum. These displays are rotated every three months to ensure fresh and engaging content. Prominent venues featured include The Arc, Cornerstone, and the Corby Heritage.

