



Annual Report 2016/17

Buckinghamshire Business First

Year ended March 2017



Buckinghamshire Business First was founded by a dozen local entrepreneurs to help our wealth creators win more often. Five years on and we find ourselves proud supporters of over 17,000 wealth creators and projecting a clear collective voice for business at the economic development tables which matter.

2016/17 has been a great year for Buckinghamshire Business First and our members.

Inside Buckinghamshire Business First, 2016 was all about innovation and investment; innovation in the form of our new web platform which revolutionises how businesses in Buckinghamshire can now interact and trade together; and investment in the form of all the businesses that gave something back by becoming investor members of Buckinghamshire Business First.

We want you to be more inspired to think big and achieve your goals. Business growth and better productivity are where we focus. You will read evidence of our impact here in this report.

No one is going to pretend all is rosy in the Buckinghamshire business garden. Brexit looms with its inherent uncertainty, a theme not dispelled by the actions of Donald Trump, Vladimir Putin and Kim Jong-un, not to mention the massive debt we must now carry on our journey as a nation.

Team Bucks includes much more talent than just those working directly for Buckinghamshire Business First to deliver business support, including my fellow Board members who I applaud loudly for giving up their time for free to support others, and the 10,000 businesses who can proudly call themselves Buckinghamshire Business First members. Buckinghamshire Business First is all of us, and more. We form a community that hothouses talent, greenhouses opportunity, and demands Buckinghamshire businesses be heard in the corridors of power, as the net wealth creators we are.

Blessed are the wealth creators, for they shall with certainty inherit the bill.

Onwards and upwards my friends.



Alex Pratt OBE

Founder, Serious Brands Ltd
Chairman, Buckinghamshire Business First
Holder of Queen's Award for Enterprise Promotion



“Coming together is a beginning; keeping together is progress; working together is success.”

Henry Ford - Founder of Ford Motor Company

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What our members say



“We are a local company with a national footprint and have greatly benefited from the business opportunities and active networking that we have experienced with Buckinghamshire Business First. They offer an important platform that brings the local business community together and enables businesses like ours to buy and supply services within Buckinghamshire, benefiting the local economy.”

Mark Walker, Ashridge Group

“It’s obvious that for a new business trying to gain a foothold, the Buckinghamshire Business First business directory and the functionality of the online profiles adds a great deal of legitimacy to any fledgling enterprise and helps get a brand name out there quicker.”

Jacqui Hogan, Cocreative



“Buckinghamshire Business First told me about Growth Grants and then guided me through the application process. This certainly helped me succeed in getting a £5,000 grant, which was especially important at that early growth stage.”

David Humpston, Viewpoint Videos



When surveyed about a range of services, members reported an average overall satisfaction rate of 91%.



Buckinghamshire Business First is the largest business representative organisation in Buckinghamshire, with more than 30% of the county's businesses engaged with us, and more than 65% of the county's private sector employees on the payroll of those businesses.

"I set aside some time to go through everything that Buckinghamshire Business First offers, from co-investment packages to the online business profile that each member gets on the business directory. I quickly realised that Buckinghamshire Business First could help me reach the businesses I needed to."

Helen Pethybridge, ActionCOACH



"The facilities at Buckinghamshire Business First's Saunderton Hub are perfect for us when we carry out our training days. Thanks to Buckinghamshire Business First we have our very own mobile office with everything we need in one place. We couldn't be happier with the advantages that we receive as members and feel incredibly grateful to have found them!"

Paul Nicklin, Whispercam

"The main thing I remember about my conversations with Buckinghamshire Business First's business support team is that they really listened to my ideas and the position I was in. They reassured me that setting up a business was very rewarding, which really motivated me. They also found appropriate local organisations to signpost me to."

Robert Kirby, People People

"Buckinghamshire Business First makes it easy for businesses to network with each other, offer services to each other and host workshops for each other. I wanted to contribute to all of this and play a bigger role in the Buckinghamshire business community, which is why I am proud to have invested and become an Ambassador of Buckinghamshire Business First."

Mathew Moslehi, IMSM Ltd

What we do

Buckinghamshire Business First is a business led, business focused organisation that exists to support and facilitate success within the Buckinghamshire business community, and to ensure that success is sustainable. We do this by fostering the conditions that encourage businesses to invest, grow and thrive in Buckinghamshire.

Since 2012...



Over £10 million

has been awarded to individual businesses through grants



2,557 jobs

have been facilitated through our grants and project activity



17,279 businesses

have benefited directly from our business support services



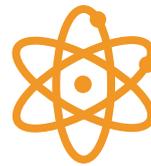
479 apprenticeships

have been facilitated through our business support activity



65,000 homes and businesses

now have access to superfast broadband from the installation of 50 fibre cabinets across Buckinghamshire



1.2 million tonnes of CO₂

has been saved by businesses involved in our sustainability projects



80 new companies

have moved to Buckinghamshire as a result of our inward investment activity



£11 million

has been added to the Buckinghamshire economy through growth in GVA

Simplifying the landscape

Buckinghamshire Business First seeks to provide ease of access and coherence to the world of business support. We provide a 'first stop shop' to both local and national business support provision and have a dedicated team and telephone hotline available during office hours, as well as comprehensive online support on our website.

Our objectives:

- To support a thriving Buckinghamshire economy
- To create jobs and business growth
- To bring together the collective voice of Buckinghamshire's businesses
- To foster a strong, mutually beneficial relationship between public policy makers and Buckinghamshire's businesses
- To simplify the business support landscape by improving awareness and understanding of the support available, as well as the accessibility of this support

Benefits to businesses

- A welcoming, mutually supportive, effective business community in Buckinghamshire
- Extensive knowledge of support and grants available to businesses in Buckinghamshire
- Effective networks that help build relationships between businesses and foster a sense of collective achievement
- Easier access to relevant face-to-face business support
- Access to our hub facilities across the county that come with meeting rooms and workspaces
- Unique access to local and national policy makers
- First-hand information on infrastructure projects such as superfast broadband

Benefits to other stakeholders

- Unparalleled reach into the Buckinghamshire business community
- A single point of reference in the most micro economy in the country
- A deep understanding of the Buckinghamshire economy and businesses at the coalface

We work in partnership with:



Our Board

The Buckinghamshire Business First Board is made up of 12 individuals who are representative of the rich tapestry of businesses in the county. These include micro businesses and those in strategically important sectors. They are with us every step of the way on this journey as the Entrepreneurial Heart of Britain.

"If we don't stand up for the businesses in the county, both small and large, who will?"

Michael Garvey, Chandler Garvey



Alex Pratt OBE
Chairman
Founder, Serious
Brands Ltd



Philippa Batting
Managing Director,
Buckinghamshire
Business First



Michael Garvey
Vice Chair, Infrastructure Lead
Managing Director, Chandler
Garvey



Guy Lachlan
Owner, Classic Oils



Martin Reed
Chairman and Chief
Executive, Thomas
International UK Ltd



Rebecca Bunting
Vice Chancellor and Chief Executive
Officer, Buckinghamshire New
University

"My particular interest and expertise is in the area of skills, accreditation, training and development, and there are many synergies between businesses and the University, beyond the supply of graduates into the county."

Rebecca Bunting, Buckinghamshire New University

"The more you get involved, the more you can help influence the agenda around infrastructure, employment, skills, access to finance and other business critical issues."

Adam Stronach, Harwood Hutton Ltd



Conor McKechnie
Head of Communications,
GE Healthcare Life Sciences



Adam Stronach
Treasurer,
Director, Harwood
Hutton Ltd



Klaus Allion
Owner and Managing
Director, ANT
Telecommunications



Andrew Smith
Director of Strategy and
Communications, Pinewood
Studios Group



Paul Gartside
Head of Intel Security Research
and Development, Intel Security
- McAfee



Eman Martin-Vignerte
Head of External Affairs,
Governmental and Political
Relations, Bosch

"Making a business work is all about creating a community in which everyone helps to promote and support each other."

Eman Martin-Vignerte, Bosch

A year of outstanding events



Buckinghamshire Business First delivered 105 events in 2016/17, welcoming 2,124 attendees and achieving an overall satisfaction rate of 91% from delegates.

With a diverse membership of more than 10,500 businesses, we ensure that our events programme is just as varied in order to meet every need.

Exporting is GREAT comes to Buckinghamshire

The 'Exporting is GREAT' advice day held in Saunderton on 14th October 2016 was a day dedicated to supporting businesses with their exporting efforts, with a particular focus on food and drink businesses. Local MPs were also on hand to speak to businesses about the issues that affect them.

On the day, experts from the Department for International Trade (DIT) and Enterprise Europe Network (EEN) provided essential information and practical tools to help businesses export, including giving information on protecting IP overseas and managing overseas partners. A representative from Santander was also on hand to showcase the Santander Trade Portal - a free online resource to help exporters identify the best export opportunities and find the information and key contacts needed to achieve success.



Prior to this, MPs Steve Baker, Cheryl Gillan and David Lidington sat down with a group of food and drink businesses to discuss issues important to them and their sector as a whole. Issues raised included:

- Tough World Trade Organisation rules that can often hinder progress
- Designation of origin rules
- Rural subsidies, not just farming subsidies, needing strengthening
- The need to upgrade workforce skills, something vocational training can help with
- Changing consumer habits and eating habits affecting food and drink businesses
- Potential brand damage to the UK as a result of the EU referendum
- What will happen to small businesses upon leaving the EU



“The Business Leaders’ Dinners are one of the best networking events locally by far, with quality venues and delegates.” - Gary Swanwick, Epoq IT

Business Leaders’ Dinners

Our Business Leaders’ Dinners bring together leaders of Buckinghamshire’s most successful and influential companies for an evening of fine dining, high level networking, and high profile guest speakers.

We began the year in style at The Compleat Angler in Marlow with some thought-provoking discussion with Paralympic gold medallist Naomi Riches MBE, and continued in the same fashion at the Buckinghamshire Railway Centre with actor Raji James, who encouraged the leaders in the room to see the benefit of being ‘performers’.

Just before Christmas we gathered at Stoke Park and heard from Hertford King, CEO of International Group, about the exciting work happening in Buckinghamshire with regards to eGames.

Finally, in March we were delighted to welcome Jacqueline de Rojas as our guest speaker at Bisham Abbey. Jacqueline, the President of TechUK, believes that the UK can become the digital nation of choice and a magnet for digital investment and tech talent, and this was the positive message she shared with guests.



MPs Briefings - Buckinghamshire’s MPs joined businesses to discuss topics including the EU Referendum, the Food & Drink sector, and the challenges and opportunities for Science & Innovation in Buckinghamshire.

Bank of England Lunches – Our members attended lunches with Bank of England representatives where they were privy to insights into interest rates and fiscal policy.



'Focus on' workshops – We ran nine specialist workshops on topics including business planning, marketing, sales, websites and social media, and negotiating commercial property leases.

Member to member workshops – Buckinghamshire Business First members delivered workshops direct to fellow members on topics including the power of YouTube, auto enrolment, sales techniques, and how to influence people.



Simply Networking – Our no nonsense networking events are held throughout the county to ensure every business feels close to our support.

Young Directors' Meet Up – This series of events is aimed at supporting younger entrepreneurs and providing them with a place to share experiences with like-minded business owners. New collaborations and alliances grow here.



Find out more about Buckinghamshire Business First's events programme at bbf.uk.com/events, or contact the events team on **01494 927158**

Buckinghamshire Business Awards



The 2016 Buckinghamshire Business Awards were another rip-roaring success that made clear once more that absolutely nobody does business like the entrepreneurs and visionaries of Buckinghamshire.

Hundreds of people filled the Old Town Hall in High Wycombe on Thursday 16th June 2016 to celebrate the hard work put in by businesses across the county.



The winners on the night were:

- Monodraught – Company of the Year
- The Snaffling Pig Co. - New Business of the Year
- Pinewood Group - Apprentice and Young Person Employer Award
- The Chiltern Brewery - Food and Drink Producer of the Year
- Excel Office Supplies - Small Business of the Year
- Chiltern Rangers CIC - Enterprising Charity of the Year
- Thomas International - International Trader of the Year
- Good Fabrications - High Performance Technology & Motorsport (HPT&M)
- The Window Film Company UK - Excellence in Customer Service Award
- Graham Parr of Gartec - Business Leader of the Year
- The Royal Buckinghamshire Hospital - Best in Aylesbury Vale District Award
- Tims Dairy - Best in Chiltern and South Bucks Districts Award
- Monodraught - Best in Wycombe District Award

Award sponsors



View more photos from the night: flic.kr/s/aHskCNButP

Buckinghamshire Digital Summit

For the second year running the Buckinghamshire Digital Summit inspired, educated and enthused delegates and exhibitors on all things digital. Everyone was encouraged to do more online and to make the most of the tools and training available to help them grow, be more efficient and remain relevant and competitive in today's digital age.

With talks from Microsoft, Bosch, Clockwork City, The Snaffling Pig Co., Google, Hootsuite and TEEG Digital, businesses picked up top tips and met dozens of digital businesses who lined the foyer of the Aylesbury Waterside Theatre with their stands to network and, in one case, hand out delicious liquid nitrogen ice cream! Even an impromptu fire drill didn't put people off, it merely created a mass networking group outside the entrance of the theatre!



Abbey Oladapo, Lead Trainer, Digital Garage from Google

After the talks there followed a series of informative sessions with experts on the following topics:

- Cybercrime
- Disaster recovery
- Making the most of a digital presence
- Building a marketing engine for your business
- Google AdWords
- Digital tools and apps
- Protecting your intellectual property
- E-commerce for international trade
- International website optimisation



Andy Allen, Co-Founder, The Snaffling Pig Co.



Lee Frater, Head of Strategic Influencer Partnerships, Microsoft



Ben Jenkins, Sales Engineer, Datto

Find out more about the speakers and their presentations, and see more photos, here:
bbf.uk.com/events/the-digital-summit

Investing in business

Our brand new website launched in April 2016 with a whole new look and functionality that allows our members to do more business both locally and nationally. Invested members can add feature rich content to the website, manage preferences, promote their products and services, and provide support to our membership.

In 2016/17, more than **6,000 member profiles** were published in the business directory.

150 members upgraded to **Stakeholder, Partner or Ambassador level**, generating an additional **£60,000** that can be reinvested into the local business community.

Members can promote their business by creating offers, running workshops, hosting events, and posting and applying for contracts



With our simple profile creator members can showcase their business using photography, videos, testimonials, and awards, and post member offers

Buckinghamshire Business First receives on average 8,500 website visitors per month



5,500



3,622



855



Support a thriving Buckinghamshire economy



Upgrade your profile and get your business featured top of the search



Share your expertise by answering queries from members or by hosting a workshop



Network and attend events for free



Enjoy up to 20 hours of free meeting room space

Visit bbf.uk.com for more information

Investment packages explained

We are a not-for-profit business community funded by our members and partners. Membership will always be free, but by co-investing in Buckinghamshire Business First, members can become more actively engaged with our thriving business community.

Member Free Business Membership	Stakeholder £150 per year + VAT	Partner £500 per year + VAT	Ambassador £2,500 per year + VAT
<p>Join for free and benefit from advice, support and facilities</p> <p>Membership benefits include...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basic listing in the member directory • Free access to support and advice from the community • Networking opportunities • Unlimited hotdesking and 4 hours free hub space <p>And more > visit bbf.uk.com for a full list of Member benefits</p>	<p>Benefit from additional features and services</p> <p>All the benefits of a Member, plus...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A feature rich profile at your fingertips • Promote your business wider by posting offers and events • Free networking to help you find new customers and suppliers <p>And more > visit bbf.uk.com for a full list of Stakeholder benefits</p>	<p>Enjoy a higher profile and more opportunity</p> <p>All the benefits of a Stakeholder, plus...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Your business will be featured at the top of the search listings • Host and attend workshops for free <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set up alerts to member questions <p>And more > visit bbf.uk.com for a full list of Partner benefits</p>	<p>Get more involved and help your business and our community grow</p> <p>All the benefits of a Partner, plus...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contribute to strategic conversations • Get recognition of your support to the business community • Network with your peers for free at Business Leaders' Dinners and invitation-only events <p>And more > visit bbf.uk.com for a full list of Ambassador benefits</p>

"I hosted my own workshop, which gave my business more publicity and helped me develop my own skills. What made life much easier was the support Buckinghamshire Business First gave me - including marketing the event and providing tech support on the day. Not having to worry about those aspects meant I could focus entirely on the content and delivery."

Andrew Giles, Law Kiosk



"I had gained a great insight into what Buckinghamshire Business First does for the county's businesses and I was impressed with the investment opportunities on offer. There's the feeling of making a contribution to something bigger than one business, a rewarding feeling of doing your bit for the wider cause of supporting your local business community."

Holger Garden, Mercury Communications

Fostering the conditions for growth

The world of economic development is full of intertwining needs and challenges that require a joined up approach. That is why we work across many different areas with different partners to ensure all of these challenges are tackled, ensuring a prosperous future for Buckinghamshire's businesses.

Enterprising Britain Awards

Buckinghamshire Business First was 'highly commended' at the Enterprising Britain Awards in 2016, credited with 'Improving the Business Environment' in Buckinghamshire thanks to our business support and job creation efforts.

The Enterprising Britain Awards celebrate local initiatives which boost business and growth, and are run by Investment in Young People (IYP), on behalf of the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS).



Margot James MP, Minister for Small Business, said: "It's great to see the support available for business owners making a real difference and driving entrepreneurial spirit across the UK. These awards recognise the value of local support and show what can be achieved when people who know their community best make their own decisions."

"Achieving national recognition for making a difference to business in Buckinghamshire has been a great boost to the team and evidence that we must be doing something right!

Over the last two years we have supported nearly 9,000 businesses and helped to create over 1,400 jobs. In 2016 alone, our team made more than 200 referrals to 40 different organisations, more than 1,500 visits were made to the free workspaces available at our hubs across the county, and GVA for the year was nearly £11m. We have also delivered a major programme of sold out events, refreshed the board membership, opened a new business hub in Aylesbury, and continually tried to do things better every single day."

Philippa Batting, Managing Director of Buckinghamshire Business First

"We know it's a big challenge to start and run a business, to embrace the fun of it all and to still come out smiling on the other side of the risks we take. We know you must fail many times to succeed and that it can be scary, but we feel those fears and do it anyway.

Buckinghamshire Business First is carved from this same spirit, so it is no surprise that it too lives out the same entrepreneurial philosophy."

Alex Pratt OBE, Chairman of Buckinghamshire Business First

**BUCKINGHAMSHIRE'S PRODUCTIVITY
IS 30% ABOVE
THAT OF GREATER MANCHESTER**

**£15 BILLION
ECONOMY**



LEADER



The LEADER Programme continued its great performance in 2016/17, delivering grants of up to €200,000 to small and medium-sized enterprises in the Chilterns, Clay Vales, and North and West Northamptonshire to help them create jobs and grow.

How rural businesses perform greatly affects how the UK economy performs, with approximately 650,000 businesses employing 3.4 million people in England and Wales. Remove rural businesses from the equation and we lose £230 billion in GVA in England alone. Buckinghamshire's workforce is heavily invested in rural areas too, with 27% of jobs in the county located rurally.

Success stories include Hartwell Nurseries, a retail nursery near Aylesbury that is expected to generate 20% growth and create at least six new jobs after building a tea room with the help of a £50,000 grant; and Rob Pratt, a farmer at Marbled Meats, who, despite having no previous catering or butchery experience was given the confidence to diversify thanks to a £16,000 grant.

It is thanks to the support of programmes like LEADER that rural businesses thrive.

Farm diversification made possible with LEADER grant



"The LEADER team were there every step of the way with me. It felt like they were on my side and wanted me to get the funding."

Rob Pratt, Marbled Meats

Productivity growth for forester after grant support

"The LEADER funding was critical to this project. Without it, the trailer would not have been purchased and the business would have had to continue relying on the availability of busy local contractors to extract felled timber, which would have meant plenty of lost opportunities for B.M.T.S Forestry."

Benjamin Manning, B.M.T.S Forestry



Funded by:



The European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development: Europe investing in rural areas

Visit leader-programme.org.uk for more information or email leader@ngagesolutions.co.uk or call **01494 927131**

Low Carbon Workspaces



Grants to reduce business energy costs

Low Carbon Workspaces helps small to medium sized enterprises identify opportunities to reduce energy usage and provides grant funding of up to £5,000 to help pay for the installation of energy efficiency solutions.

A Low Carbon Workspaces grant can help fund solutions such as insulation, LED lighting, double glazing, energy efficient boilers, voltage optimisation and energy efficient equipment.

Implementing measures such as these can have an immediate impact on a business's energy spend. Just ask Kevin Dargue of ABA Stronalva - "We've almost done away with the heating altogether!"

The Low Carbon Workspaces funding comes via the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF).

"The Low Carbon Workspaces team were really helpful throughout the grant process. Any time I needed help, they were there to tell me what to do in order to get the grant."

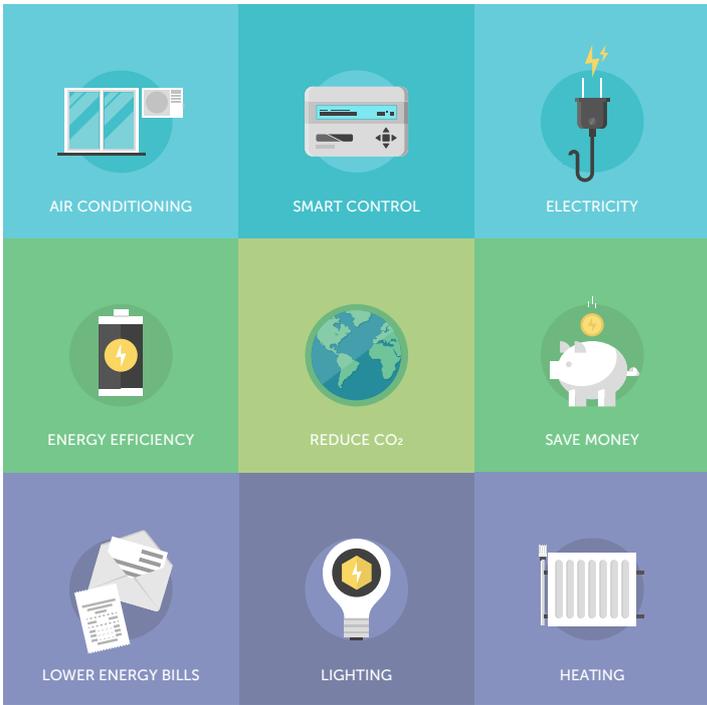
Kaye Crittall, Let's Do Business



The Low Carbon Workspaces Team



To check if you're eligible for a grant and to receive a free guide on energy efficiency, please use the online **'Registration and Eligibility Checker'** available at lowcarbonworkspaces.co.uk



Apply for your grant online: www.lowcarbonworkspaces.co.uk

Call the team: **01494 927131** or email: info@lowcarbonworkspaces.co.uk

Funded by:



Delivered by:



In partnership with:



Visit Buckinghamshire



It's never been easier for visitors and residents to plan their fun in Buckinghamshire thanks to the new and improved Visit Buckinghamshire website that went live in early 2017. The new Visit Buckinghamshire website is full to the brim with activities, offers, events and attractions for every taste.

The tourism industry in Buckinghamshire is vibrant, with 19,300 people employed in the sector across 2,300 enterprises. It is predicted that the visitor economy can create more than 2,000 new jobs by 2020 in Buckinghamshire and The Chilterns.

Buckinghamshire Business First has been working with Visit Buckinghamshire and the Buckinghamshire and The Chilterns Regional Strategic Tourism Group to enhance the Buckinghamshire experience and build the desirability of the county as a destination for both UK and international visitors.



Buckinghamshire County Museum - Roald Dahl



Cycling in the Chilterns



Bekonscot Model Village



Visit Buckinghamshire receives on average 18,000 website visitors per month

 **4,525**
 **3,906**
 **1,024**

Why work together to promote Buckinghamshire?

- Visitors to Buckinghamshire are vitally important to the county's economy
- Tourism supports over 19,000 jobs locally
- Buckinghamshire welcomes 15.5 million visitors per year
- These visitors currently spend £486 million
- We aim to attract another 1.1 million overnight stays
- These overnight stays will add £142 million to our economy
- Join a growing partnership of businesses working collectively to promote tourism

For a comprehensive guide to what is happening in the county, please visit visitbuckinghamshire.org. Sign up via the web to receive the monthly newsletter.

Growth Programme

Buckinghamshire Business First has secured £500,000 of EU funding to support growth locally.

Buckinghamshire Business First's team of experienced business advisers will help local businesses with growth ambitions through tailored business support or growth grants.

Our Growth Team will help plan and implement a growth strategy through:

- Face-to-face meetings, telephone and email support
- Growth-focused workshops
- Investment readiness support
- Referrals to other specialist advice and services, including grant funding opportunities

£1,000 Growth Grants are also available to assist businesses with investing in projects that will help them grow, such as market research, website design, re-branding, marketing collateral, and customer relationship management software.

One grateful recipient of support, Emma Luddington of Living Well at Home, said: **“Thank you so much for your time, advice and inspiration yesterday. I have taken it all on board and feel even more excited about the future. I look forward to the next steps!”**



European Union

European Regional Development Fund



Heather Dean
Head of Skills and Business Support



Ian Mackey
Business Support Manager



Jeremy Green
Growth Programme Manager



Jane Dell
Business Adviser



Jerome Harlington
Business Adviser

For more information on the Buckinghamshire Business Growth Programme, call **01494 927130** or email **BusinessSupport@bbf.uk.com**

Broadband

The Connected Counties project continued to support the county-wide roll-out of superfast broadband, something crucial for business. Through a collaboration of local authority partners, the second phase of superfast broadband roll-out gathered steam towards the target of 95% coverage of homes and businesses in Buckinghamshire.

Over 50 per cent of households and businesses in Buckinghamshire have now taken up high-speed broadband, one of the highest rates across all Local Enterprise Partnerships and well above the national average of 30 per cent.

We organised and hosted the 'Buckinghamshire Broadband - The Final 5%' event in partnership with the Federation of Small Businesses. Attended by Rt Hon Cheryl Gillan MP, the event brought together key stakeholders and local businesses to address plans to tackle the final 5% of coverage in Buckinghamshire.



connectedcounties.org

Focus on skills and **young people**

One in three Buckinghamshire businesses have stated that 17-18 year-olds recruited into work for the first time are “poorly” prepared for the workplace, while businesses frequently cite challenges when recruiting appropriately skilled people for their vacancies. Buckinghamshire Business First and its partners are working hard to address these challenges.

Uniting business and education

The Bucks Skills Hub works with local schools, colleges, and businesses to develop a dynamic programme of employer engagement in the classroom, and is confident that an effective ecosystem of skills development and careers inspiration will evolve. By Easter 2017, the Bucks Skills Hub had supported or helped facilitate 29,000 student-employer encounters. The ultimate target is for every student to have at least one employer encounter per term.

Last year’s £150,000 award to Buckinghamshire Thames Valley Local Enterprise Partnership as part of the Careers and Enterprise Company’s national Enterprise Coordinator & Enterprise Adviser programme has resulted in 92% of schools and colleges in Buckinghamshire engaging in this programme.



Bringing careers to life

2016/17 saw quite the change to apprenticeships, and Buckinghamshire Business First worked hard to ensure businesses were aware of and prepared for them. We compiled a comprehensive guide to the changes, which include the introduction of the apprenticeship levy, and held two events to bring businesses up to speed.

We also hosted three ‘Talent Tuesday’ events, in partnership with the Bucks Skills Hub and the Skills Funding Agency, where young people met employers looking to recruit new apprentices.

Hundreds of young people came away from the first Bucks Skills Show full of enthusiasm for their career prospects. Aimed at those aged 14-19, the event featured lively and interactive exhibits from household names including Glaxo Smith Klein, GE Healthcare, Pinewood Studios, and the BBC.



A partnership between:



Priorities for the year ahead

Strong collaborations, driven by a shared vision and passion for economic growth and developing businesses in Buckinghamshire, are at the very core of Buckinghamshire Business First. Our model recognises that aligning our delivery with those who can provide complementary resources or funding has the potential of maximising return on both public sector and private sector investment.



Buckinghamshire Business First's plan for 2017/18 is to align with our funders and partners around an agreed set of priorities which, with due reference to Buckinghamshire's Strategic Economic Plan (authored by Buckinghamshire Thames Valley LEP), have been selected to facilitate economic growth at the level of the firm in Buckinghamshire.

In the next year we want to continue to support businesses to realise their growth. We will:

- Intensively support companies on a growth trajectory through our new Growth Programme
- Build on our existing start up programme and work closely with other stakeholders in this field
- Ensure that the Government's Industrial Strategy benefits from consultation responses and lobbying on behalf of Buckinghamshire businesses
- Ensure the Growth Strategy for Buckinghamshire does not lose sight of the needs of businesses on the ground as the Government presses for huge housing growth
- Continue to lobby for full 100% broadband coverage throughout the county, with speeds becoming ever more important in our digitally developing economy
- Capitalise on the new Enterprise Zone status at Silverstone, Westcott and Aylesbury Woodlands and ensure Buckinghamshire businesses and inward investors are aware of the benefits of these locations

Buckinghamshire Business First Key Performance Indicators for 2017/18:



600 jobs created



13,000 businesses supported



Membership retained at **10,000**



£1.5m in grant funding awarded to businesses at the coalface

Financials

Buckinghamshire Business First receives funding for its day to day activities from Buckinghamshire County Council, the Buckinghamshire Thames Valley LEP, project funders, and members. The Financial Statements for the year 2016/17 ended on 31st March 2017 have been submitted for external audit scrutiny and are summarised below. Full, signed accounts will be submitted to Companies House and are also available on the Buckinghamshire Business First website.

Income		Expenditure	
Bucks County Council	£427,500	Direct Costs	£1,269,892
Projects Funding	£648,170	Overheads	£190,477
Growth Hub Funding	£287,000	Finance Cost - Bank Charges	£1,993
Other Income	£123,875	Tax	£25
Total Income	£1,486,545	Total Expenditure	£1,462,387
		Excess of income over expenditure transferred to reserves	£24,158

Balance Sheet as at 31st March 2017		Funded by	
Fixed Assets	£19,870	Retained Reserves b/fwd 1 April 2016	£100,993
Current Assets	£457,921		
Creditors	£352,640	Excess of expenditure over income funded from reserves	£24,158
Total Assets less Liabilities	£125,151	Retained reserves	£125,151



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