

Statement by the Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Economic Development and Finance

April 2022

Business Support - COVID Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG)

At the end of December the Government announced a further tranche of funding for businesses affected by the Omicron variant of COVID 19. This included a further £223k of discretionary Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG) funding to be administered by the Council's Business & Economy Team. Together with previous allocations this gave a total of £693k ARG funding to be applied for, assessed, awarded and paid out by the Council by 31 March 2022.

The ARG Omicron Grant application went live on the Council's website on 21 January and a second round of ARG Business Support Grant went live on 1 February. Work was undertaken to promote the grant to businesses across the District and I am delighted to say that a total of £691,894 has been paid out to 232 businesses. This is an achievement that the Council should be proud of.

We have continued to support a range of businesses across many different sectors and spanning the breadth of the district.

C@N Campus at Northallerton

Now that the fit out of Campus@Northallerton (C@N) is complete and external signage installed, there has been an increase in activity both within the new facility and also across the partnerships working to generate interest in the building and what will be on offer. On 4 February the Council hosted a visit from Sir David Bell (Sunderland Vice Chancellor) Tim Probert and Danny Brett (Principal and Vice Principal of York College) to showcase the facilities at Campus and the wider Treadmills development and consolidate the partnership between the Council, the University and College.

A number of other visits have also taken place involving key stakeholders including the Y&NY LEP, North Yorkshire Business & Education Partnership (NYBEP) and the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB).

The 'Breakfast Briefing on the Move' event held on 4 March by the Evolution Business Centre team is the first of a series of events to generate interest from the local business community. A programme of taster sessions and short courses has been developed by Sunderland University and York College on a range of topics across business/health/digital which will begin on 7 April 2022. A dedicated C@N website is currently being developed which will detail all of the courses available and allow people to enrol.

C4DI Northallerton

C4DI Northallerton continues to generate interest with businesses who have attended events and taken tours of the building. I am pleased to report that C4DI will be launching the first session of the 6-month Digital High Street project on Monday 21 March which is on the topic of boosting footfall.

A new exciting partnership between C4DI Northallerton and Barclays Eagle Lab has been agreed which will provide a team dedicated to supporting local businesses including start-ups and entrepreneurs. The Barclays team will be utilising the co-working, office and meeting space at C4DI Northallerton, and also support access to banking services, business expertise, mentoring and coaching from scale-up specialists, industry bodies, universities and potential investors. The team will host a full programme of events throughout the year promoting collaboration and innovation with the C4DI community and with the wider business community.

The Eagle Lab Northallerton was officially opened on 25 February by Rishi Sunak MP and the global CEO of Barclays C.S. Venkatakrishnan (Venkat) at an event attended by the Leader of the Council, Councillor Mark Robson and Chair of the Y&NY LEP Helen Simpson, all in attendance were impressed with the transformation and agreed that the facility represents a really exciting opportunity for the future.

#Discover Hambleton

The aim of the #DiscoverHambleton campaign has been to increase awareness of the District, including promotion of the market towns, local businesses, attractions and key reasons to visit. The campaign includes a combination of paid for activity, support through the Council and partners and content on the new social media feeds that launched last year, Facebook, Instagram and Twitter.

#DiscoverHambleton has reached over half a million people through the social media channels and this figure continues to rise, gaining more followers week on week. To date over 350 posts have been shared, promoting all things happening across the district, supporting the market towns, attractions and seasonal events.

Utilising funding made available to the Council through the Welcome Back Fund a range of promotional products and activities have been delivered over the last couple of months to assist in delivering the welcome back message post COVID. This has culminated in the recent 'Music in March' initiative which brought live music performances to each of the market towns in March.

Activities have included leaflet production & distribution, bus, radio and magazine advertising both regional & local including a package with Living North magazine and a social media influencer. A number of lamp post banners are being installed in the Council's car parks to reinforce the #DiscoverHambleton brand. A new destination promotional film for the District and a series of thematic films to promote the local offer including food and drink, days out, places to stay, outdoor, heritage and shopping have been produced. Across all activities the campaign audience reach will exceed 1.85m people - an impressive achievement which once again demonstrates the leadership and vision of the Council in terms of supporting the economy.

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