

Annual Report 2014/2015

Creating a dynamic business
environment in the Entrepreneurial
Heart of Britain



Aylesbury Vale

Chiltern
District

Wycombe
District

South Bucks





Buckinghamshire is the Entrepreneurial Heart of Britain. We have more businesses starting in the county than anywhere else in the UK. This has been so for well over a decade. It is thanks to the sheer intrepidity of enterprise to move forward and exploit new ideas and opportunities when they present themselves. These attitudes and values are reflected in many walks of life. It is no accident that Buckinghamshire is the birthplace of the Paralympics at Stoke Mandeville, the creative film engine for James Bond, Lara Croft and The Hobbit at Pinewood Studios and home to (most of) the Silverstone Grand Prix Circuit.

Ensuring that enterprise remains the heartbeat of the county and giving support, every step of the way, is Buckinghamshire Business First. Our membership now stands at over 6,500 businesses. I am proud of the team's continued commitment to the county and their professionalism and passion for creating a dynamic business environment in which all businesses can flourish and grow. This has meant making the most of our Growth Hub status and working closely with partners, stakeholders and local authorities, for the greater good. We remain impartial, whether it is securing investment from central government, delivering grants, giving bespoke business support or facilitating apprenticeship placements. We continue to be the collective voice for enterprise in Buckinghamshire.

We have been busy! In this report, you will see in more detail the services and benefits Buckinghamshire Business First was able to deliver to our business community during 2014/15. We will show you some impressive facts and figures, backed up by real life stories of specific businesses which were able to move forward, build and grow, with Buckinghamshire Business First's help. We will also showcase the direct help that we have provided from helping startups, securing substantial investments for more mature businesses to organising the prestigious Buckinghamshire Business Awards. Indeed in January this year we were even congratulated for our outstanding efforts by MPs William Hague and Cheryl Gillan in the House of Commons!

I hope that you will find the read interesting and enjoyable...

Alex Pratt OBE JP

Founder Serious Brands Ltd

Holder of Queen's Award for Enterprise Promotion

“Growth is never
by chance; it is the
result of forces
working together.”

James Cash Penney, American Businessman and Entrepreneur

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Our members say...



"The work that Buckinghamshire Business First has done to bring superfast broadband to Buckinghamshire is the sole reason we are keeping our business here. I know that there are hundreds of rural businesses that rely on high speed broadband to remain competitive and this is so important to the local economy."

Bob Newell, Newell Projects Ltd



"Buckinghamshire Business First has been so important to me because they provide that personal touch, that sounding board when you need to talk about business issues like HR, taxes and recruitment – the things you can't talk about with staff. Buckinghamshire Business First has been my link to other business leaders who I can also talk to about these issues."

Bob Urie, Mediplus



"In the two years since I became a member of Buckinghamshire Business First I have become a raving fan! I have been able to access grants to help my business grow and the Buckinghamshire Business First business support team have been particularly fantastic in making the whole funding process straightforward and easy to access those crucial funds."

Karen Moule, Enterprise Marketing



"It's great to have people who are readily available on the end of the telephone to answer any questions we have. Speaking to friends of mine elsewhere in the country, they tell me that there isn't anything like Buckinghamshire Business First where they are. I think that's a shame because it is such a good support network."

Elizabeth Assaf, Urban Front



"The people you meet at the Buckinghamshire Business First networking events are fantastic and really keen to share their knowledge and experience. The advice we have received from other business owners at these events has really helped us grow. We met one business at a Buckinghamshire Business First event and struck up a relationship with them. At the time they were outsourcing their IT to London, but now we have signed a deal with them, which is not only great for us as it means more business but also great that they are keeping business local."

Gary Swanwick, Epoq IT



"Discovering Buckinghamshire Business First was a breath of fresh air. As a result of the support we saved time, quickly received practical and profitable help."

Rich Marsh, Licx UK Ltd



"Buckinghamshire Business First's expert team guided us through all of the business support and funding that is available. With the funding we secured we've had our company car branded. We were also able to buy new computers, so the benefits have been substantial."

Martin & Sarah Dyckhoff, Cartridge Word / 3DPrint World



"I can say with confidence that Buckinghamshire Business First have got the right format for their networking events. I find a new client every time I go along."

Max Barbour, Sales Revolution



"When we took the decision to launch our business, it was a lonely journey and surprisingly tough to find any support on offer for start-ups and small businesses. We were reliant on the experiences of others. That was how we heard about Buckinghamshire Business First"

Ramon Santos, Ignite

Who we are

Buckinghamshire Business First (BBF) is a business led organisation that works in partnership with key stakeholders to coordinate business, innovation and trade support within Buckinghamshire. Our mission is to foster the conditions that encourage businesses to invest, grow and thrive in Buckinghamshire. We exist to make a positive difference to Buckinghamshire's existing businesses, new start ups and those who wish to relocate to the county.

Our aims

- To offer a 'first stop shop' for valuable business support
- To help businesses grow and be successful
- To support all local businesses
- To ensure the needs of the county's business community are heard by central and local government

Our strengths

- Our business led board
- Membership stands at over 6,500 business members
- We have a strong track record of engagement with national and local business support stakeholders
- We work in partnership with local and national business representative organisations including the Federation of Small Businesses and The Institute of Directors
- We are uniquely positioned to foster a strong, mutually beneficial relationship between public policy makers and the Buckinghamshire business community

*Did you know...
we have over 6,500
business members*

Our executive team



Philippa Batting,
Managing Director



Rupert Waters,
Head of Economic
Research



Heather Dean,
Head of Skills &
Business Support



Lynsey Dunn,
Head of Marketing,
Communications
& Events



Sarah Randell,
Head of
Operations & MI



Adrian Champney,
Head of Business
Development

Our Board

As a business driven, business led organisation, we're privileged to be able to call on the input and advice of a board of non executive directors that truly represent the Buckinghamshire economy. They help us set strategy, support us in delivery and help us to overcome the issues that any business faces.

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

Michael Garvey



Alex Pratt OBE
Chairman Founder,
Serious Brands Ltd



Philippa Batting
Managing Director,
Buckinghamshire
Business First



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

"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



Adam Stronach
Treasurer Director,
Harwood Hutton
Ltd



Andrew Smith
Director of Strategy
and Communications,
Pinewood Studios Group



Guy Lachlan
Owner, Jones and
Cocks

"I joined the board in 2012 with a passion to change lives and encourage the development of entrepreneurs and start ups."

Martin Reed



Martin Reed
Chairman and Chief
Executive, Thomas
International UK Ltd



Ruth Farwell
Retired 2015
Vice Chancellor & CEO,
Bucks New University



Rob Spurrett
Stepped Down 2015
Managing Director,
ComDev Europe Ltd

"It has been fascinating to be part of a blend of people giving up their time to improve our county."

Lisa Williams



Lisa Williams
Relocated 2015, Managing
Director, John Lewis Home &
Leisure, High Wycombe



David Pritchard
Stepped down 2015
Partner, Manches LLP



Elizabeth Adlington
Stepped Down 2015
CEO, Aylesbury
Waterside Theatre

Buckinghamshire Growth Hub

Going for Growth

Growth Hubs are intended to drive growth by bringing coherence to the business support landscape, improving awareness, understanding and accessibility of the support available in the local area.

A collective business voice

An important part of our role as a Growth Hub is to ensure our collective business voice is heard where it counts in government. This is why we host regular briefings with our local MPs, the Bank of England and work closely with Buckinghamshire Thames Valley Local Enterprise Partnership to input into the strategic economic plans that will ensure Buckinghamshire's businesses can compete on a global scale.

Rt Hon Cheryl Gillan MP celebrated the success of Buckinghamshire's businesses in January 2015 during questions to the Leader of the Commons.

Mrs Gillan asked Mr Hague to find time for a debate "the unsung heroes – those organisations that often provide the link between public policy and businesses. One example is Buckinghamshire Business First, which has been particularly successful in creating a dynamic business environment and was recently officially invited by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills to be the first non-city growth hub in the UK, because of the trends developing in our successful businesses in Buckinghamshire." William Hague joined Mrs Gillan in congratulating Buckinghamshire Business First.

Rt Hon Cheryl Gillan, MP for Chesham and Amersham



MPs' briefing, Roald Dahl Museum (June 2014)

Navigating the landscape

We work hard to ensure businesses in Buckinghamshire can make the most of government funded sources of support like the Business Growth Service and UK Trade and Investment and have hosted workshops on Exporting, Food and Drink and have supported organisations looking to reshore their operations.



Exporting for Growth Event, Pinewood Studios (November 2014)

Achievements

2014/15



Funding

£3,266,283 has been awarded to individual businesses through grants.



Jobs

724 new jobs have been facilitated through our grants and project activity with a benefit to the economy of circa £9 million.



Business Support

3,329 businesses have benefited directly from our business support services.



Events

Over 100 workshops and networking events have welcomed 1,700 delegates. Our customer satisfaction rating for events is on par with John Lewis.



Free working space

There were over 1,500 Hub users and 200 meeting room bookings (free of charge) in Saunderton and Chesham.



Research

Our team provides the evidence to support policy making at both central and local government level. In 2014/15 our members crowd-funded £25,000 to commission an Ernst & Young report into 'Cutting the Cost of Local Government'. All our research reports including 'Bucks Trends' can be found on the research pages of our website.



News

Weekly e-newsletter keeps membership up to date on events and news in the business world.

Supporting the entrepreneurs of the future

Buckinghamshire is the 'Entrepreneurial Heart of Britain' and we want to make sure it stays this way which is why we have launched a new type of membership to support individuals to set up their own businesses.

Apprenticeships work

Apprenticeships have seen faster growth in Buckinghamshire than the country as a whole. With our partners, we are committed to ensuring the number of apprenticeships continue to grow with more employers creating opportunities and more young people and parents recognising them as a creative and equal alternative to further and higher education.

Origin Frames

Origin Frames is just one member who is making the most of apprenticeships to source its next generation of staff. Managing Director Ben Brocklesby explains: "We employed Drew in July 2012 as a "Business Administrator Apprentice" and during his time here we have seen a remarkable transformation in his confidence, work ethic and contribution to our business growth. This development has surpassed even our own high expectations, with Drew recently taking on a management position. Fortunately our experience with Drew is not a one off. The calibre of candidates that we have drawn from Buckinghamshire has been fantastic and by embracing the apprentice model across a number of different disciplines including; sales, marketing, technical and IT support we have built in a robust long term strategy for growth and development."



3,000

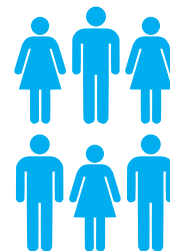
Apprentices taken on

The number of apprentices taken on, in 2012/2013 by 1,800 businesses stands at 3,000



19 out of 20

19 out of 20 of our young people who go to university do so outside Buckinghamshire



96%

96% of employers that take on an apprentice report benefits to their business

Inward Investment

We work in partnership with the UK Trade & Investment and Thames Valley Chamber of Commerce to promote the benefits of Buckinghamshire as a place to locate a business. There are presently over 700 foreign-owned businesses in Buckinghamshire and we want this number to grow so that new investment and new jobs are brought to our county. This in no way detracts from our steadfast support for local businesses of all sizes from sole traders upwards. Securing high quality mobile inward investment projects will help us develop the number of mid-sized and large businesses in Buckinghamshire.



"In the couple of months since our move to Buckinghamshire, our business has grown incredibly, by over 50%."

Mark Walker, Ashridge Security Management



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Inward investments

Were secured into Buckinghamshire during 2014/15 of which 12 are foreign owned companies.



Kansai Chamber of Commerce (Japan) visit to Buckinghamshire

Working in partnership



Celebrating Excellence

Buckinghamshire Business Awards



The Buckinghamshire Business Awards are the county's leading business awards and honour the entrepreneurial spirit, vision, innovation and drive of our business community and celebrate 'the best of the best' across the whole business community.



"Congratulations on organising a great event last night! We got a huge sense of the creativity and enterprise that exists throughout the county"



Financials

Buckinghamshire Business First receives funding for its day to day core activity from Buckinghamshire County Council, project funders and from day rate sales. The Financial Statements for the year 2014/15 ended on 31st March 2015 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.

2014/15 Income & Expenditure Account

Income		Expenditure	
Bucks County Council	£ 613,385	Direct costs	£1,304,544
Projects funding	£750,706	Overheads	£195,540
Other income incl Earnt income	£108,197	Finance cost - Bank charges	£1,565
Total Income	£1,472,288	Tax	£62
		Total Expenditure	£1,501,711
		Excess of expenditure over income funded from reserves	-£29,423

Balance Sheet as at 31st March 2015

		Funded by	
Fixed Assets	£14,044	Retained Reserves b/fwd 1 April 2014	£96,563
Current Assets	£397,171	Excess of expenditure over income funded from reserves	-£29,423
Creditors	£344,075	Retained Reserves c/fwd 31 March 2015	£67,140
Total Assets less current liabilities	£67,140	Retained Reserves	£67,140

Buckinghamshire Business First Statistics

Since 2012:

11

businesses make up our board

20,000

homes and businesses have access to superfast broadband

£7.77m

has been paid in grants directly to businesses

5,948

businesses have directly benefited from our business support services

Over
6,500

members and growing continuously

Over
23,500

BBF articles read by members, partners and funders since 2012

Av. 150

companies use our Chesham and Saunderton Hub meeting room and business facilities every month

1,497

new jobs have been created

50%

of the county's private sector employees are in companies that are BBF members

2,200

attendees at events hosted by BBF to network and share knowledge

94%

customer satisfaction (John Lewis (our heroes - 90.8%))

3,500

Avg. unique visits to the BBF website each month

3,200

Twitter followers and over 1,500 retweets in 2014

7

grant funding programmes currently available to help businesses grow

1.2m

tonnes of CO₂ has been saved through our low carbon projects

458

young people have been supported to start their careers in Buckinghamshire

What's next for Buckinghamshire Business First? 2015/16 and beyond



"Buckinghamshire Business First's focus areas for the year ahead are to ensure active dialogue with the business community, free and open knowledge exchange, raising funding for distribution to businesses and growing the number of new jobs. Together, we can make it happen."

***Philippa Batting, Managing Director
Buckinghamshire Business First***

We will make sure we address the key challenges faced by businesses in the areas of skills, property, finance, infrastructure and business support. These are the issues that businesses tackle most often and our expertise will be mobilised to help them.

We will continue making a difference and being the positive force that contributes to driving Buckinghamshire's economy.

Being The Force For Change

Buckinghamshire Business First will continue to use our collective voice to ensure the government allows businesses to have a place at the table when discussions take place about issues that affect county businesses.

Buckinghamshire Business First will continue to invest its energy and resources in facilitating business growth which will underpin prosperous healthy communities. It is a well-known fact that being in work is a major driver of health and community cohesion in general.

We will support the private sector to grow and deliver more jobs for local residents which will further increase Buckinghamshire's significant net contributions to the Exchequer. We will carry on re-enforcing the clear and unequivocal link between wealth creation and the quality of life enjoyed by Buckinghamshire residents.

Our Priorities for 2015 - 2016

We have set ourselves targets for the year ahead that will capitalise on the momentum we have already generated since Buckinghamshire Business First was formed in March 2011.

Our priorities will be to realise:

- 500 new jobs created
- 1,750 businesses assisted
- 8,000 BBF member businesses
- £1,500,000 value of grants distributed
- £3.8 million GVA* growth

* Gross Value Added (GVA) is used by Government to measure the overall economic wellbeing of an area. In broad terms it is generated by people in work and is quantified in terms of wages and company profits. Increases in GVA are primarily achieved through increases in the number of people in employment or increases in the productivity of people in work.



bbf.uk.com



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Your business first



Melissa Stanton-Matthews
YoNu



Jim Webster
Bees Knees Pest Control



Mark Walker
Ashridge Security Management Ltd



Poonam Gupta & Jane Eakhurst
Holy Cow Home



Richard Byford
ForeVu Ltd



Anna West
Clark Howes



Mark Bale
Crash-2000.com Ltd



Kerrie Brindle
BeneFIT Health and Wellbeing