



Business Bulletin

Autumn 2021

Recovery and Growth

As we move into Autumn with the lifting of many Covid restrictions, our sights are firmly set on recovery and business growth. This quarterly newsletter includes details of our recently launched Independent Retailers Support Programme including store improvement grants and a roundup of other FREE business support available, from funding and training workshops to innovation support.

This issue also features one of the most significant projects underway in Mid Sussex, our digital infrastructure project and below you can find out what has been achieved, what's next, and how businesses can benefit.

We have also been busy meeting with local businesses and partner organisations who have been sharing experiences of operating in Mid Sussex, identifying challenges and opportunities, and providing valuable input to our emerging Sustainable Economy Strategy. Thank you to all those businesses and organisations that have taken part so far. We are holding an **additional**

virtual roundtable session on 23rd September at 10:30 for any businesses who would still like to participate. You can register for this online session [here](#).



Grants and Free Online Support for Independent Retailers

The Independent Retailers Support Programme offers FREE online training as well as store improvement grants.

The training is available via a dedicated online platform, the [West Sussex Retail Hub](#). Retail businesses can register for free access to a series of support modules designed to help strengthen skills, build confidence and improve knowledge of key topics. Delivered by a range of industry experts, topics range from social media and business planning to creating an exciting in-store experience.

The online platform provides the opportunity for businesses to pick and choose the topics of most value to them, at a time that suits them. The hub launched in July with special guest Mark Smith, Chief Operating Officer at Sweaty Betty joining us online to share his views on the future of the high street and role of the physical store. He is an enthusiastic advocate and it was great listening to him. A recording of the session is available to watch on the hub.

The West Sussex Retail Hub is just one part of a broader programme of support including grant funding. **£40,000 has been allocated for store improvement grants, with grants of £500 to £4,000 available.** Applications

will open later this month, with businesses urged to apply as soon as possible. Further details, terms and online application will be available via our website [here](#)

Businesses Urged to Apply for Discounted Business Rates

Reminder - Calling all businesses or organisations in Mid Sussex that are eligible or could potentially qualify for the Business Rates Expanded Retail Discount for the [Leisure, Hospitality and Retail sector](#) or the [Nursery Discount](#). A maximum discount of 66% is available subject to a [cash cap](#). All businesses wanting to receive these discounts will need to complete a simple online claim form at <https://midsussex.grantapproval.co.uk/>

A number of businesses have applied to help them pay their business rates from the 1st July 2021, but many qualifying businesses have yet to apply.

Digital Infrastructure in Mid Sussex: What Next?



Following the successful completion of the Burgess Hill Local Full Fibre Network, we are now moving forward into the operations and commercialisation stage. The programme so far has seen **over £6m invested and over 90km of fibre laid** across Mid Sussex

The next stage involves the Council supporting commercial telecom suppliers, to help connect businesses and residents to the network. We have already received many enquiries from local businesses and are excited to be moving forward. Mid Sussex is a member of the Cooperative Network Infrastructure (CNI) organisation (www.cni.coop) which gives immediate access to the market and a wide range of telecom operators and providers.

What are the benefits of a full fibre network?

In our area, most broadband services are run over a mixture of traditional copper telephone lines (ADSL), a little bit of fibre, or coaxial cables. This limits the speeds and capabilities of services which often makes for a frustrating online experience. Our new 'full fibre' solution is capable of much quicker speeds as it is not hindered by the old telephone network. Initially typically up to 1GB with faster speeds as the network develops.

What can businesses expect next?

Connecting to our new network means that businesses and residents can enjoy much better performance when relying on connectivity with hyper fast speeds to power your bandwidth hungry applications. Working closely with CNI members, we are agreeing a structured "roll-out" plan over the next 6 to 12 months and beyond, to connect businesses and residents to full fibre. We will continue to provide regular updates of when connection milestones are planned and have been achieved.

Who do I contact to connect to this full fibre network?

The Council and CNI are building an on-line "landing-page" which will contain all the information that businesses and residents will need to see if they can be connected to the network. This will also contain details about services available from CNI and its members. The landing page will be live towards the end of October, enquiries in the short-term can be made directly to [CNI](https://www.cni.org.uk), or fibre@midsussex.gov.uk



LoCASE Grants of up to £10,000

The Low Carbon Across the South and East ([LoCASE](#)) scheme provides businesses with grants of up to £10,000 to grow their business or make energy efficiency improvements.

These grants are **now available to businesses in West Sussex**. There are two types of grant:

- [LoCASE Business Development Grants](#) available to SMEs offering low carbon (or “green”) goods or services.
- [LoCASE Energy Efficiency Grants](#) are available to any SME. These grants cover renewable energy and energy efficiency projects.



Launched this month, the [Recover & Rise SME Digital Accelerator programme](#) is designed to digitally up-skill West Sussex businesses. It consists of over 25 online webinars - presented by industry leading professionals. The programme is free to attend for any small or medium businesses based in West Sussex.

[Recover & Rise SME Digital Accelerator Series](#) is broken down into four sections: Getting Online, Customer Marketing Strategy, Systems & Productivity and Growth & Expansion. Book your tickets online [here](#)



Research & Innovation Sussex Excellence (RISE) business innovation project

[RISE](#) is a new business innovation project to help West Sussex enterprises innovate using expertise from the universities of Brighton and Sussex.

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) will be given access to expertise to support their business innovation. A combination of innovation diagnostics, workshops and a bespoke development programme to help companies take their business in new directions. Find out more at rise-innovation.uk or contact Lorraine Bell, Head of Project (RISE) at RISE@brighton.ac.uk.

Business & IP Centre (BIPC)

The [Business & IP Centre \(BIPC\) Brighton & Hove](#) supports entrepreneurs, inventors, and small businesses across Sussex, from that first spark of inspiration to successfully launching and developing a business.

Business &
IP Centre
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As well as being a hub for entrepreneurs to network and attend events, it provides one to one expert advice and access to a wealth of free information - business databases, market research reports, company data and information on intellectual property. Whether you are just starting out or are ready to take the next step in your journey.

Governments Help to Grow Programme

Visit the [website to register](#) your interest for the Government's new Help to Grow programme. There are two strands to the programme which aims to help small and medium sized businesses across the UK learn new skills, reach new customers and boost profits.

Help to Grow: Digital

Small businesses will be able to get free impartial advice on how technology can boost their performance through a new online platform. Eligible businesses will also be able to get a discount of up to 50% on the costs of approved software, worth up to £5,000.

Help to Grow: Management

Small businesses will be able to access a 12 week-programme delivered by leading business schools across the UK..



Contact our Wellbeing Team to book a **FREE Wellbeing MOT day** for your employees

Staff members receive a printout of their biometric information and specific advice during the appointment, with the option of a free 1 month follow up. The Wellbeing Team also offer a variety of other free wellbeing support for you and your employees including the popular Virtual Health Talks on topics such as managing stress, menopause awareness and much more. To find out how MSDC's Wellbeing team can support you and your team contact Julia Meckael-Jennings on Julia.Meckael@midsussex.gov.uk

Stay in Touch

Please circulate this bulletin to others in your network. Anyone interested in receiving this Business Bulletin can sign up to receive them [here](#) and they will be added to the mailing list and contact database.

If you have any suggestions for future issues, business support or other ways we can support the local economy please contact the [Economic Development team](#).

[Contact the Economic Development Team](#)