



**BRITISH
CHAMBERS
OF COMMERCE
BUSINESS AWARDS**

UK Chamber of the Year

Derbyshire Accelerator

Case Studies 2022

Delivered in partnership with:



A lasting legacy for accelerated business growth



The Derbyshire Accelerator provided businesses in the Derbyshire Dales and High Peak with the funding, training and advice needed to grow, create and safeguard jobs, and recover from the Covid pandemic.

The project received £1.48 million from the UK Government through the UK Community Renewal Fund (UKCRF), and was led by East Midlands Chamber (Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire, Leicestershire) in partnership with Marketing Peak District & Derbyshire, University of Derby and the Food & Drink Forum.

The project supported 582 businesses and delivered 1,624 business support interactions. Some 93 grants were awarded – valued at £678,527 – and 114 specialist Consultancy projects brokered. A total of 48 unemployed people were supported into work.

Matching businesses with the support they need, when they need it and how they need it – through the region's most comprehensive business ecosystem yet – is surely the most important legacy of the project, and will act as a springboard for growth in our region for many years to come.



Diane Beresford
Deputy Chief Executive
East Midlands Chamber
(Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire, Leicestershire)

Achievements and Successes



48

People into employment/
self-employment



192

Jobs safeguarded



42

Businesses using
new products



121

Employment increase
in businesses



25

New businesses created



49

Decarbonisation plans

Fired up for success



The Clay Rooms

Sector	Creative Industry
Location	Ashbourne
Number of employees	4
Support received	Kickstart wage subsidy Growth voucher Business Adviser support

Challenges

As a recipient of the Chamber's original Kickstart project, the business received funding to offer a work placement to young local resident, Minnie Reed. Having Minnie on board allowed Sarah and Helen to extract themselves from some of the day-to-day operations and turn their attention instead to more strategic activity to help accelerate the business.

When Minnie's placement came to an end in March, the business ran the risk of losing a highly-valued member of the team.

The Business

The Clay Rooms specialise in offering pottery craft and workshop experiences, where people come not only to learn new skills in a friendly environment but to join a community of likeminded artists and practitioners.

Co-founders Sarah Heaton and Helen Cammiss set up the business five years ago, bringing together Sarah's experience within the ceramic industry – where she was responsible for many global bestsellers for Denby Pottery, Burleigh Pottery and selected retailers – and Helen's leadership in teaching art and design across education.

Acceleration

The business has benefited from the East Midlands Accelerator project in two ways.

Firstly, through the Kickstart Accelerator which has not only allowed this thriving business to keep on Minnie when her original Kickstart placement came to an end, but also take on a new member of staff, 24-year-old Joe Low from Wirksworth.

Secondly, a £2,000 growth voucher has covered the costs of the first print run of the Clay Rooms' new, free arts magazine, before they switch to a paid advertising model.

Impact

For a business that hadn't previously employed anyone, the Chamber's Kickstart Accelerator offered welcome support.

Both employees work as retail and workshop assistants, but also bring a higher level of skill to the business. For Minnie, this is putting her creative degree background to good use through social media activity; which is perfectly complemented by Joe's skills in photography.

With time to work on, not in, the business, owners Helen and Sarah have been able to concentrate more on planning and expanding their workshop offering. This strategic approach is helping to set the foundations for business sustainability and resilience.

Learn more about the business: theclayrooms.co.uk



"Having Minnie and Joe on board has helped Helen and me let go of looking after the shop, and work on our long-term strategy instead. This, combined with Minnie's skills in social media and Joe's in photography, means we're in our strongest position to face challenging times for the high street."

Sarah Heaton

(on the left with fellow owner Helen Cammiss)
Joint Owner

Digging with purpose



Archaeological Research Services

Sector	Research services	Support received
Location	Bakewell	Grant funding Cenex Electric Fleet Transformation training and consultancy Zellar sustainability support
Number of employees	75	

The Business

Archaeological Research Services (ARS) Ltd is one of the UK's leading archaeological and heritage services providers. Its highly skilled staff include heritage consultants, historic building specialists, field archaeologists, scientific experts in finds analysis and environmental archaeology, as well as a design team who produce exhibitions, display boards, books and reconstructions. ARS's consultancy, fieldwork and specialist services are used by a wide range of commercial clients, from large infrastructure and private construction, to national and local government, national parks, universities and the Heritage Lottery Fund.

Challenges

The business has been lauded for its acceleration. It was chosen by the Federation of Small Businesses as its High Growth Business of the Year 2021; not necessarily because of its revenue growth but because of its sustainable approach to increasing both capacity and capability. It has since been chosen as a finalist for East Midlands Chamber's Business Awards 2022 (Derbyshire), in the category 'Outstanding Growth'.

Funding from D2N2 Growth Hub allowed the business to invest in iPads and work effectively throughout the pandemic. Staying one step ahead technologically, however, requires continual investment.

Acceleration

The business recognised a need to record all excavation data in a robust and logical manner, allowing data interrogation on a much wider scale. An £8,000 grant from the East Midlands Accelerator project has allowed the business to purchase further iPads, which will run its newly-created digital recording app.

Recognising the challenges of sustainability and carbon footprint, the business welcomed the opportunity to tap into two other areas of the East Midlands Accelerator project: the University of Derby's Cenex electric fleet transformation programme, and the offer of a free, annual licence to the Zellar sustainability platform.

Impact

Investment in the app will allow the business to further accelerate both quality and productivity, rolling it out further and faster to the team.

Not only will less paper be used as a result, it also means interesting records may be made more publicly available. History only tells you what's been recorded; archaeology lets you discover it for yourself. For the businesses and residents of Derbyshire, it means discovering our shared heritage.

Learn more about the business: archaeologicalresearchservices.com



"Investment from the East Midlands Accelerator project allows us to lead the way in digital adoption in our industry. The support we've received on EV investment and developing our own sustainability plan only adds to our resilience."

Will Throssel
Chief Operating Officer



Shining light on a hidden gem



Treak Cliff Cavern

Sector	Tourism and manufacturing	Support received
Location	Castleton	
Number of employees	13	

Grant funding
Carbon Literacy training
Environmental Management and Accreditation training and consultancy
Specialist Business Adviser support

The Business

Treak Cliff Cavern is an underground wonderland open to school visits and the general public. Located on the remote Treak Cliff hill in Castleton, it has been a lead mine since the 1600s, and became a visitor attraction in 1935. It was acquired by the family of the current owner, Vicky Turner, during wartime.

As well as being a popular visitor attraction, the cavern is a hub of productivity; mining its own blue john and producing jewellery at its on-site workshop.

Challenges

The cavern's position on the side of a remote hillside means it has no mains water; instead it needs to collect and manage its own supply. Similarly, it has no gas on site, nor vehicular access. The business is instinctively self-sufficient, and is keenly aware of its conservation responsibilities as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). However, Covid had a big impact on this indoor visitor attraction's ability to invest in the equipment needed to reach the next level of sustainability.

Acceleration

Support from the East Midlands Accelerator project came at the perfect time.

It provided grant funding for the purchase of a solar voltaic system which will not only harvest light for the caves but provide the electricity needed to power the jewellery workshop.

The cavern was already a Patron of Marketing Peak District & Derbyshire (MPDD), helping to support the development of sustainable tourism in the area, but through the project they also gained an understanding of MPDD's Hospitality Charter, which will help them champion other local businesses.

The project also afforded access to the University of Derby's carbon literacy training, and environmental management and accreditation training. Through the latter, the business has access to useful learning and resources through the Investors in the Environment (iIE) online portal, and is now firmly on its way to achieving iIE Bronze accreditation.

Impact

Investing in renewable energy not only puts the business in the best position to weather rising energy bills, it is also a clear signal to visitors that the cavern operates in a way wholly sympathetic to its environment. School visitors in particular will be encouraged to learn about the power of natural energy.

Learn more about the business: bluejohnstone.com



"We've always been careful custodians of the resources we have here in this glorious part of High Peak, but support from the East Midlands Accelerator project means we can continue at pace with our conservation ambitions; using the solar panels as a springboard to the next stage of our journey – ground heat pumps."

Vicky Turner
Owner Administrator



Elevated for growth



Buxton Chiropractic Ltd

Sector	Medical
Location	Buxton
Number of employees	1
Support received	Grant funding Business Adviser support Carbon Literacy training Zellar sustainability support



The Business

Buxton Chiropractic Ltd offers a range of treatments to patients of all ages, from babies and children to adults and seniors. It concentrates on the diagnosis and treatment of neuromuscular disorders, using specific and effective techniques on the spine and other joints. As well as treating pain-based health issues, it helps athletes improve their performance and reduce the risk of injury.

The business was set up in 2020, when owner and practitioner Lydia Johnson relocated to the area to be closer to family.

Challenges

Lydia's long-term plan is to work as a chiropractor for the next 30 years. However, the work is physically demanding which limits the number of appointments she can offer.

Investing in a chiropractic bench, with its capacity to elevate and angle, would not only alleviate pressure on Lydia but also improve the experience for her clients – whether they be pregnant women seeking an angled bench to make room for baby, or a 6ft 5 inch tall, 23-stone bodybuilder seeking a sturdier, extendable bench!

Acceleration

'Chiro' means 'by hand'. By nature, it takes nothing from the planet.

The practice is already some way on its sustainability journey but Lydia is keen to see where else they might improve. Alongside applying for a grant to cover the cost of the bench, it made perfect sense to tap into support on offer from the Net Zero arm of East Midlands Accelerator.

Signing up to Carbon Literacy training and the accreditation it offers, is a strong indicator to clients that this is a business that values the health of the environment as much as the health of its clients.

Impact

Since the bench takes a lot of the strain, Lydia has been able to fit in more clients. The investment signals that the clinic is growing and in a way that adds value to the client experience; not only attracting new clients but also more chiropractic associates.

This commitment to growth means Lydia will be able to take on a receptionist, and turn more of her own attention to attracting a new clientele in the commercial sector.

Learn more about the business:
buxtonchiropractic.co.uk



"Without funding from East Midlands Accelerator, I would not have been able to afford the bench I needed so soon after establishing my business. Seeing 30% more clients as a result, and, at the same time, formalising my approach to CSR, means I have a far more sustainable business for the long term."

Lydia Johnson
Owner

Calling time on wasted energy



Bamford Community Society

Sector	Retail, hospitality and leisure
Location	Bamford
Number of employees	16
Support received	Grant funding Business adviser support Zellar sustainability support



The Business

The Bamford Community Society t/a The Anglers Rest is a community hub incorporating a pub, post office and café. Bamford's last remaining pub had faced closure for some time, and moved into community ownership in 2013 with an investment of £260k of capital from some 300 members across the village.

Challenges

Whilst the services offered by the hub are the thriving heart of the community, the building itself has needed significant work; having passed into community ownership as unloved and uninvested in.

The impact of Covid has meant that trading income has been significantly reduced in recent years, leaving little spare cash for capital investments. The stop-start of lockdowns has dealt a further blow in reduced takings from the pub, post office and café.

Acceleration

The hub may be modest in size and led by a board of volunteers, but it certainly punches above its weight in terms of its environmental efforts. LED lighting and an EV charging point have been in place for some time.

However, the draughty old cellar continues to drain both energy and finances. Securing an East Midlands Accelerator grant for its insulation means reducing an annual cooling bill from £5k to £1k; and not a moment too soon as the Society faces the rising costs of energy and raw materials.

Impact

Investing in financial viability in this way gives the business the best opportunity for long-term sustainability. Its survival is, after all, dependent on a healthy balance sheet.

Investing in environmental measures in particular, helps foster loyalty amongst patrons – whether they be local residents, or day or overnight visitors.

Learn more about the business:
tripadvisor.co.uk/theanglersrest



"We are deeply committed to making the building as energy efficient as possible. Conserving vital funds in this way means we can concentrate resources where impact is needed most; those services that support the very fabric of our wonderful community."

Rebecca McIntyre
Volunteer Director

Hatching new plans for Ladybower



Ladybower Fisheries

Sector	Tourism, leisure & food manufacture
Number of employees	1 FTE
Location	Hope Valley
Support received	Grant funding Specialist Business Adviser support Decarbonisation support

Challenges

To the fishing community, an aesthetically appealing fish is, undoubtedly, a prized catch; but it means that fish with even the smallest of fin or tail defect may never make it from the surface hatchery to the waters. Could a new commercial venture to smoke the fish tap into growing consumer interest in provenance and a desire amongst particular religious groups to consume ‘top’, not ‘bottom’ feeders? Owner Geoff Smith certainly thought so, and saw food manufacture as a way in which to diversify and build resilience after the business’s leisure activities were hit hard by Covid.

The Business

Ladybower Fisheries is in the Hope Valley and part of the Peak District National Park, and is well-known for its fly fishing for all abilities on the bank or by boat.

The Fishery is open to the public and clubs as well as other groups that might benefit from time on the restorative Ladybower waters, including ex-servicemen suffering PTSD, children with behavioural difficulties at risk of exclusion, and long-term patients from a local children’s hospital.

Acceleration

Plans for this entirely new commercial venture have been five years in the making.

Funding from East Midlands Accelerator and support from project partner The Food and Drink Forum have undoubtedly fast-tracked these plans.

The project has funded a state-of-the-art smokery as well as the equipment needed, including a vacuum packer and trollies to transport the fish from one processing area to the next. With expert guidance from The Food and Drink Forum, the business has developed a decarbonisation action plan. It has also been offered technical support on product labelling, and has been granted access to an NPD test kitchen to trial recipe formulations and smoking flavours.



Impact

The investment has already led to the creation of a full-time position, which will help service a growing interest from local pubs, restaurants and farm shops.

Sympathetic use of the area’s natural resources will continue with proposed plans to introduce new hydropower.

Learn more about the business: ladybowerfisheries.co.uk



“Through East Midlands Accelerator, we’ve been able to fast-track our food manufacture plans. In turn, this generates investment for the long-term future of the reservoir as a visitor destination, securing the valuable role it plays in the lives of so many local people.”

Geoff Smith
Owner

Branching out with a new website



Thompson Tree Services (Midlands) Ltd

Sector	Arboriculture
Number of employees	20
Location	Wirksworth
Support received	Grant funding Digital Skills training Help to Grow leadership & management training Business Adviser support Zellar sustainability support

The Business

Thompson Tree Services (Midlands) Ltd is a Wirksworth-based Chamber member that provides tree contracting and consultancy services to a multi-sector client base. As a highly regulated and accredited company, it is a contractor of choice for many of the region's local authorities.

It was established in 2009 and incorporated in 2014 by Managing Director Jack Thompson, and has enjoyed year-on-year growth ever since.

Challenges

The business has ambitions to extend the services it offers as well as its geographical reach.

It recognised that its website – a key tool for engaging with the domestic market – needed to work harder to showcase the extensive specialisms the business now offers.

Acceleration

Support from East Midlands Accelerator came in four key ways.

Firstly, a grant has allowed the business to undertake a root and branch update of its website. The new build streamlines the process for domestic clients requesting a quote, gathering the required info at enquiry stage and automatically feeding through to the business's ERP system. D2N2's Marketing Essentials course for SMEs has allowed the Commercial Director to develop a greater understanding of marketing impact.

Secondly, the University of Derby's Help to Grow leadership and management training programme is offering the owner dedicated time and space away from the business to develop a focused plan for the future.

Thirdly, carbon literacy training, through the University of Leicester, has given the business a greater understanding of the environmental impact of its operation and the tools it uses.

Finally, access to the Zellar sustainability platform is helping the business to calculate its carbon footprint and identify where it can make improvements to its fleet of vehicles.

Impact

The business has ambitions to develop more specialist work having recently invested in more mechanical equipment such as a Jekko crane which allows it to complete complex jobs safely and efficiently.

With a refreshed website, the company now has the tools to demonstrate its capabilities and extensive accreditations, as well as streamline its quoting process.

Learn more about the business:
thompson-treeservices.co.uk



"Support from East Midlands Accelerator has been invaluable. It's funded the development of our website so we can better respond to new business opportunities. It's helped us devise a decarbonisation plan, which has helped formalise our approach to growth in a sustainable way. It's given our MD Jack access to leadership training and mentorship so he can build and implement a robust plan for our future."

Gary Moorhouse
Commercial Director

Fresh ideas for growth



John Palin (Wholesale) Ltd

Sector	Food wholesale and manufacture
Number of employees	62
Location	Matlock
Support received	Grant funding Decarbonisation support

The Business

John Palin (Wholesale) Ltd was first established some 150 years ago when it delivered local fruit and vegetables by horse and cart.

It was owned by three generations of the Palin family before long-standing employees David Newton and Neil Norman established the business as a limited company in 2004. The business has enjoyed sustained growth ever since; and now supplies fruit, vegetables, dairy, bakery and deli products to schools across Derbyshire, South Yorkshire, Lincolnshire, Leicestershire, Staffordshire and Nottinghamshire, as well as semi-wholesalers, market stalls, care homes, universities, pubs, restaurants, factory canteens, farm shops and caterers.

Challenges

Covid lockdowns presented significant issues when, for large periods of time, the majority of children were not in school and therefore had no need for school dinners.

This had a particular impact on an area the business had earmarked for growth; its ready-to-eat (RTE) products. RTEs like baton carrots and coleslaw prove highly popular since they significantly reduce preparation time for busy kitchens.

Acceleration

The business calculated that, post Covid, investing in a whole new RTE room would not only allow it to cater for more customers across the region, but also extend its product range.

Grant funding from East Midlands Accelerator has allowed the business to invest in a new sanitising tunnel (to sanitise the food bags) and a reconditioned vegetable salad washer. The new RTE room and equipment are expected to be fully functioning ahead of the new school term.

It has also allowed the business to train its staff in the preparation room in both HACCP hazard analysis and Food & Safety, in preparation for its SALSA food safety audit. Staff have also benefited from decarbonisation support from The Food and Drink Forum.

Impact

The new RTE room has opened up significant opportunities for the business. It allows for new product development. It means it can take on a new member of staff to fulfil the business's burgeoning order book. Last but not least, it gives customers the confidence that the business is committed to investing in its machinery.

Learn more about the business: john-palin.co.uk



"Being able to access grant funding for our new RTE room came at the perfect time to help us accelerate out of Covid. Diversifying into manufacturing in this way undoubtedly helps build a more resilient business for many years to come."

Ann Newton
Finance Manager



East Midlands Chamber (Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire, Leicestershire)

☎ 0333 320 0333

🌐 www.emc-dnl.co.uk

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