

Warwickshire Recovery & Investment Fund Communications Plan 2021-22

Campaign Details

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Link to Council Plan: Warwickshire's economy is vibrant and supported by the right jobs, training, skills and infrastructure

Link to Recovery Plan: Support existing business, attract new business and grow the economy: Build confidence in local businesses and provide our residents with employment opportunities in a thriving economy. Re-purpose town centres and create the conditions for business innovation and investment to drive economic growth

Stimulate job creation and skills: Work with our partners in the Local Enterprise Partnership and higher and further education, to invest in getting people back into employment, or starting their careers, supporting skills, training and re-learning

Invest in regeneration and a sustainable future: Invest in the regeneration of local areas, support housing growth, a fit for the future digital infrastructure and sustainable transport

Make sustainability and tackling climate change central to our recovery so that we lay the foundations for a sustainable long-term future.

Link to Economic Growth Strategy 2020-2025

Our ambition is for strong economic growth, with seven strategic priorities and particular focus given to four sectors: automotive technology, advanced manufacturing, digital creative/video game development, and tourism

Context

The Covid-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the economy in Warwickshire. Despite showing growth in several areas such as high tech and automotive, the county's economy has seen a sharp downturn both in terms of its output and rates of employment (the Council expects that unemployment could rise from 7,000 at the start of 2020 to over 30,000 by the time the effects of the third national lockdown are fully felt).

For Warwickshire, much of this downturn will be due to the restrictions imposed on the tourism, retail, hospitality and leisure sectors. Similarly, these sectors have a supply chain that will also have been very badly affected by their customers not being able to fully operate.

In response to this, Warwickshire County Council is launching a number of projects across Warwickshire, backed up by budget priorities, around economic recovery and business growth.

Foremost among this will be the Warwickshire Recovery Investment Fund, a £140m scheme which will, over the next five years, offer loans and other financial investments to existing and new Warwickshire businesses to help their long-term recovery and growth, create and safeguard jobs, and attract new inward investment into the county.

It will sit alongside the £160m Warwickshire Property Development Group which will deliver new affordable and market-priced homes and a range of commercial and mixed-use properties using the Council's existing land and property assets to drive growth and regeneration and create an environment and premises suited for businesses.

Objectives

- Raise awareness amongst residents and businesses in Warwickshire that WCC is investing time and money into the economic recovery of the county
- Raise awareness of WRIF funding among medium sized, and smaller Warwickshire businesses to increase interest in applying for loans initially, then attract applications when they are available
- Promote our local residents' skills to attract business into Warwickshire
- Increase interest amongst other businesses in partnering with WCC as part of strategy to lever external investment

- Increase local business confidence, highlighting success stories and countering the damage done to business morale by the repeated lockdowns and their impact upon the local economy
- Position WCC as an ambitious, innovative, forward-thinking and commercially-minded local authority on a regional and national level

Audience Insight

Our target audiences include:

- Businesses operating for more than three years demonstrating growth potential - Business Investment Pillar
- New and growing Warwickshire SMEs, who will be applying for smaller portions of funding - Local Communities and Enterprise Pillar
- Developers of housing, office and employment space to enable and accelerate development of property and infrastructure schemes – Property and Infrastructure Pillar
- Industry / business media, including property / construction sector to promote opportunities through WPDG, increase awareness around WRIF and improve confidence around Warwickshire as a destination for businesses

Those who need to be aware:

- Residents to instil confidence in WCC commitment to economic recovery
- Members
- Partners (LEP, Chamber of Commerce, Federation of Small Businesses, Warwickshire Towns Network, West Midlands Combined Authority, Midlands Engine, West Midlands Growth Company, British Business Bank)
- MPs, District and Borough Councillors, Town and Parish Councillors

Strategy

Our strategy to achieve our objective of behaviour change is based on the AIDA marketing model:

Awareness

Engage with our audience (residents, local businesses and local stakeholders) – promote the narrative of Warwickshire County Council as an authority which leads economic change.

This message should sit alongside that the County will do this while maintaining its targets on Carbon reduction and supporting proposals that have a positive social value ie create job opportunities at entry level

Integrate the WRIF and Warwickshire's ambitions for its economy, businesses, places and workforce into all communications where applicable.

Increase visibility of the WRIF on our owned, earned and paid channels and reach new audiences in partnership with other business organisations.

Create interest

Create opportunities for direct engagement between businesses to generate local awareness of each other and keep more business in Warwickshire e.g. webinars, LinkedIn

Create a narrative around how the Fund will encourage ventures that have a link to climate change and Carbon reduction, in line with Warwickshire's Climate Change strategy

Create interest among potential applicants who will bring a benefit and shape the place within Warwickshire ie those that will make the county more attractive a place to live, work and invest

Suite of FAQs linked to the WRIF webpage to engage and maintain interest. Signpost to other sources of support e.g. FSB, Chamber, Growth Hub, DWP

Share progress on rollout of loans with a ready reckoner of jobs created/safeguarded against value of loans awarded through existing schemes to show value of loans/grants

Desire

Share case studies showing success of enterprises and case studies of employees to showcase WCC role as initiator of employment.

Thought leadership – sharing information and experience tips on applying for grants/loans, information on latest stages of the WRIF at warwickshire.gov.uk/wrif

Action

Promote opportunities to apply for loans

Gather and share stories to generate further interest among local businesses and potential national investors

Gather and maintain a database of potential applicants and interested businesses and enterprises for future engagement

Implementation

After the initial announcement of the WRIF and the Warwickshire Property Development Group (WPDG) which sits alongside it and which will help to drive economic growth, there will be a period in which little can be added around those two initiatives as the local election will delay the process for it to go to Cabinet for ratification.

However, the additional funding streams made available will create opportunities for mention and avoid a loss of momentum. Cabinet of June 17 should see full approval of the WRIF Investment Growth Pillar at which point a full launch can be undertaken. We will use news releases for local, national and trade media, WCC social media, website articles, public facing newsletters, case studies on our own and on partners' websites to externally promote the breadth of projects supporting recovery across Warwickshire.

A webinar with key speakers can be arranged for this period to announce, explain and promote the scheme. Guest speakers might include WCC officers, portfolio holder for Economy, Representatives from partner agencies and recipients of existing economic recovery funding.

Partner events will also be sought where WCC officers can engage with regional business partners and organisations, directly promoting the WRIF to business leaders and benefitting from the promotion and links of these organisations.

This will run alongside messages being shared internally using the Intranet, appropriate communications from the Chief Executive, Assistant Directors and managers, internal blogs and newsletters and Working for Warwickshire.

Key messages for these platforms include:

- Warwickshire has a sound financial position that will underpin the WRIF enabling it to be more ambitious in its scope.
- Warwickshire will invest in access to finance for local businesses to enable them to be sustained and safeguard jobs in the short term, then grow and diversify creating jobs in the medium to longer term.
- Warwickshire will support local businesses by reshaping town centres to create positive places and conditions for business innovation and economic growth
- Warwickshire will invest and work with local partners to give people skills and training to get them into employment
- The proposed loans will be in line with the County's policies on Carbon reduction
- Among the criteria for loans will be strong business cases which incorporate social value ie creating job opportunities for unemployed, disadvantaged, young people into their proposals

We will also make greater use of partner channels e.g. Chamber of Commerce website, newsletters and social media accounts; FSB webinars and proactively seek slots for WCC subject matter experts to talk about the availability of loans.

We will build a repository of good news stories that can be immediately accessed by Marcomms and Economy and Skills officers, to enable quick reactive measures to capitalise on any opportunities or respond to requests.

Month	Key activity	Content plan
March	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Warwickshire Means Business (WMB) • Media releases and associated social media 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WRIF announcement • WPDG launch • Survive Sustain and Grow case study • Adapt and Diversify progress report • Announcement of additional funding for CBILS
April	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WMB • Media releases and associated social media 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing promotion of funding streams such as Adapt and Diversify; Survive, Sustain and Grow; Community Renewal Fund <p><i>While not directly associated with the WRIF, promotion of these activities will drive traffic through to our website and social media channels to enhance the audience for when we can announce the WRIF properly.</i></p>
May	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WMB • Media releases and associated social media • Partner newsletters and social media channels <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Website updates • Local media • Trade and Municipal media 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 17 May: Further relaxation of restrictions in hospitality with links to existing support <p><i>Again, while not directly associated with WRIF, this will maintain continued engagement with the business community ahead of launch.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mid-late May: Potential appointments to WPDG Board (dependent upon availability of appointees to commence)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Email Internal comms channels W4W, SD briefing to staff 	<p>immediately – if not, then will be later than this)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 18-31 May: Start contact with national media, trade and business media, entrepreneurial websites and titles and industrial/financial correspondents, as well as partner organisations in and around Warwickshire to engage their support, in preparation for announcement via draft email and suggested talk with project managers w/c 31 May: Leader decision to commence procurement of WRIF fund manager
June	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research potential for involvement in partner webinars e.g. Chamber of Commerce, LEP, FSB WMB Media releases and associated social media Piece in Municipal Journal Possible virtual event to promote the launch WMB Media releases and associated social media Attendance at event Sharing of content of event on social media channels 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> w/c 31 May: Partner events/webinars Ratification of WRIF and WPDC at Cabinet of 17 June (Call in ends 24 June) 21 June: Reopening of tourism sector as social contact restrictions lifted link to grants and support available to that sector. Use this opportunity to push WRIF in the messaging. 30 June: Potential to get WCC keynote speaker at Champions Event
July	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> WMB Media releases and associated social media 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Early July: Invitation to smaller businesses to apply for loans

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partner websites and social media outlets e.g. Chamber of Commerce, CWLEP, FSB • Explanatory PDF on application process for interested parties to request (enabling WCC to capture database of businesses/enterprises) • Testimonials/case studies of previous recipients of WCC funding to encourage/inspire potential applicants (to go on WRIF website) <p>Testimonials, endorsements from local MPs, business leaders (e.g. Chair of CWLEP, Chamber, Chief Executive of Gigafactory, JLR) for website, media releases</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Salaried appointments to WPDG commence in post (potentially July/August, dependent upon talent pool and successful candidates' notice periods) • launch of Business Investment Growth Pillar – Business Growth Fund
August	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WMB • Trade and municipal media • Local and regional media 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Salaried appointments to WPDG commence in post (potentially July/August, dependent upon talent pool and successful candidates' notice periods)
September	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WMB • Event at company premises – this may not be appropriate or even possible for September so timeframe should be fluid • Local, national and trade media • WCC and partner websites • WCC social media outlets and website • Partner social media outlets and websites • WMB • Local, national and trade media 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Possible announcement of first successful applications to WRIF. The first investment is expected to be approved by Cabinet in Autumn • Appointment of WRIF fund manager (LCE pillar)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WCC and partner websites • • Local, national and trade media • WCC and partner websites • WCC social media outlets and website • Partner social media outlets and websites • WMB • Blog from conference • Supply of graphics for WCC/CWLEP representatives to use on site • Additional promotional tool including banners, brochure to be designed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Launch of Local and Community Enterprise Pillar – Small Business Fund • MIPIM Conference 7, 8 Sept
October	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WMB • Local, national and trade media • WCC and partner websites • WCC social media outlets and website • Partner/entrepreneurial social media outlets and websites 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued announcements of successful applications to WRIF Pillar 1 • Appointment of WRIF fund manager (P&I pillar)
November		
December		
January 2022		
February		
March	<p>WMB</p> <p>Blog from conference</p> <p>Supply of graphics for WCC/CWLEP representatives to use on site</p> <p>Video including successful applicants to BIG, testimonials from reps of key sectors eg battery site, creative industry</p>	MIPIM Conference 15-18 March

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Scoring and Evaluation

We will measure success by the following:

- Volume of appropriate WRIF applications (i.e. from businesses that have a reasonable chance of meeting the WRIF investment criteria)
- Audience reach of 1,000 unique visitors per month to the Warwickshire WRIF webpage (output)
- Achieve an additional 200 sign-ups to Warwickshire Means Business by December 2021 (output)
- Create a database of businesses signing up to receive further information and to engage with WCC on an ongoing basis.
- Achieve an increase in audience on WCC LinkedIn of 5% (outtakes)
- Inform and attract the target number of applications or expressions of interest for loans (behaviour change).