

## Communities O&S – November 2020

### Economic Development Update

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***The following briefing note provides an update to the Communities Overview & Scrutiny Committee on recent economic development activity in Warwickshire. It covers work undertaken by County Council officers and partners across a range of services and areas as well as other key pieces of relevant news and information.***

#### **Government Support**

- The Government has announced a further **package of support for businesses to coincide with the new national lockdown measures** from 5<sup>th</sup> November. The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme will now run until the end of March 2021 with employees receiving 80% of their salary for hours not worked. Support for self-employed workers through the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme will also be increased, with the third grant covering the November to January period calculated at 80% of average trading profits, up to a maximum of £7,500. The Government also announced new cash grants of up to £3,000 per month for businesses which have been forced to close, plans to extend the existing loan schemes and an ability for businesses to top up Bounce Back loans, and a new one-off payment to local authorities to support businesses more broadly over the coming months. It is envisaged that the one-off Additional Restrictions Grant – which will be administered by the District and Borough Councils as the billing rate authorities in Warwickshire – will be used to fund further discretionary grants to businesses, but it can also be used for wider business support activities.

#### **Local Redundancy Support**

- Job losses in Warwickshire are tracking lower than the national upward climb, this is thought to be due to our strong pre-Covid economy, however, we are seeing Warwickshire unemployment figures running higher than recorded redundancies. This is thought to be caused by zero-hour contract job losses which do not translate as redundancies presenting a more positive picture than perhaps experienced on the ground. Our hard-hit sectors such as Leisure and Tourism who typically employ on such contracts would be representative of such rises in unemployment, however, we can be reasonably confident that this is a short-term to medium impact and the situation is expected to improve as we emerge from the pandemic and businesses re-boot.
- The **Coventry and Warwickshire Redundancy Support Service** has been launched by WCC and partners. The new service provides a co-ordinated sub-regional approach to responding to redundancies. A series of events to support businesses making difficult business decisions will launch this month with events to support those facing redundancy to be launched soon after. For more on the new service, see the Warwickshire Skills Hub web site:

<https://skillshub.warwickshire.gov.uk/businesses/coventry-warwickshire-redundancy-support-service/1>

- The CWLEP Growth Hub, as part of this package of redundancy support, have launched a new digital platform to support engagement and provide a dedicated place for recruiting employers to post jobs, offering work opportunities to those who find themselves looking for new employment. For more information on the Coventry and Warwickshire Employment Solutions portal, see: [https://www.cwemploymentsolutions.co.uk/employers#tab\\_2](https://www.cwemploymentsolutions.co.uk/employers#tab_2)

## Economic Recovery

- WCC's Employability & Skills team has launched its new **Warwickshire Skills Hub web site** which brings together support for businesses, schools and local communities. The new site encompasses support for helping young people to enter the world of work, links for both young people and businesses to organise work experience placements and information about apprenticeships as well as practical guidance and help for businesses during the Covid-19 pandemic. The site also includes information about WCC's Skills for Employment programme and there are links to the Careers and Enterprise Company and the Coventry and Warwickshire Careers Hub. To visit the new site, see: <https://skillshub.warwickshire.gov.uk/>
- WCC's **Digital Training Programme for Retailers** is seeing significant demand since a further phase was launched over the summer. The programme – which is open to all “bricks and mortar” retail and hospitality businesses to help reach and connect customers through online and social media tools – has so far supported 62 businesses on both taster sessions and workshops. Covid-19 has shown that customers are online more than ever before and the workshops will help retailers embrace digital trends to grow their business. It is delivered by Coventry and Warwickshire Chamber of Commerce in conjunction with Stories Marketing: <https://www.cw-chamber.co.uk/business-support/towncentres/>
- WCC has approved a further £1 million loan to Coventry and Warwickshire Reinvestment Trust (CWRT) in support of the Government's **Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CBILS)**. A £1 million loan from WCC in May 2020 – along with further £750,000 from NBBC, RBC and WDC has so far supported 15 businesses and safeguarded 213 jobs in Warwickshire. The latest £1 million loan – which this time is funded by a Government grant via Coventry and Warwickshire Local Enterprise Partnership – will allow CWRT to support a further ten businesses in the county, safeguarding a further 143 jobs. The major banks have provided the majority of finance under the CBILS scheme. However, smaller specialist local lenders such as CWRT have also helped meet demand from businesses. The Government recently extended the CBILS scheme until the end of January 2021.
- WCC has so far agreed grants worth £217,500 to 40 businesses as part of its new £250,000 **Retail and Hospitality Recovery and Investment Grant Fund** for the retail and hospitality sectors in the county. Small businesses in these

sectors could apply for grants of between £2,000 to £7,500 towards the costs of capital investments which help safeguard jobs, sustain the business and support its future growth. 192 applications worth £1,090,194 were submitted in Round 1 which closed on 11<sup>th</sup> September 2020. All unsuccessful grant applicants have been proactively referred to alternative support programmes. There will also be further opportunities to apply. The grant fund forms part of a £1 million allocation from WCC's Capital Investment Fund to support economic recovery.

#### Place Shaping and Capital Feasibility Fund

- Cabinet have approved a further allocation of £50,000 from the Place Shaping and Capital Feasibility Fund in support of the economic recovery in Warwickshire. The funding has been approved for the “**Digital Market Place**” project which will produce a range of films about work in local businesses for use in Career Market Place events. The resources will meet an immediate need and also provide a valuable long-term resource for schools, colleges and employment programmes to utilise as part of their digital delivery. Two edits are being produced, one for schools and one for young people aged 15-25 seeking employment around Warwickshire. For more information, see the Warwickshire Skills Hub web site: <https://skillshub.warwickshire.gov.uk/businesses/vacanciesdigital-market-place/1>
- The **Tech Challenge Fund** has now been launched. The Challenge fund was set up after a business survey undertaken by Coventry and Warwickshire Local Enterprise Partnership identified the need for digital products which help support and promote town centres, engage existing and new customers, and improve consumer confidence in returning following the end of national lockdowns. Up to £80,000 is available for digital and creative businesses based in Warwickshire with proposals which encourage people to visit our town centres for leisure and business post-lockdown. Applications must be submitted by 20<sup>th</sup> November 2020. For more information and to access the guidance and application forms, visit: <https://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/information-coronavirus/town-centres-tech-challenge/1>
- Place Curators, Creative Giants, have been appointed to deliver the **Art Challenge for Economic Recovery** project which will see a number of art installations across Warwickshire's towns through 2021. We are working with partners and stakeholders to identify potential locations, as well as ensuring that the project is linked with City of Culture 2021. The Northern Warwickshire Art Challenge is being funded by the Government's Getting Building Fund via the Coventry and Warwickshire Local Enterprise Partnership, whilst installations elsewhere across the county will also be delivered with funding from WCC.
- WCC's new **Survive, Sustain and Grow** programme – which has been designed to support those businesses most affected by Covid-19 – has been seeing huge demand. The programme has already had 192 enquires/ referrals since its launch in late August and 146 businesses are now actively engaged on the support. There is a good spread of businesses both across Warwickshire and by sector (66 retail, 37 hospitality and 14 tourism with 69 businesses across a wide range of other sectors). The programme is delivered by a network of specialist, industry-specific consultants appointed by WCC. It is also complemented by existing and

new finance support including WCC's new Retail and Hospitality Grant scheme (see above).

## **Inward Investment News**

WCC's inward investment service has been working with a number of companies over recent months and can report the following significant activity:

- **Wincanton** and **Hello Fresh** have both made recent investments into Nuneaton, and we are providing local contact and support.
- **Cadent** announced its new HQ centre, at 90,000sqft larger than its existing base at Prologis Keresley, and the largest out of town office development in 2020.
- Despite the difficult trading conditions, we are working with a number of new and potential investors to identify suitable commercial property and help facilitate a 'soft landing' for them here.
- We recently held an inbound trade mission for the games development sector and have won a bid to develop an investment proposition around connected and autonomous vehicles (see below).

### Inbound Trade Mission – Pacific North West

Invest in Warwickshire worked together with West Midlands Scale Up and Screen Central to host an online delegation from the US on 22<sup>nd</sup> October, to hear about the opportunities here for games development businesses. The event helped raised the profile of 'silicon spa' and the wider area, and we hope this will lead to collaboration and further investment here from the US.

### HPO – High Potential Opportunity

Warwickshire has been recognised as a nationally significant location for future mobility technologies as part of a major initiative by the Department for International Trade (DIT) to boost Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in the UK.

The West Midlands region has won two major project bids within the second round of the UK Government's High Potential Opportunities (HPO) programme – an initiative designed to promote high-level industry opportunities to foreign investors and drive overseas investment into the UK's regions and nations. Of the 19 HPOs announced, this was the only one covering automotive.

Warwickshire, with Coventry, is among the leading regional locations chosen as a centre of excellence in Connected and Autonomous Vehicle (CAV) Modelling and Simulation. Birmingham and Solihull have been selected as the UK's top destination for opportunities in Data Driven Healthcare & Technologies.

WCC will work with Department of International Trade, CCAV and colleagues from Oxfordshire and local universities and businesses to bring together an information pack on the sector and its opportunities, which will then be used by DIT and others to promote the area and future mobility opportunities to potential investors around the world.

<https://business.warwickshire.gov.uk/october-2020/news-in-brief/region-leading-location-for-future-mobility-technologies>

### Built Environment Networking – Coventry & Warwickshire Future Development

The Built Environment Networking organisation will be hosting an event on the morning of November 18<sup>th</sup> titled Coventry & Warwickshire Future Growth.

Monica Fogarty will be presenting on the panel to talk about how Warwickshire County Council and partners have been adapting to the pandemic and how Warwickshire remains a strong destination for investment and development.

On the panel she will be joined by Martin Reeves, Chief Executive of Coventry City Council, and Ian Harrabin, director of CDP (Complex Development Projects), a developer with interests in Coventry, including the new Telegraph Hotel, and Leamington Spa and the Creative Quarter.

<https://www.built-environment-networking.com/event/coventry-future-development-plans/>

### Midlands Forum for Growth

WCC, partner local authorities and Coventry & Warwickshire LEP will be taking part in the new Midlands UK Forum for Growth next month.

The three-day online event will convene global leaders and investors to showcase the Midlands region and the wealth of opportunities for sustainable growth, investment and collaboration. More than 250 public and private sector organisations are anticipated to attend virtually, including leaders and investors from around the world from 24 to 26 November. It will provide a comprehensive insight into the Midlands' strategy, policy and plans for growth and investment.

There will be a presentation on Warwickshire development opportunities by Mark Ryder, and panelists from local Warwickshire and Coventry business and education, including Marion Plant OBE from North Warwickshire and South Leicestershire College, Martin Yardley from University of Warwick Wellesbourne Campus and Sarah Windrum, CWLEP Board member and lead for the Creative and Digital sector.

<https://www.midlandsukforumforgrowth.co.uk/>

### **Business News – Major business headlines from around Warwickshire**

#### UK begins mainline testing of hydrogen-powered trains in Warwickshire

Warwickshire enjoyed a UK first with the trials of the HydroFLEX hydrogen train, the first time a hydrogen powered train has run on the UK network.

It follows two years of development by the University of Birmingham BCRRE (Birmingham Centre for Rail Research and Education) and rolling stock leasing company Porterbrook with a £750,000 grant from the Department for Transport (DfT). The testing took place between their base at the Quinton Rail Technology Centre near Stratford-upon-Avon, and Honeybourne in Worcestershire.

<https://www.railway-technology.com/news/uk-mainline-testing-hydrogen-powered-trains/>

### New director for UK BMW engine manufacturing plant

BMW Group has appointed Dr. Dirk Dreher as the new plant director at the company's UK engine production plant in Hams Hall, North Warwickshire.

Dirk's career with BMW Group spans almost 20 years with a variety of management roles and key positions under his belt. He succeeds Bernd Gress, who after more than three successful years leading the plant, moves to a new role within BMW Group, based in Germany.

<http://britishdealernews.co.uk/general-news/bmw-biker-boss-hams-hall>

### WMG Announces new Catapult Chief Exec

Professor David Greenwood will replace Archie MacPherson who has led the WMG Catapult team since 2016.

Prof Greenwood currently leads WMG's Energy Research and also holds advisory and board positions for the Advanced Propulsion Centre, Innovate UK (Faraday Challenge and IDP) and the Faraday Institution, and is head of the Advanced Propulsion Centre's Electrical Energy Storage Spoke.

<https://www.insidermedia.com/news/midlands/top-appointment-for-wmg-arm>

### Gigafactory Key Place in Coventry & Warwickshire Reset Strategy

Two leading business organisations in Coventry and Warwickshire have put extra charge in the call to Government to build a factory in the region that could create thousands of jobs.

A recent Coventry and Warwickshire Chamber of Commerce PolicyHour video call with businesses in the region included representatives from the Coventry and Warwickshire Local Enterprise Partnership (CWLEP) who joined to discuss its reset strategy for the economy. Nick Abell of CWLEP said: "The Government is going to back a Gigafactory and, wherever it goes, it is going to create thousands of jobs, potentially tens of thousands. There is no doubt, we want it here.

<https://www.cwlep.com/news/coventry-and-warwickshire-business-leaders-charge-calls-regional-gigafactory>

### Codemasters

One of the UK's oldest games developers, and the original 'Silicon Spa' business has been valued at £739m as a deal to takeover the company has been announced. If the sale goes ahead, it will bring another of the UK's triple AAA games developers studios to the area.

Warwickshire-headquartered Codemasters has received the approach from Take-Two, an American NASDAQ-listed video game holding company based in New York. The company owns two major publishing labels, Rockstar Games and 2K, which operate internal game development studios.

<https://www.insidermedia.com/news/midlands/takeover-offer-values-video-game-maker-at->

[739m?utm\\_source=westmidlands\\_newsletter&utm\\_campaign=westmidlands\\_news\\_tracker&utm\\_medium=top\\_story\\_article](https://www.insidermedia.com/news/midlands/takeover-offer-values-video-game-maker-at-739m?utm_source=westmidlands_newsletter&utm_campaign=westmidlands_news_tracker&utm_medium=top_story_article)

## Jobs at Risk at RSC

Almost 160 jobs have been put at risk at the Royal Shakespeare Company.

The RSC has said it does not know the final number of redundancies until the end of the consultation but 158 positions are currently at risk. This would be up to a 17% reduction in the workforce. The RSC added that it will focus its efforts on the Royal Shakespeare Theatre in Stratford-upon-Avon, with Swan Theatre and The Other Place remaining closed until 2022.

<https://www.insidermedia.com/news/midlands/royal-shakespeare-company-puts-jobs-at-risk>

## West Midlands 5G Investing in Digital Transport Solutions

The company creating a 5G network in the West Midlands is set to invest £2.4m in seven consortiums to support the development of new products and services to transform transport across the region.

<https://www.insidermedia.com/news/midlands/multimillion-pound-investments-for-transport-projects>

## New Chief Exec Appointed at Nuneaton Based Holland & Barrett

A new chief executive has been confirmed at Holland & Barrett after his predecessor stepped down after less than 18 months in the role.

The former digital director at B&Q owner Kingfisher, Steve Willett, has been appointed to succeed Tony Buffin.

<https://www.insidermedia.com/news/midlands/new-ceo-confirmed-for-holland-barrett>

## Cadent Letting at Ansty Largest in UK

Cadent, the gas supply company, is moving its UK HQ to Prospero Ansty, to a new 90,000sqft purpose built development, the largest out of town office let in the UK in 2020. The company is expected to complete the move in early 2022.

<https://www.prospero-ansty.com/cadent-agrees-to-take-a-purpose-built-90000-sq-ft-office-building-at-prospero-ansty-from-manse-opus/>

## Spec Build Units Completed in Leamington Spa

Stoford Developments has finished units three and four at Spa Park in Leamington Spa which comprise 61,075 sq ft and 30,715 sq ft of space respectively, rounding off the first phase of the project.

The units, which are now available to let, sit alongside a 50,000 sq ft unit, which is occupied by Liberty 920E, part of the Liberty Vehicle Technologies, and US-based Martin Sprocket & Gear, which occupies unit five, a 41,173 sq ft warehouse and offices.

<https://www.insidermedia.com/news/midlands/multimillion-pound-business-park-buildings-completed>

## Government Funding Unlocks New Flexible Workspace in Nuneaton

A grant of £1m from the Government's Towns Fund team will be used to repurpose the two floors above 22 Queens Road - known to many as the former Woolworths

store - and create flexible working spaces that include both shared and dedicated office space with a new dedicated public entrance, creating up to 75 jobs.

<https://www.cwlep.com/news/%C2%A31million-funding-give-nuneaton-town-centre-retail-space-new-lease-life>

### New Leamington Co-Working Complex Announces New Tenants

Marketing agency Gibsonhaus and creative engagement agency Purple Monster have both signed up to move in to 1 Mill Street, an exciting new office space in Leamington Spa.

The Victorian building on the corner of Mill Street and Leam Terrace has undergone a transformation and will now feature flexible offices, dedicated desks and hot-desking, a video and sound studio, The Muse Coffeehouse, meeting areas and world-class events space.

<https://www.insidermedia.com/news/midlands/new-tenants-for-co-working-complex>

### Chamber Annual Conference Moves Online

The Coventry and Warwickshire Chamber of Commerce's Annual Economic Conference, in its 20th year in 2020 as a key event in the business calendar, will take place online on Wednesday, November 11.

Speakers include West Midlands Mayor Andy Street; Nadhim Zahawi MP, Minister for Business & Industry; Angela Joyce, CEO of WCG; Andrew Carter, Chief Executive of the Centre for Cities; Martin Sutherland, Chief Executive of the Coventry City of Culture Trust; Leigh Hunt, CityFibre's City Manager Coventry; and Martin Reeves, Chief Executive of Coventry City Council.

<https://www.cwlep.com/news/major-regional-business-event-moved-online-it-will-still-pack-punch>

### FirstPro 2020 Awards Go Online

Coventry & Warwickshire First Pro 2020 Awards will be going online for the first time this year. Each of the FirstPro categories showcases the talent and capability of the business services, professional and financial services sector in our region. The event takes place from 4pm on 12<sup>th</sup> November.

<https://www.coventryfirst.co.uk/firstpro/>