

News for Businesses



JULY 2005

Produced by the Rural Economy Team at North Dorset District Council

North Dorset People and Places Awards

WELCOME

Welcome to the first newsletter for businesses, prepared by the Rural Economy Team. We would like to use this opportunity to share some information with you about activities of the team and new initiatives that can benefit your business. We hope you find the newsletter helpful and informative.

If you have any comments to make, please contact

Pam Bacon,
Policy Manager
Rural Economy
01258 484005.

The Council is currently developing an annual awards programme, which will recognize the achievements of local people and good customer service from local businesses. It also aims to celebrate the local environment particularly those building projects which have been sympathetic to the natural environment.

A range of categories have been identified for the first awards ceremony, which is scheduled to take place at the end of November, including sports, arts, recycling, community and business, tourism and environmental. Further information is available on the Council's website: www.north-dorset.gov.uk

SPONSORSHIP OPPORTUNITY FOR LOCAL BUSINESSES

We are very interested to hear from any business that would like to consider becoming a sponsor for any of the awards and further details on the sponsorship package available will be sent out to businesses in the next few weeks. Alternatively, if you would like to receive information beforehand, please contact the Rural Economy Team on 01258 484005 (Pam) or 01258 404072 (Alice).

Dorset Business Mentoring Programme

Economic development officers from across Dorset have been working on an exciting new initiative, which aims to provide access to a business mentor for very new businesses, or those that are ready to expand but need support and guidance from an experienced business friend who has successfully expanded and can share their experiences.

There is **no charge** involved for using the service as the local authorities and other partners are contributing to the scheme alongside anticipated funding from the South West of England Regional Development Agency.

It is envisaged that the scheme will be ready to roll in September once all funding is secured and a project manager has been recruited.

If you are interested in becoming a business mentor, or you would like to receive some support to help you expand your business, or if you have just started up in business and would like the support of a business friend, please contact the Rural Economy Team for more information.

A web site is currently being developed and further information about the full programme of support will be available when this has been completed.

The scheme has been developed based on a similar successful model delivered across Devon and Cornwall and has benefited from the experiences gained through the programme.

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E-Business Directory

The Council is currently considering the development of a web-based business directory.

The directory will be available through the Council's website and provide information on local services and amenities, together with information on local businesses.

An entry within the directory will be FREE to any business or local organization that wishes to be included. It is anticipated that the directory will provide a very valuable source of local information to anyone within the area or who is proposing to visit or relocate to the area. This is your way to promote your business FREE OF CHARGE.

In addition to providing a platform to promote local

businesses, it will have the necessary mechanisms to enable our business community to communicate easily with the Council about a range of issues affecting them through use of the email connection.

We are also considering the option of giving individual businesses responsibility for editing their own information, based on a standard template. It will also provide the necessary links to your own websites, if you have them. Alternatively, it will provide you with a face in the market place if you do not currently have a website.

For more information, please contact the Rural Economy Team on 01258 484005. We will need to capture your business details to include in our developmental work.

Dorset Broadband Partnership Project Launched

A new scheme to promote the benefits of broadband has recently been launched. The £1.9m project has received a £700,000 investment from the South West of England Regional Development Agency.

The main objectives of the project are to improve awareness of broadband, increase take-up by local businesses and build the capacity of local communities to access broadband, together with increasing the take-up of e-government services and developing the ICT needs of local employees.

The programme provides advice, support and fund-

ing to small and medium sized enterprises based within Dorset, particularly small to micro companies. The programme offers the opportunity of improving business performance.

Support can be sought to help businesses with the creation of a Web site or re-development of an existing web site, for example updating or developing into an e-commerce web site.

The XPAND programme is being managed by James Cope at Business Link Wessex. More information about the scheme can be obtained by contacting James on 01202 785417.

XPAND—about the funding:

A business is eligible to apply for XPAND funding if it is operating in Dorset and has fewer than 250 employees; has been trading for 12 months or more; has an annual turnover not exceeding €40 million, or an annual balance sheet total not exceeding €27m.

Not for profit organizations can qualify for a grant so long as their

application relates to a genuine e-business process.

Funding will be for 50% of the eligible project costs of development up to a maximum of £2,500 and applications can be submitted immediately.

The selection process take account of the following:

The project must not have started prior to approval of the funding; the application must be for a clearly identified e-business project which utilizes Broadband technology and either creates a new web site or updates and enhances an existing web site to provide an integrated e-commerce process solution.

A Cracking Good Breakfast !

Although no eggs were cracked, North Dorset District Council hosted a very successful business breakfast on 15th June at Durweston Village Hall just outside Blandford.

The event focused on addressing some of the issues experienced by many small businesses, through a range of presentations and interactive working group sessions. It also brought together a range of business support organizations from across Dorset.

Presentations were provided by Business Link Wessex on the support available to businesses, and from the Prince's Trust who highlighted their valuable work with vulnerable young people.

Breakfast was supplied by Provisio, a local caterer based in Charlton Marshall, who had sourced the majority of the ingredients from local producers.

Favourable comments were received at the end of the event as to the value of the exchange of information between businesses during the workshops.

A summary report is available for anyone who was unable to attend the event. Please contact us for a copy.

Representatives from 50 businesses attended, along with Council Members and officers, and representatives from business support organizations. In total, 67 people attended. Of these, 42 completed an evaluation form at the end of the event providing essential feedback to the Council on the value of the event.

Of those that responded, **98%** rated the business breakfast as **good/very good**. Most wanted a similar format for any future event, with more time allocated for discussion on specific issues identified by businesses.

The Chief Executive, Liz Goodall, said: "we are delighted that so many local businesses were able to attend this event and welcome the positive feedback we have received. We are committed to listening to those who play an important part in the District and to supporting the local economy".

Colin Jamieson from the Federation of Small Businesses said: "We welcomed to opportunity to support an event such as this and congratulate North Dorset District Council for taking the initiative to organize it. We very much look forward to working in partnership in future.

It is likely that another business event will be held in the Autumn.

Vacant Property Information

The Council is a member of a broad economic partnership which has developed a Dorset-wide database of vacant properties across the local area.

If you currently have vacant property and you are seeking tenants or a buyer, please let us have the information and we can make this available to prospective tenants/

buyers when requested. There is no charge for the service.

If you are currently considering expansion and you do not have the room or are limited by local planning policy, we are able to provide information on a range of land and properties across Dorset.

The database is also supported by many local land and property agents.

For more information or to market your property, please contact the database co-ordinator: Joanna Rufus on 01305 224797 or by email: j.c.rufus@dorsetcc.gov.uk

The Council's website is a very valuable source of information. It provides information of the range of support available to businesses and contact details of organisations who can assist with a variety of issues:
www.north-dorset.gov.uk

Business Support Organisations

The following information is provided to assist you with making contact with the relevant business support organisation which will be able to respond to your specific needs as a business.

Business Link Wessex

Business Link Wessex specialize in helping businesses across Dorset, Hampshire & Isle of Wight to develop and grow. They offer access to a comprehensive network of business contacts, information, seminars and advice, to enable businesses to realize their ambitions.

Most of their services are free of charge or heavily subsidized to ensure businesses get easy access to the most appropriate route to business development and growth. Further information is available as follows:

Website: www.businesslinkwessex.co.uk

Advice Line: 08454 588558

Federation of Small Businesses

The FSB is the largest campaigning pressure group promoting and protecting the interests of the self-employed and owners of small firms. Formed in 1974, it now has over 185,000 members across 33 regions and 230 branches. On the member benefits side, it offers assistance and support 24 hours a day, while its lobbying arm, led by the Westminster Press and Parliamentary office—applies pressure on MP's, Government and Whitehall, lobbies politicians in their constituencies and puts the FSB viewpoint over to the media.

Website: www.fsb.org.uk

Wessex Regional Office - Tel: 01425 28000

Email: colin.jamieson@fsb.org.uk

Prince's Trust

The Prince's Trust is a UK charity that helps young people overcome barriers and get their lives working. Through practical support including training, mentoring and financial assistance, they help 14-30 year olds realise their potential and transform their lives. The Trust focuses their efforts on those who've struggled at school, been in care, been in trouble with the law, or are long-term unemployed.

Website: www.princes-trust.org.uk

Dorset & South Wiltshire Office—Tel: 01202 888845 **Email:** david.fox@princes-trust.org.uk

Dorset Business

Dorset Business is the Chamber of Commerce & Industry for Dorset. It is an independent organisation that has been created to benefit its members' businesses and to enhance the business environment of Dorset. The Chamber provides services that can make financial savings for members, help them achieve new business contacts both at home and abroad, provide PR and advertising opportunities along with a wide range of other activities, represent the interest of Dorset business to Government.

Website: www.dcci.co.uk

Tel: 01202 714801 (Chief Executive)

Email: peter.scott@dorsetbusiness.net

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Nordon, Salisbury Road, Blandford Forum, Dorset, DT11 7LL **Tel:** 01258 484005

