

**BUSINESS  
READY**

UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK  
SCIENCE PARK

# Driving innovation

## Making a difference Impact report



This project is part funded by the European Regional Development Fund, forming part of the CW Business: Start, Grow and Scale Programme

**Business Ready**, an innovative business support package, continues to provide ambitious, tech-based SMEs across Warwickshire and Coventry with fully funded support.

With the financial assistance of the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and Warwickshire County Council (WCC) our experienced team of Business Advisers help innovation-led and/or knowledge-based companies, from early stage through to mature organisations, overcome their barriers to growth and to take their businesses to the next level.

## The Business Ready team



**Amandeep Sangha**



**Dirk Schaefer**



**Carol Bull**



**Gaynor Matthews**



**Ian McFarlane-Toms**



**Matthew Lawrence**

# Business support with real impact

## BUSINESS READY



Over the last 3 years we are proud to have worked with a fantastic range of forward-thinking, innovative and ambitious businesses across the region. Our support has enabled our clients to launch innovative new products, raise millions of pounds in external finance, improve their market reach and upskill their employees.

Our highly experienced internal team of Business Growth Advisers are ably supported by a hand-picked cohort of independent mentors; subject matter experts with sector specific experience, that we can bring in to support the identified needs of each individual business.

Our first programme was funded from 2016-2018 and successfully created jobs, helped companies raise finance, upskill their workforce and grow and scale. This phase, from the start of 2019 to the end of 2021, has operated in a particularly testing time yet we have continued to exceed targets despite the unprecedented challenges.

We are proud to have...

- **Interacted with more than 600 companies and ventures**
- **Engaged nearly 250 businesses in discovery meetings and delivered more than 12 hours of assistance to more than 100 of those**

- **Supported over 40 clients to raise in excess of £5.8M in external funding, leveraging in further private funds to support investment in businesses in the region.**
- **Assisted numerous clients to create over 75 jobs, with further recruitment planned**
- **Nurtured 27 high-growth companies through the first years of starting and establishing a business**
- **Delivered 90 subject specific workshops with more than 870 participants.**

The teams at University of Warwick Science Park, WCC and the wider Coventry & Warwickshire Business Support Programme are delighted to continue working with a wide variety of businesses in supporting them to meet their growth ambitions. This programme has been granted a contract extension, and fully funded until June 2023.

Since 2016 Business Ready has received financial support from ERDF, WCC and the University of Warwick Science Park. We are grateful for their trust and support that has enabled us to create jobs, promote innovation and stimulate the economy across Coventry and Warwickshire.



## Business Ready teams up firms on sports app

Clubbie was established in 2016 by Chris White as a social media platform aimed at sports clubs and individuals to upload clips and create a network within the amateur sports community.

Meanwhile, entrepreneur Joe Wheatley had set up his own amateur football team called Shottery United and was all set to launch his own app – Club Bubble.

### The Challenge

The Coronavirus crisis saw most amateur sporting activity cancelled and then only return for a short period of time before being

cancelled again, which caused engagement to drop with Clubbie.

Chris was looking at ways that he could maintain engagement with the platform and Joe was just in the process of creating Club Bubble, which was aimed at the same market and audience.

### The Solution

Gaynor Matthews, a Business Ready adviser, was mentoring both Joe and Chris separately but when she saw the synergy between the two individuals, she recommended that they meet and look at working together.



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### The Results

The two have now joined forces under the Clubbie brand and Chris has given Joe the backing to get a new app created by experienced programmers and developers.

Gaynor has also supported a grant application for the business.

Pictured: Chris White (left) with Joe Wheatley

## New sustainable & ethical beauty platform launches with Business Ready help

Counter Culture is a new sustainable beauty marketplace that will make it easier for consumers to buy affordable beauty products that are good for them and for the planet.

### The Challenge

Business Ready adviser Gaynor Matthews had been supporting Mark through the programme, initially for another business.

Mark then helped Gaynor with her own business WOW HOW – a makeup app – from a technical perspective and this sparked his interest in the beauty space from a clean and sustainable perspective.

He came up with the idea of creating a niche marketplace after

his research identified that his target audience wanted to buy ethically and this was then key to his business strategy.

### The Solution

Gaynor's role worked exceptionally well as she was able to mentor Mark and guide him through the set-up of the business and the platform based on her own experiences within beauty.

She then connected him with a key contact, Wendy – who has nearly 30 years' experience in sales, marketing and e-commerce and, after they hit it off straight away, Counter Culture was born.



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### The Result

Counter Culture now has a fully developed brand and offer to both businesses that wish to sell their products on the site and for those customers wanting to buy ethically and sustainably.

Pictured: Wendy Martin

# Nuneaton e-cargo company delivers success thanks to Business Ready

Eskuta, which has recently expanded into a second unit at Warwickshire County Council's Bermuda Park Innovation Centre, designs and manufactures electric bikes and scooters which have proved to be a hit with fast-food delivery firms.

## The Challenge

One of the biggest challenges to growth was financing the purchase of stock to make the Eskuta products in order to be able to fulfil orders quickly.

The company was introduced to Business Ready, initially, when it was looking for grant-funding but found

support from advisor Ian McFarlane-Toms brought much more than a search for grants.

## The Solution

The support from Business Ready offered Eskuta a better understanding of how to finance the business and, also, help with some of the other fundamentals of growing a business.

This was not only through advice but also introductions to other people and organisations who could support the company's growth.



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## The Result

Sales have accelerated with some of the major players in the take-away and food delivery market but also in groceries too.

The firm is also exploring international opportunities with distributor deals signed in Dubai, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Qatar.

On top of that, the consumer market is set to take off after an agreement to sell Eskuta products through 24 Apple stores in the UK and Ireland.

Pictured: Ian McFarlane-Toms, Ian O'Connor, Jake O'Connor

# Specialist blinds manufacturer set for strong growth

Guthrie Douglas has been operating for 40 years as a specialist manufacturer of blinds which are sold all over the world and are used within prestigious building projects – both commercial and residential.

## The Challenge

The company saw an opportunity to grow by making more of the parts within its shading systems in-house. That would mean investing in a new CNC lathe and also adapting its Warwick headquarters to create more space both for additional equipment and staff.

## The Solution

The overall investment was £150,000 and, after contacting the Business Ready team at the University of Warwick Science Park, Guthrie Douglas secured a capital grant of £35,000 through Warwickshire County Council.



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## The Result

Andrew Kitching said the investment will see the company significantly increase its staff numbers and more than double turnover over a three-year period.



# BUSINESS READY



## Support



**607**  
enquiries



**246**  
businesses engaged  
in discovery meetings



**107**  
businesses supported  
for 12+ hours



**82**  
clients supported  
to raise funding



**67**  
clients supported  
to access markets



**62**  
qualified referrals out



## Finance



**£5.8m**  
funding  
raised



**£4.3m**  
funds raised for  
clients in equity



**£1.5m**  
raised in grants  
and debt

# Impacts at a glance



## Skills



**873**  
participants  
upskilled



**90**  
workshops held



**147**  
clients received  
skills support



**75**  
jobs created



## Incubation



**95% survival  
rate** after 3  
years



**27**  
new businesses  
created



**53**  
clients received  
incubation support



# The gloves are on as Business Ready supports PPE firm

HealthCorm Ltd, launched by Harris Qais is a social enterprise – which exists to benefit the community – and not only supplies a range of PPE to firms and organisations at a fair price, but also donates it to small local businesses to support them as they re-open following the easing of government restrictions in a bid to help boost the economy.

## The Challenge

Having experience in logistics through his company King of Saffron, Harris saw an opportunity to import PPE to help support the community.

The challenge was not only to successfully launch the business, but also ensure it is sustainable

and in a strong position to thrive when the supply of PPE eventually overtakes the demand.

## The Solution

Business Ready helped Harris to put together a business plan, gave advice around the initial investment that would be needed and ensured that the business was structured appropriately so it would be able to compete effectively against other suppliers when demand for PPE falls.



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## The Result

Since launching Healthcorm with the support of Business Ready, the social enterprise has grown at a rapid rate.

It remains keen to continue supporting the local community and is importing stock based on demand, for instance as the UK is currently in desperate need of gloves, Healthcorm has recently closed a deal to import a large quantity of them.

Pictured: Paul Walker, of Business Ready; Harris Qais, of Healthcorm; Ian O'Connor, managing director of Eskuta; and Ian McFarlane-Toms, of Business Ready

# Business Ready helps Nimbus Maps chart path to hyper-growth

Nimbus Maps was set up by brothers Simon and Paul Davis with the aim of providing up-to-the-minute access to information on potential investment and development opportunities, accessible to everyone investing in or developing properties.

## The Challenge

Nimbus Maps had experienced a sharp rise in demand for its services. Over an 18-month period, the number of users had risen from 3,000 to 40,000. This growth needed careful management to

avoid overexpansion – something that might have put added pressure on the team and affected the firm's business strategy.

## The Solution

Nimbus Maps switched its strategy to instead focus on a more targeted approach. Business Ready was able to assist the company to communicate the value proposition of its product. It also received direct support from Business Ready on marketing, pricing and access to finance. The latter helped them raise £400k equity investment which funded their go-to-market campaign.



## The Result

Since receiving support from Business Ready, Nimbus Maps has grown its team to 12, which has yielded positive results – and this number is expected to increase as part of the firm's strategy going forward.



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Pictured from left – Simon Davis, Andrew Green, Dirk Schaefer and Paul Davis



# Business Ready helps horse treat company gallop towards success

Alcester-based husband and wife team Kevin and Mary Elizabeth Nairne founded Kelcie's Horse Treats in 2019 to offer high-quality, natural treats to high-calibre horses that take part in equestrian events.

After seeking advice from Mary Elizabeth's Olympic gold-medallist sister; Laura Kraut and fellow Olympic champion Nick Skelton, they decided to move into the treats market and came up with a product made of 15 natural ingredients.

## The Challenge

Finding a company to manufacture the product in the UK or the EU

proved difficult, so they turned their attention to the USA and found a partner.

And as soon as they managed to get the treat to market, they found they had an instant hit with horses and owners alike – but they were missing a formal business plan and marketing strategy.

## The Solution

Gaynor supported the firm directly and introduced the company to experts who offered strategic sales and marketing advice, followed by a digital marketing plan to grow sales and distribution in the USA and then the EU. The firm was also given business planning advice by Innovate UK Edge.



## The Result

Having turned over \$40,000 in its first year, it reached \$100,000 in its latest round of accounts, with plans to double that again over the next 12 months.



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Pictured: Nick Skelton with Laura Kraut

# Lyra Electronics sets out on growth journey

Lyra Electronics started in the Science Park's Ignite incubator where the team received business support to help them get started in good order.

Lyra is now established as one of the UK's leading providers of power electronics solutions, with plans in place to increase developments to the point where companies are buying its 'off the shelf' products rather than bespoke designs.

## The Challenge

Lyra successfully doubled the size of its base in 2019 after securing grant funding with the Business Ready team.

After winning a competitive pitch to be part of ESCAPE and CompETe, as well as winning the bid to deliver the Hi-VIBES project together with other partners, this has led Lyra to require further expansion, with plans to double staff and once again extend the Wellesbourne Campus site.

## The Solution

As Lyra moves forward with its role in their development projects, the team will continue to work alongside Business Ready for another period of growth.



## The Result

Through Business Ready, the team have been able to access around £500,000 innovation funding as well as accessing Warwickshire County Council's Growth Fund.

The company had doubled their size and doubled employee numbers over the past three years following the support from Business Ready.



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Pictured: Dirk Schaefer with Peter James

# Business Ready helping Hollywood Gaming expand into new markets

Hollywood Gaming was founded in 2005 and has worked on leading brand IP from industry leaders such as Hasbro, Paramount Pictures, Sony and EA.

Its solutions help make experiences come to life, merging the visuals with all the props the player interacts with during the game to make it feel lifelike. These include haptic feedback systems, motion, lighting and audio prompts.

## The Challenge

The company now has plans to create its own experiences that it will operate from its own venues.

Further plans are to expand into strategic locations in the UK before expanding to Europe and North America.

## The Solution

Gaynor Matthews, has been working with Hollywood Gaming on how to position itself within the marketplace and better explain what it does to different groups – whether that's Business to Business or Business to Consumer for its new venues.

The company is now attempting to raise £800,000 through venture capital and grant funding – including an Innovate UK grant which is being supported by the University of Warwick.



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## The Result

Hollywood Gaming has now identified potential locations for its new venues once it has raised the necessary funding to be able to invest in the project.

It is also working with a team of scriptwriters to help create the narratives for the new experiences, which Malcolm expects to cost around £30 per person for half-an-hour.

Pictured (left to right): Mark Evans (director of Hollywood Gaming), Gaynor Matthews (Business Ready), Malcolm Barnes (director of Hollywood Gaming)

# Drone company set to fly after Business Ready support

Skyfarer is based in Coventry having been established by Elliot Parnham who studied aerospace engineering at university.

It is aiming to established itself as an expert in drone delivering, bringing together the systems and technology involved in the process.

## The Challenge

Elliot's original plan for the business was to manufacture drones but after meeting with Business Ready, it became clear that there was a market for a business that brings together all of the systems, all of the technology and the planning required to make the use of drones commercially viable.

## The Solution

The company needs to begin trials and has received a £50,000 grant from Innovate UK – which has led to the creation of one full-time and two part-time jobs – and the firm is also in the process of applying for further funding.



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## The Result

The grant has helped the company to begin trials alongside the support it has received from Business Ready and will better help to understand the extent to which drone delivery can be used in this way and its limitations.

Pictured (left to right): Luke Pulford, Matthew Lawrence, Peter Butlin, Elliot Parnham



# Warwickshire-based supply company helped to quadruple annual turnover

The Ground Screw Centre was established in 2016 and supplies screws that are more environmentally friendly, efficient and cost-effective than concrete foundations, and can be used as a base for garden rooms, sheds and fencing in the domestic market as they do not require expertise to install.

## The Challenge

Aware of the huge market potential of their business, The Ground Screw Centre's directors were looking to identify key aspects of their operations that could be improved in order to speed up its expansion.

Tim Powell – who previously ran the Science Park's Access to Finance & Minerva business angels' network – introduced the centre to Business Ready after he was recruited to advise on business development.

## The Solution

The company has received help with digital marketing to help it grow its customer-base but is also making use of the flexibility of support and using advisers as a sounding board for its plans for expansion.

It also utilising the connections to the University of Warwick as part of its drive to develop new product innovations.



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## The Results

The Ground Screw Centre's turnover has jumped from £185,000 to £875,000 and is on target to hit £1 million in annual revenue after moving into its new HQ.

The Warwickshire company now counts global brands such as Manchester United and McDonald's amongst its clients, it has grown from three to nine staff and moved from the Innovation Centre at Stoneleigh Park into its own base in Ryton.

Pictured (left to right): Steve Thomas, Tim Powell, Dirk Schaefer (Business Ready), Tom Hawthornthwaite, Donna McCarthy, Steve Hawthornthwaite, Paul Brown, Rob Harris, Toby Farmer.

# Recruitment firm moves from kitchen table to brand new office

Nick and John founded TalentTech in April 2019 after leaving a much larger recruitment company to go it alone. With a background in engineering, the pair carved out a niche in helping technical and technology companies hire candidates, and finding better work for those already in the industry.

## The Challenge

While Nick and John had great expertise in recruitment, neither had any real knowledge of how best to run a business.

The pandemic also brought its own challenges to the business – from people needing to find work after

being made redundant in the early stages of the crisis, to businesses looking to fill vacancies once many of the restrictions had eased.

## The Solution

The Business Ready team mentored Nick and John to help them master key business procedures such as financial planning, digital marketing, and upscaling through productization.

It also helped them make connections with both the University of Warwick and Coventry University, allowing them to provide advice and the company's services to students, graduates and university departments in finding work and hiring top candidates.



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## The Result

Business Ready's advice and support gave TalentTech the skills and connections it needed to not only navigate the challenges of the pandemic, but grow its team as well.

Pictured (from left to right): Dave O'Neill, Ryan Parfrey, John Ahearne, Dirk Schaefer, Lyndsey Hulm, Nick Goodwin, and Rich Shortland



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