

## **Council – 21 September 2015**

### **Economy, infrastructure and development**

#### **Progress Report of Councillor Andrew, Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder**

My Portfolio is responsible for a number of services vital to the quality of life of residents throughout the borough including regeneration, highways and transportation, planning, community safety and public protection.

Having a job is vital to the well being of anyone of working age and, over the past few months, I am pleased to be able to say that under our administration a number of significant projects have been completed offering the prospect of new jobs in the borough. Most notably these include the recent completion of the £7.8m Old Square development and the new Primark store recently opened by the Leader, with the new Co-op food store soon to follow. This month also sees the opening of Walsall College's £11m Business and Sports Hub to complement its impressive offer to the young people of the borough and completion of the £3m Jhoots Pharmacy headquarters and offices nearby. Next month will see completion of the £1.5m cross party Willenhall Townscape Heritage Initiative programme benefitting 16 business properties in the area.

In Walsall town centre the £12m Waterfront cinema and restaurants project are due to be completed in early 2016 and a start is expected soon on the £14m Norton & Proffitt retail scheme in Digbeth.

Work on the New Walsall Market is expected to commence in the next few months which will help to revitalise a popular and traditional feature of the town centre, this has been delayed through complications due to Network Rail.

We are continuing to work with WHG to deliver an £88m housing and environmental works scheme at Goscote providing in excess of 750 homes over the next few years.

Consideration is currently being given to a proposal to extend the Black Country Enterprise Zone, involving land in Wolverhampton and Darlaston, as part of the J10 cluster of sites. We are working hard to identify a private sector partner to remediate and develop the Phoenix 10 site next to the M6 in partnership with the landowners of the Homes and Communities Agency.

Discussions are ongoing with the seven metropolitan West Midlands authorities and their partners on a possible devolution deal for the West Midlands which could result in the creation of a Combined Authority. This is part of the Government's response to English Devolution following the no vote in Scotland and promises of Devo/max.

We are consulting on the preferred options for the Site Allocation Document and Walsall Town Centre Area Action Plan which will be vital to the prosperity of the borough in the period to 2026.

My Portfolio also includes Economic development, under my direction officers established the Walsall Economic Board in 2012 to assist in driving forward the creation of local jobs together with ensuring that local people had the skills and opportunity to secure them.

I would like to bring to your attention the work we are doing to create local jobs through the Council's Employment Growth Team, who during 2014/15 created;

- 152 new jobs,
- safeguarded 92,
- worked with local businesses to secure almost £1m of external grants in support of their expansion,
- over £4million of new business for local companies through our meet the buyer events,
- for every £1 of council money invested in the team they secured £16.13 of external grants.

Their annual report for 2014/15 is attached for your information.

Secondly the work of the Council's Employment and Skills Team, who together with partners assist local people to secure and remain in employment through initiatives including our successful Walsall Works Apprenticeship programme that has so far since July 2012 created 937 pre / full apprenticeships and supported 867 young people into other positive outcomes, including training and employment.

I need to ensure that the homes Walsall people need are being built, including a range of affordable and private housing options, and regenerating derelict sites within the borough – an ongoing project over many years.

During 2014/15 Kier completed the first phase of the Harrowby Road development in Moxley, developing 72 affordable homes that we part funded through our new homes bonus allocation. In addition, last year saw the completion of 40 new timber framed homes in Beechdale, providing high levels of energy efficiency and low heating bills. These homes were manufactured across the road from the site, by local people employed in Accord's award winning factory that our Administration was at the forefront of securing and establishing.

Overall 330 affordable rent homes were completed last year. Building on this achievement we worked closely with the Homes and Communities Agency and our main affordable housing providers to ensure that £15m grant funding was attracted to Walsall for our housing providers to deliver 715 affordable homes between 2015 and 2018. This was 1 of the largest allocations in the region, second only to Birmingham.

As well as increasing affordable housing provision, home ownership is also high on my agenda. In 2013 our Administration launched Walsall's Local Authority Mortgage Scheme, administered by Lloyds bank. We invested £2m with Lloyds to act as a guarantee, and to date this scheme has now helped 64 first time buyers achieve the dream of owning their own home.

Looking forward, we will:

- continue to provide support to stimulate the housing market within Walsall, working with public and private house builders and landlords.
- maximise the number of affordable homes provided, with a particular refocus on ensuring mixed tenure schemes, and we will work hard to unlock derelict land and stalled housing sites that blight some parts of Walsall.
- work hard to increase affordable warmth in new and existing homes
- bring long term empty homes back into use.
- encourage developers to provide suitable housing developments, which take into account the impacts of bedroom tax.

Transportation makes a vital contribution to the local economy and serves as an important catalyst to aid its recovery. My job is to ensure we sustain this contribution and deliver schemes where funding has been identified.

A major improvement to Junction 10 of the M6 is being developed in conjunction with DfT and Highways England. Funding of £64m has been secured for this scheme through the Black Country Local Enterprise Partnership and Highways England together local tax payers money. An innovative governance model between the funding partners is being established to deliver the project. Preliminary design work and an assessment of the land required are currently being prepared.

During the last year the Council implemented 38 highways maintenance schemes over a total length of 11.6km of carriageway at a cost of some £4m. In the last five months we have completed 9 carriageway resurfacing schemes at a cost of some £605,000 and completed 8 footway resurfacing schemes at a cost of some £370,000. In addition we have carried out £150,000 of patch repairs using the innovative Velocity Patch system.

Earlier this year we were successful in securing an additional £5.1m from the government's Challenge Fund for use on the classified road network with the aim of assisting regeneration and the local economy.

In March the Council gave approval to the Highways Maintenance Strategy and Asset Management Plan for 2015 to 2018. I have recently approved the detailed Programme for 2015/16 which was compiled with the help of the new objective scoring approach to prioritising highways schemes.

As part of the Darlaston Strategic Development Area Access Project we have commenced construction of the new and improved road layout and completed the construction of the Bentley Road North railway bridge. Works to the major junctions at Bescot Road and Darlaston Road, which form part of this project, are progressing well.

We continue to work with the Portfolio Holder for Learning, Skills and Apprenticeships, to deliver the Sustainable Mode of Travel Strategy including the award winning A\* programme with emphasis on education and training at schools. In the last five months we have involved over 640 parents and reception children in a

range of activities. Over 10,000 children across 40 schools participated in our Walk to School Week and Bike Week campaigns held in May and June.

As part of the road safety aspects we have trained 126 secondary children to level 3 Bikeability Standard with 1550 students trained to level 2. The Council has introduced 20 mph areas for five estates and we are currently assessing their effectiveness with a view to extension into other areas.

A review of the winter gritting service is underway in conjunction with our partner, Tarmac, so that we will be adequately prepared for this winter.

Consultation events have been held this month to consider the proposals designed to address traffic congestion and road safety concerns along Caldmore Road.

Major proposals are currently being formulated for a major £14m 'Invest to Save' scheme to install LED technology throughout the borough's street lighting network.

We will continue with our efforts to provide a replacement for York's Bridge to enhance safety and accessibility in the Pelsall area following the Planning Inspector's recommendation to identify further land to become Common land.

Liaison with Network Rail will continue in relation to the major Chase Line Electrification Project and associated bridge works to protect the interests of the borough. We will continue to talk to the Department for Transport (DfT) regarding motorway improvement works.

My Community Safety team has led on delivering many parts of the Anti-Social Behaviour Crime and Policing Act 2014 across the borough including the Community Trigger.

The team has helped to develop and coordinate a youth ASB project in North Walsall in which the Reach Up Tower and Move Truck were taken to hot spots during school holiday period.

The Cohesion Through Cricket project brought young people together through the medium of cricket and has had significant outcomes in terms of people of difference playing sport and socialising together. Over 500 young people have been involved in the project in less than 3 months.

A Domestic Abuse Coordinator was recruited in February 2015 using Community Safety grant funding. The Coordinator has been working with partners to ensure a broadly based approach to tackling the problem of domestic abuse across the borough.

Walsall Mela took place in Palfrey Park over the August Bank Holiday involving a variety of performers with a wide cross-section of the community attending and mixing together in a safe and enjoyable environment.

The Council Environmental Health team continues to respond to thousands of concerns raised by residents and businesses regarding matters posing a risk to

health. Through support we have provided, 82% of Walsall food businesses are compliant with food law requirements which is the highest for many years. In contrast, a number of enforced closures of food businesses due to rodent infestations have taken place and five food businesses have been prosecuted for serious breaches of food law. Investigations into three food poisoning outbreaks have highlighted the need to ensure food produced and sold in the Borough is safe.

Officers across the Council are working with our partners to improve the way we use our collective resources across a range of enforcement activity. Over the course of the year we have trialled new approaches to tackling environmental crimes. A project involving West Midlands Police, Walsall Housing Group and the Council's noise team saw staff working together at night to intervene at problem premises and locations.

Investment in the economy and infrastructure is fundamental to making Walsall a great place to live, work and play. We are committed to improving services that support the growth and development of the borough's economy and protect the public. This is challenging in times of unprecedented financial restraint but the performance of our services shows yet again that we are making real progress towards this goal.

**Councillor A Andrew**

**Portfolio Holder for Economy, infrastructure and development**

**September 2015**

# Investment and Employment Growth Report

Annual Report: April 2014-March 2015

Walsall Employment Growth Team supports businesses to achieve sustainable growth and undertake investment in Walsall.

152

New jobs identified in Walsall businesses

36

Grants secured for Walsall businesses

92

Jobs safeguarded

£4,100,000

Business Investment

**TWO** new initiatives to support businesses:

Referral to Walsall Works Job Brokerage service

Support to win work locally through local supply chain



Walsall Council

investing  
in your future  
European Regional Development Fund  
European Union



**WALSALL**  
A PLACE TO DO BUSINESS ●



## Foreword

Walsall is a great place to do business!

It is the job of Walsall Council to enable investment, development and the creation of job opportunities in our borough.

Building on this past year, we will also continue to work hard alongside our Black Country and regional partners to increase the level of regional and national investment opportunities that come to Walsall Borough.

Our focus is on supporting existing and future businesses to help them achieve continued success for themselves, but also for Walsall residents and customers.

**Clr Adrian Andrew**

*Deputy Leader of Walsall Council*

*Portfolio Holder for Economy, Infrastructure and Development*



## From the Executive Director

Walsall Council's role in supporting development is to create links which are essential to the growth of local businesses, commit to creating jobs and helping people acquire new skills, and capture the investment coming into Walsall.

All this, with the support of our local business community, can be achieved through partnerships at regional and national levels; working to achieve long-term sustainable growth for Walsall

**We want to ensure that every investment we and our partners make into Walsall is an investment in our economic future.**

**Simon Neilson**

*Executive Director, Economy & Environment*

## Our Commitment to Walsall - Employment Growth Team Strategy

Actively supporting local businesses and providing them with the best possible opportunities to expand, and create more jobs in the borough. Expanding the number of businesses in the borough through both inward investment and new businesses development.

Walsall will be a place where:

- Companies invest in the future of their business (infrastructure) and the wellbeing of their employees (upskilling)
- Businesses invest in the local community through corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives
- Enterprise, innovation, self employment and new business is encouraged
- Businesses have access to finance and support in order to maximise opportunities for growth
- Supply chains are developed with businesses that are fit to supply both locally and into new and diverse markets
- Inward investment is drawn into the borough, expanding the range and increasing the quality of local jobs on offer
- Foreign markets are opened up to local companies

### **Funding and Return on Investment**

The Employment Growth Team comprises of 3 full time members of staff. The team is part funded through the European Regional Development Fund.

***For every £1 spent  
Walsall Council levers in  
£3.68 from other sources***

This year, our team assisted businesses in securing £1,000,000 in grant funding. (See page 7)

***£16.13 in grants secured  
for every pound spent by  
Walsall Council 2014-15***

### **Our Approach**

Contact and Conversation

- We want to get to know and understand business, through direct engagement, working with partner organisations, hosting and attending business to business events.

Digital Comms

- **Making information Accessible** with Walsall.com: A business-oriented website about our team, the offer to local firms and information for companies planning to move or expand into the borough.
- **Keeping in Touch** through E-mail newsletters: Investment Newsletters are delivered to 1200 business contacts on a monthly basis. Additional information about events and projects is disseminated via e-mail on an ad hoc basis.
- **Interactive Engagement** via Social Media: The team operates a Twitter account advertising events and interacting with Walsall Business accounts.



**Who we met this year:**

**Business Engagement by Sector**

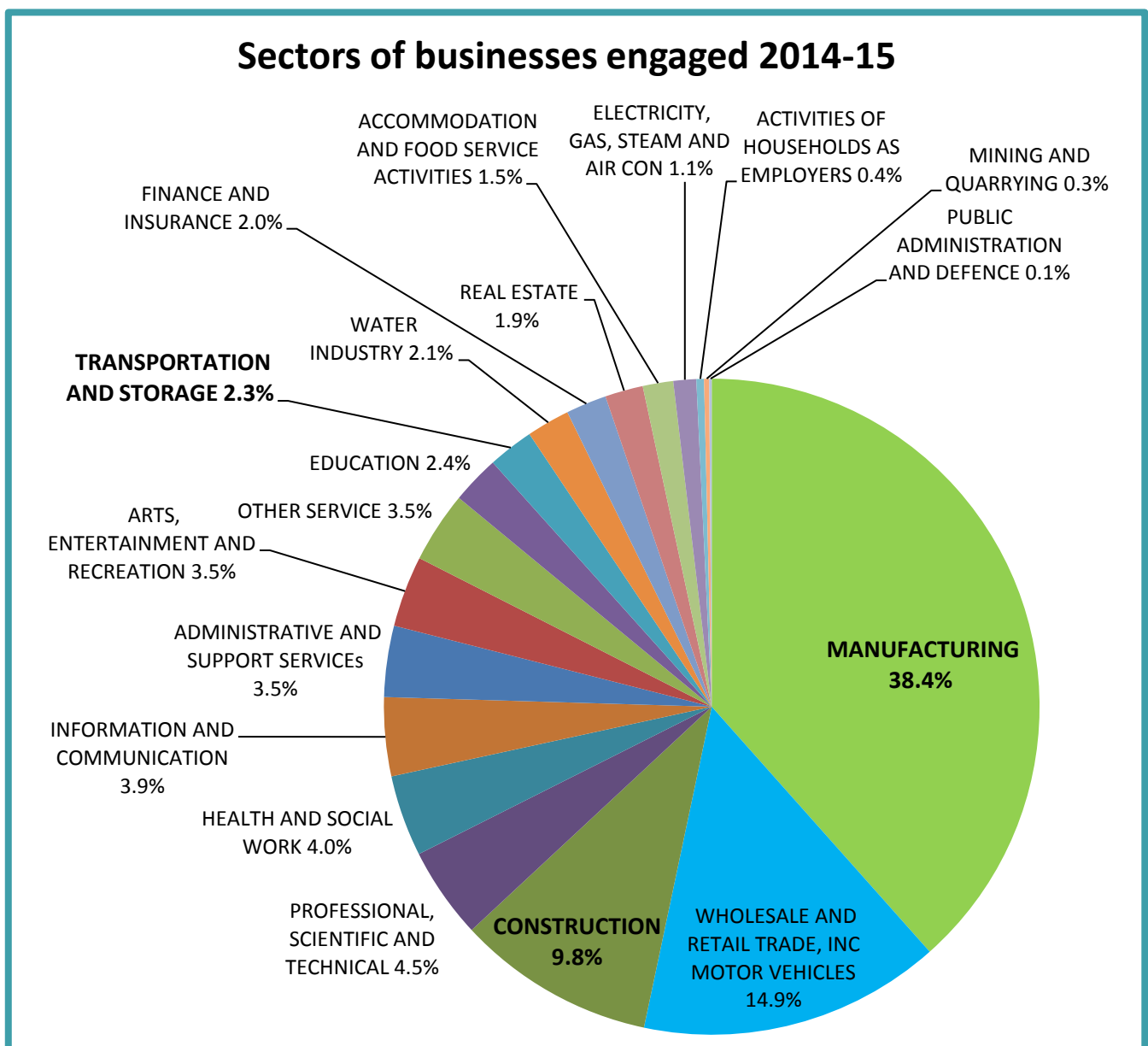
From the graph below it is clear that approximately half of businesses engaged in the year 2014-15 were in three of our strategic sectors:

- Advanced Manufacturing
  - Automotive
  - High Value
- Construction (Building Technologies)
- Transport & Logistics

**Sector Penetration Successes**

Of the 785 **Manufacturing** businesses in Walsall, **44%** were engaged this year.  
We also reached **20%** of **Construction** sector firms.

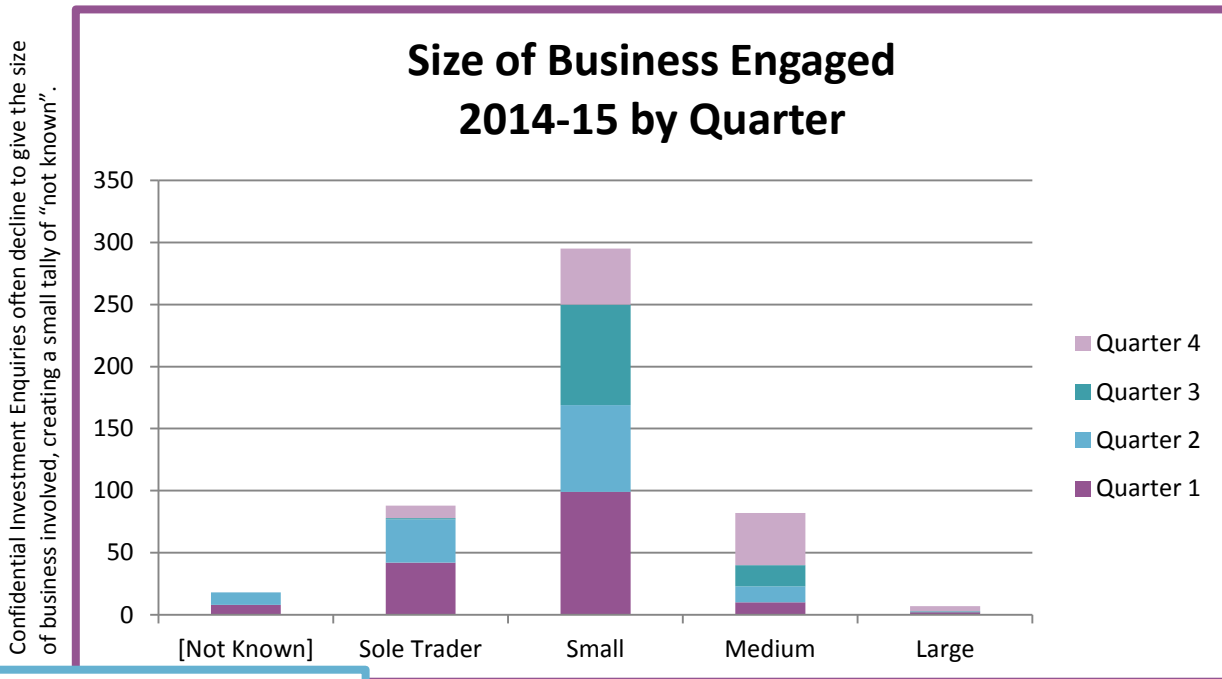
Retail and Wholesale represent just under a sixth, and the variety of sectors represented in the final third is a good indicator of the diversity of Walsall’s business community, and our reach to businesses of all types.



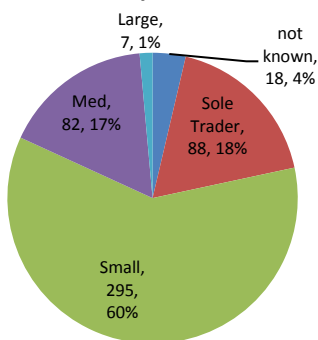
## Business Engagement by Size

Businesses in Walsall range from large multinationals, wholesale and larger retailers to a host of individuals and Sole Traders across all sectors.

This year, the team engaged with three small businesses (fewer than 50 employees) in every five contacts. Small businesses represent the greatest proportion of engagement in every sector, but most especially in Construction and Manufacturing.



**Number of Businesses Engaged 2014-15 by Business size**



### Case Study – Small Business Wins Work Locally

Supporting local supply chain through a Meet the Buyer event, Nov 2014.

Spectrum Fire Protection (UK) Ltd based in Middlemore Lane, Aldridge was awarded the contract for the repairs and maintenance of the automatic opening vent (AOV) system at Jessup Brothers' award-winning canalside Waterfront South residential development in Walsall town centre.

**"We found the Meet the Buyer event very helpful,"** said Anna Wilkins, customer support manager at Spectrum Fire."

**"It was a really well organised event** and gave us the rare opportunity to meet face to face with these nationwide developers. There's a huge amount of development going on in Walsall and it was great that we were able to introduce ourselves to Clive who recommended us as a supplier to Art One, who manage and maintain these beautiful canalside apartments."

A representative of Walsall Council, said: "We're delighted that Spectrum has secured this contract with Jessup. **We want local businesses - no matter how small or great - to have the opportunity to tender** for work on these exciting developments and to take advantage of these regeneration activities in the borough."

Original Article on [Walsall Council Website](#).



## The Impact of Business Engagement

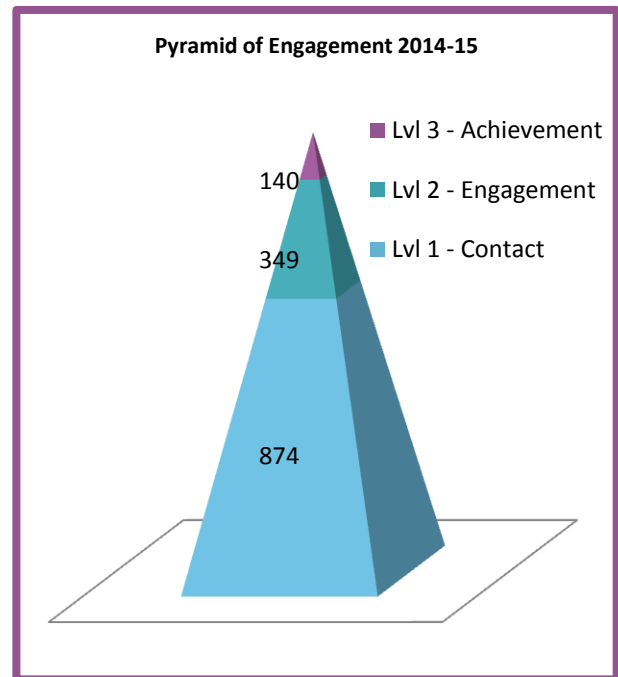
Of nearly 1400 business contacts this year, two thirds were initial contact (**Level 1**), as shown in the pyramid diagram.

Where a business asks for and receives support or information from the team, this is a **Level 2** Engagement. Achievements which meet our strategic objectives, such as grant offers, new premises, increased employment or winning additional business are **Level 3** outcomes.

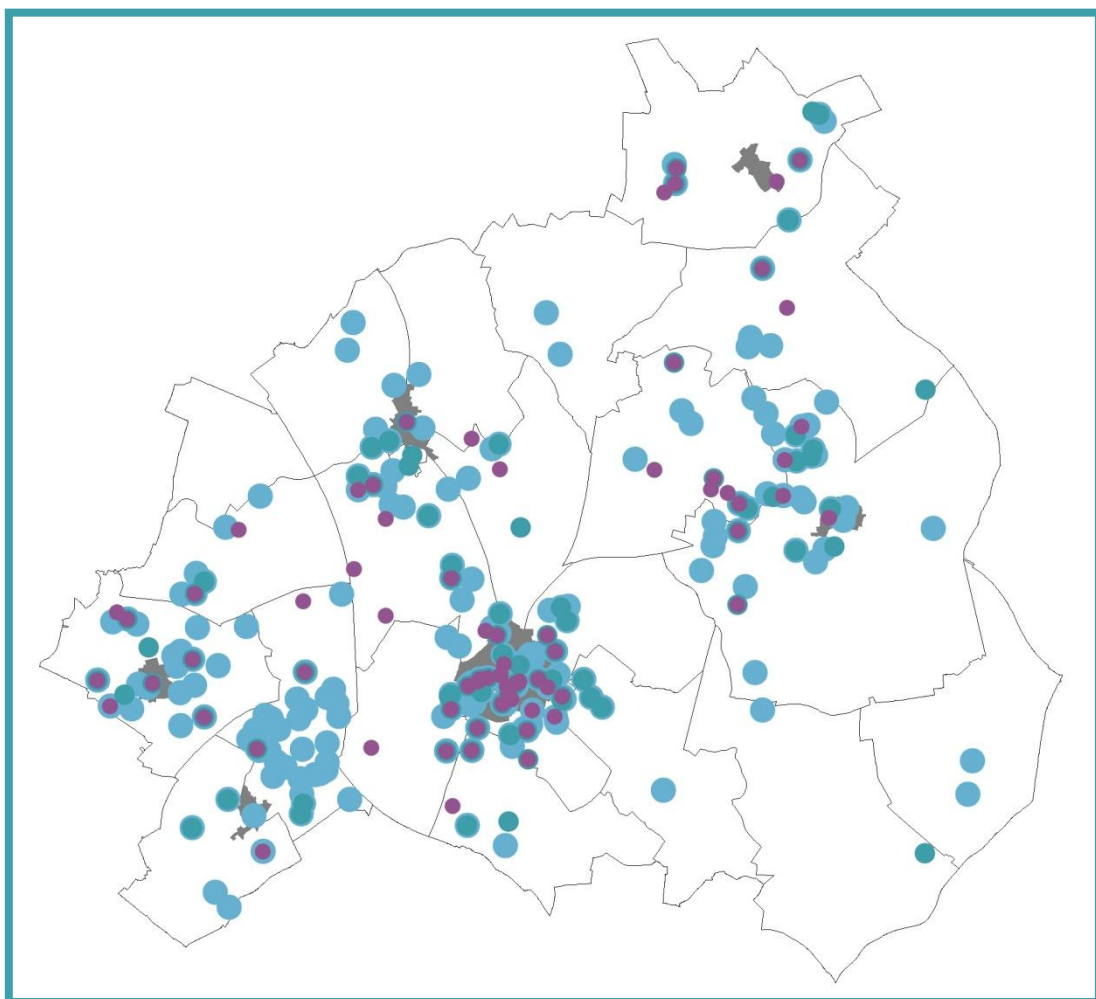
Level 3 outcomes represent the culmination of continuous engagement. Projects can take more than 12 months or start and finish in different reporting years.

## Business Engagement by Location

Engagement has not been limited to the traditional industrial centres of the borough in Darlaston, Willenhall, Pleck, Bentley, Bloxwich, Brownhills and Aldridge. The simplified map below shows engagement with businesses by postcode (colours as pyramid, above) but does not include businesses beyond the borough with inward investment enquiries.



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## Funding and Grant Application Support

80% of Level 3 outcomes recorded for local businesses relate to grant funding, as shown in the pie chart below. We have assisted 36 successful grant bids, including a significant number of Black Country GOLD grants.

The **total value of grants** offered was **one million pounds** although this may not represent the final value drawn down by businesses<sup>1</sup>. Black Country GOLD grants represent £200,000 in total.

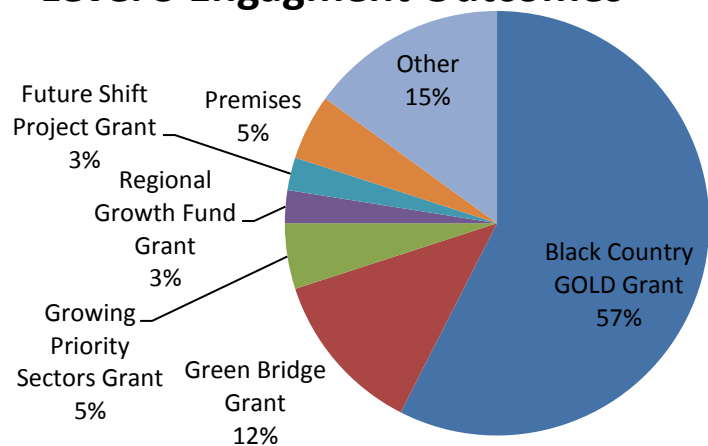
Key strategic recipients include:

- AlphaDrive Engineering Services Ltd
- H Davenport & Sons
- Lodent Precision Ltd
- Lonsdale Metal Merchants Ltd
- Midlands Toiletries
- Motad Ltd
- Offshore Stainless Steels Ltd
- One-Lux Ltd
- Superior Sections Ltd

**36**

Grants secured for  
Walsall businesses

### Level 3 Engagement Outcomes



#### **Case Study – Exhaust Manufacturer benefits from Grant Support**

Supporting innovation through access to Black Country GOLD, an ERDF project.

Initially based in London, **Motad moved to Walsall in 1980**; the company currently sources the majority of their components from within a 10 mile radius of the Black Country and **prides itself on championing local industry**.

Business owner John Atherton said: “The **funding process was easy to follow and the timescale was quick**; it only took eight weeks from our expression of interest until the council gave its final authorisation.

“The funding will help us to **underpin the growth strategy of attracting further OEM customers** and we will also be able to demonstrate our commitment to the latest technologies to ensure competitive pricing and exceptional quality.”

A representative of Walsall Council said: “It’s great that a Walsall company such as Motad has benefited from the Black Country GOLD initiative and is using it to enhance its reputation as **a key supplier within the motor trade**.”

Original Article on [Midland Business News](#).



<sup>1</sup> Actual recorded total value £999,900 across 36 applications. Grant bodies are not obliged to inform Local Authority teams when a grant offer is made, and intelligence is often accepted as received from the companies concerned.

## Black Country GOLD Project

The Black Country GOLD Project was open from June 2013 to March 2015. Walsall Council’s contribution to the project as a partner was £17,000 and matched 25% of an officer’s time.

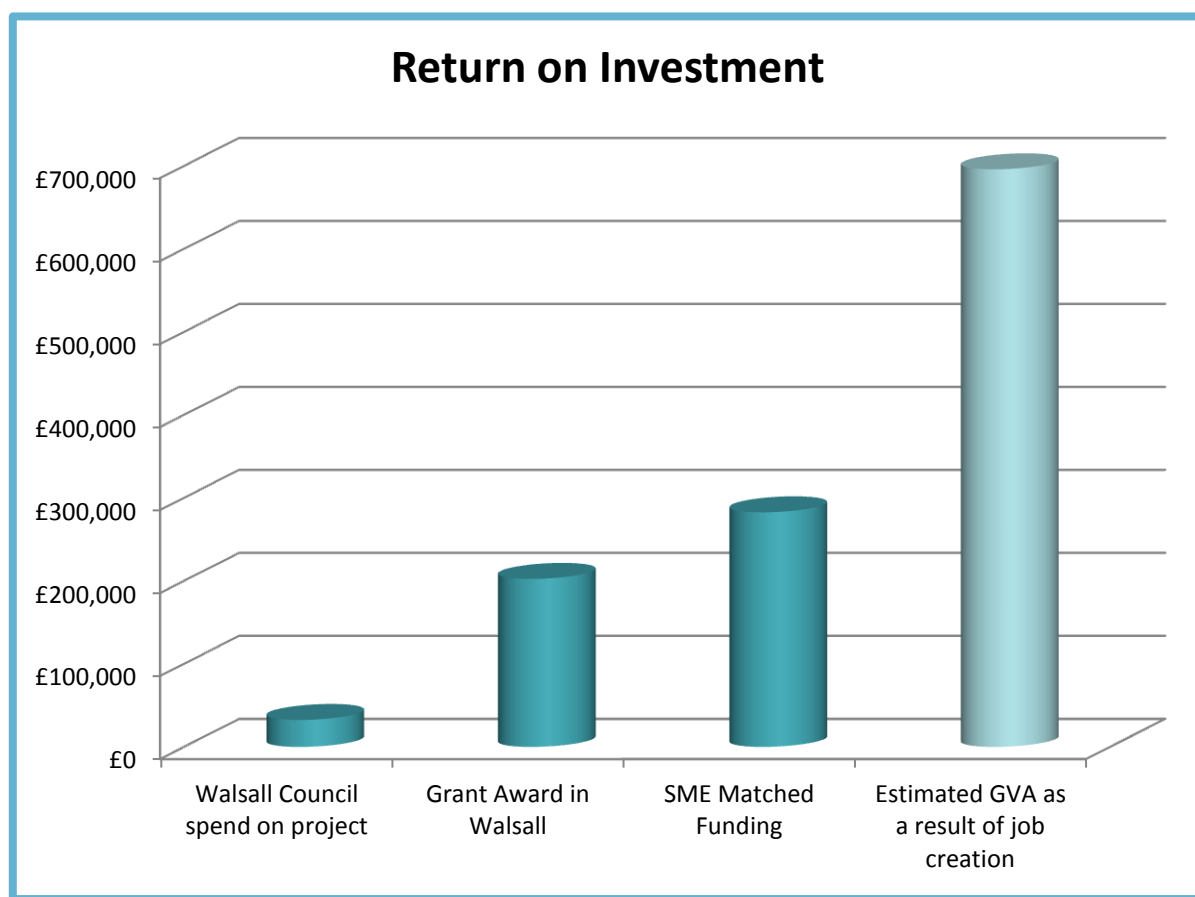
This project achieved tremendous success during 2014-15. Many Walsall businesses benefitted from both grant support and mentoring support. In summary some of the achievements of the project were:

- **Every £1 of ERDF attracted £1.31 match funding from SMEs.**
- Each LA partner contributed £32,500 in cash / staff time
  - **For every £1 of this, Walsall attracted ERDF grants and SME match of £14.93**

The table below sets out how the programme has been received across Walsall:

	Capital Grant	Revenue Grant	Total Grant	Private Sector	Total Project Value
<b>Total:</b>	£96,483.46	£107,644.00	<b>£202,467.91</b>	£282,680.51	<b>£485,148.02</b>
<b>Average:</b>	£4,020.14	£4,485.17	<b>£8,436.16</b>	£11,778.35	<b>£20,214.50</b>

**23 businesses** generated **29 jobs** as a result of successful applications to this project.<sup>2</sup>



<sup>2</sup> These jobs are reported roles created within businesses. Participating firms have until March 2016 to recruit to these positions under the terms of Black Country GOLD.

## Employment Growth Support

Support to businesses was offered across a range of products – finance, employment, premises, and CSR advice were core topics, along with referrals made across the Council to departments including Business Rates, Transport and Planning.

Led by market intelligence, and aligned to our strategic objectives, we undertook a number of projects:

- Meet the Buyer (resulting in a large quantity of enquiries in Nov 2014)
- GOLD grant application support and administration.
- Supporting businesses in the area affected by the Darlaston Strategic Development Area Access Project. (Initial engagement conducted largely Oct and Nov 2014)
- Virtual Construction Supply Chain Initiative, gathering data on local suppliers and subcontractors to pass to developers working in Walsall.
- “We’re with Walsall” awareness and promotion campaign working with



Walsall FC and HomeServe to engage the residents and business

community, to celebrate their first Wembley fixture. This included providing the Walsall Town Hippo with a bespoke Walsall home kit.

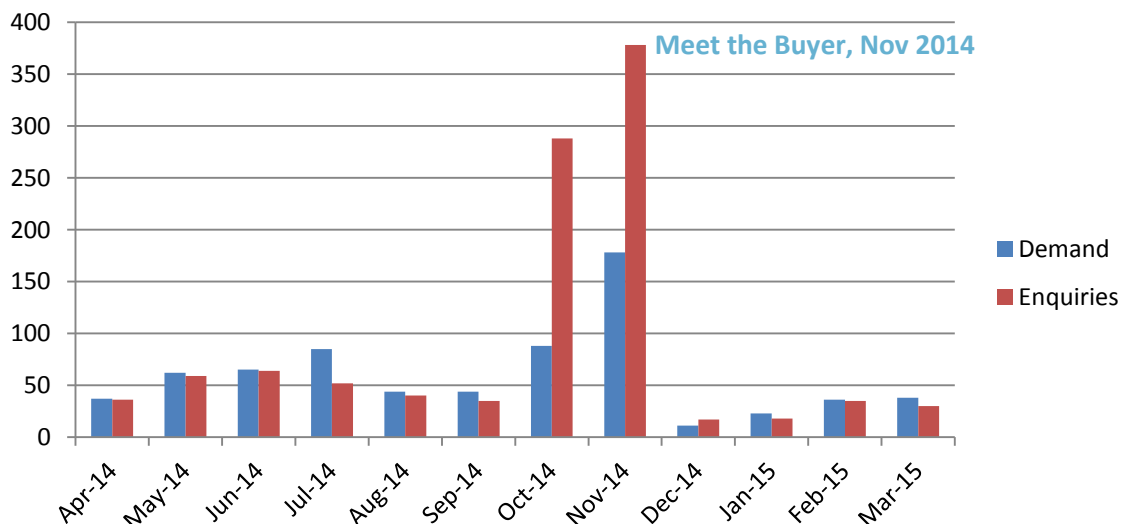
Data regarding job creation is based on intelligence received from businesses who are engaged with the team. These businesses reported the creation of 152 new roles and the safeguarding of 92 further posts.

A key strategy for filling these roles with local people is to refer businesses to the free jobs brokerage service offered as part of Walsall Works. This is a new initiative which was picked up in the course of the year 2014-15. A case study of such a referral can be found on page 12 of this report.

**152**  
New jobs identified in Walsall businesses

**92**  
Jobs Safeguarded

### Demands and Enquiries 2014-15 by month





## Investment from Businesses

Investment related to grants and business growth totalled £4.1 million in the year 2014-15. This relates in part to the funds pledged by businesses to projects which received grant funding, and also to intelligence received regarding capital expenditure on equipment.

This figure does not include a £12 million investment by Walsall College in their new Business and Sports Hub or the £3 million Jhoots Pharmacy headquarters which was begun in late 2014. Work also began on the LIGHT cinema complex at Walsall Waterfront, and on two public sector projects where ISG has been commissioned to deliver modern leisure facilities for communities in Walsall Wood and Bloxwich.

Further infrastructure investment by the public sector includes the £26 million Darlaston Strategic Development Area Access Project. A team member is assisting this project as Business Liaison Officer, working with local firms to ensure there is a clear line of communication with the local business community.

## Incoming Property Investment and Acquisition

Incoming occupation of premises was slightly lower than 2013-14 at 105,951 square feet. Key investment has been made in retail premises, with the forthcoming Primark and Coop development in Walsall Town Centre, and the establishment of Norbert Dentressangle's 50,000 sq ft warehouse in Brownhills.

Further intelligence on incoming enquiries continues to be referred from the Invest Black Country service, delivering their inward investment marketing programme "Made in the Black Country, Sold around the world." (<http://www.investblackcountry.com/>)

**£4.1m**

**Business Investment**

**106**

**Thousands of square feet of premises occupied by new business.**

### **Case Study – Department of Health approve of new Pharmacy HQ in Walsall**

Supporting investment and growth in the borough.

Under Secretary of State for the Department of Health, Earl Howe, has visited the site of a **new pharmacy headquarters** in Walsall.

Mr Howe has marked the commencement of work on the new £3 million Jhoots Pharmacy headquarters in **Walsall's Gigaport**. The new headquarters is **set to create 31 jobs** at the 20,000 sq ft complex.

Manjit Jhooty, managing director of Jhoots Pharmacy Group, stressed how keen he was to **keep his business in Walsall**.

He said: "We were keen for our head office to remain in Walsall and we are grateful to Walsall Council for their encouragement for us to develop it on the site at Hatherton Street, which is ideal for our purposes."



Original Article on [Walsall Advertiser](#).

## Land and Property Investment

82 new sites and premises enquiries were received in 2014-15 by the Employment Growth Team. They were a combination of existing Walsall businesses seeking expansion space, and those businesses considering Walsall as an investment location. Just over a third of these enquirers were seeking land with the majority searching for existing premises.

The nature of these projects is that they often last more than 12 months, and very few occur in one reporting year. There is a significant pipeline of investment

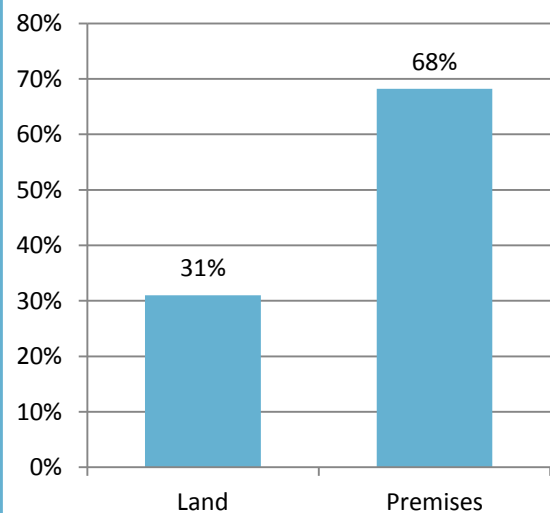
enquiries which is managed and reviewed regularly. Meetings with planning officers take place to help assess the suitability of known sites for specific enquiries and to facilitate exchange of market intelligence.

All incoming planning enquiries are provided with information pertaining to the team and the wider offer: employment and skill support, access to local supply chain details, support with finance and grant applications, etc.

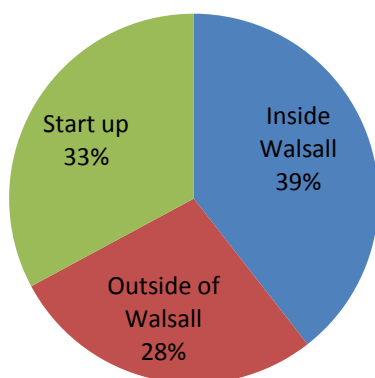
**82**

New sites and premises enquiries received

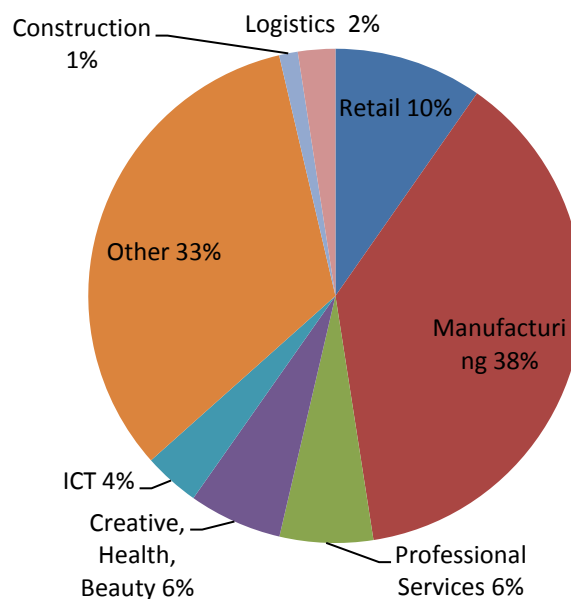
### Balance of Enquiries Received by Demand



### Enquiries Received by Location / Source



### Enquiries Received by Sector of Business



## **New Initiatives in 2014-15 to support Business Growth**

### **Case Study – Meet the Buyer, Nov 2014**

Supporting the local Construction Supply Chain

**Seventy representatives and owners** of local businesses enjoyed breakfast at Jerome’s Restaurant in Walsall College on Tuesday 25th November. They had registered interest in meeting the **procurement teams from Jessup Brothers, Interserve and Dawnus Construction** who each have significant multi-million pound projects under way in the borough. The meeting was a response to **the needs of local companies** looking for access to the supply chain.

After an introduction from Paul Sheehan the Chief Executive of Walsall Council, the council Leader Cllr Coughlan set out the **forward vision for investment in the borough**. There were briefings from Walsall College and each of the contractors, introducing their projects and expectations.

Ninety minutes of intense meetings followed; representatives were given only ten minutes one-to-one with each contractor. **Walsall businesses across the construction and highways sectors attended, over two thirds of which were SMEs.**

**6**

Walsall businesses  
winning work locally



Local businesses who attended said:

“Thanks for all your help making us visible to the contractors and helping us compete for business in the borough.”

“There’s some real potential from today’s meeting. I’ll be following up with them this week.”

“I wouldn’t normally come to something like this, but it’s been very positive. Are you running more events in the future?”

“It’s very useful to have three contractors in the same room. I didn’t realise so much was happening so close to home.”

### **Case Study – Davenport Burgess**

Supporting local recruitment through Walsall Works job brokerage

Davenport Burgess is a Willenhall based supplier of locks and components.

The team originally approached this firm with a general support offer, and worked to determine barriers to future growth. E-commerce was a small and relatively dysfunctional part of the company’s marketing and sales strategy. **GOLD was a suitable fit for their funding needs** and the grant was used to fund a project which included preparation and maintenance of a new website for the company.

As part of the GOLD agreement, two roles **were created in the business** for Data Entry Clerks. A referral was made to the **Walsall Works free job brokerage service**, and suitable applicants were presented to Davenport Burgess.

Two of these applicants were successful in securing the posts advertised, and continue to work within the business as it grows.



**5**

Businesses offered Walsall  
Works Job Brokerage

## Walsall Economic Board

The Walsall Economic Board, chaired by Mr Brian Lowe, forms part of the formal partnership arrangements for Walsall Borough and provides a voice on behalf of the Walsall Economy through its membership.

The Economic Board aims to ensure that the private sector voice is clearly heard and understood, as its representatives come together to champion the economic agenda and help to develop the Walsall economy. They explore the key issues and priorities for the borough under three themes: People, Place and Business. Then, based on a consideration of our strengths, weaknesses, challenges and opportunities, the Board develops and agrees actions that will help achieve positive outcomes for Walsall.

### Strategic Objective of the Walsall Economic Board



### Walsall Economic Board Membership 2014-15

Business	Employment Sector
Addison O'Hare Solicitors	Business Services
Aspray24	Logistics
Autobase	Retail / Motor
Caldmore Accord Housing Association	Health & Social Care
Fortel Construction	Construction
Handelsbanken (Walsall branch)	Finance
Homeserve plc	Finance / Service
Jhoots Pharmacy	Pharmaceuticals
LoneStar Group	Manufacturing / Service
Maloney Metalcraft (Avingtrans plc)	Manufacturing / Service
National Express West Midlands	Transport
Talent Navigator	Education / Professional, Scientific, Technical.
The Midcounties Co-operative	Service Sector
University of Wolverhampton	Education / Professional, Scientific, Technical.
Walsall College	Education
Wedge Group	Manufacturing
ZF Lemforder	Manufacturing

## **Looking Ahead 2015-16**

The team will continue to build on the momentum and success generated this year. Our ambitions for the coming year include:-

- *Targeted programme of business engagement incorporating our Strategic Companies as well as working across sectors and through supply chains*
- *Introducing a dedicated Construction Supply Chain Officer to drive employment and business growth, in this sector*
- *Establishing a series of working groups of public and private partners, to develop and deliver initiatives responding to the strategic objectives of Walsall Economic Board, under the three themes Place, People and Business*
- *Developing an Enterprise Plan, to support individuals looking to set up in businesses and help coordinate support across Walsall and from partners*
- *Shaping the Black Country Hub to ensure it meets the needs of businesses and unlocks economic growth for Walsall*
- *Develop and pilot a Community Engagement Action, bringing together the community and the businesses of Walsall.*
- *Shaping and influencing the forthcoming ESIF workstreams, to ensure they meet the needs of Walsall businesses, residents and the wider environment.*
- *Continuing to support Invest Black Country, to ensure Walsall's showcased as an investment location.*
- *Engaging with landowners and developers, and intermediaries to raise awareness of the services of the teams and stimulate investment and expansion, increasing economic growth for Walsall*
- *Continuing to support the DSDA project, to provide liaison and assistance to businesses within the project area.*
- *To secure continued funding, to support the activities of the team and its services*

## Ongoing Partnership Relationships

The Employment Growth Team continues to work in partnership with a range of organisations to enhance the offer to local businesses.



Dudley - Sandwell - Walsall - Wolverhampton



**Walsall Economic Board**

**Darlaston Strategic Development Area Access Project**



# Walsall Business News

How the press celebrated success in Walsall.

April 2014 – March 2015

Discount retailer **Poundland Group** saw sales leap by 13.3% year on year. The Willenhall company, whose shares started trading on the London Stock Exchange in March, revealed in a trading update that in the 52 week period ended March 30 total sales were £997.8m year compared to £880.5m in 2013.

**Work gets under way on of a £26 million scheme to transform the road network in Walsall and help create jobs.** The junction of Darlaston Road and Bescot Road, known locally as the Brown Lion junction, in Pleck, will be improved with new traffic lights, a widened carriageway and extra lanes on three of the approaches.

Walsall manufacturer targets growth after an injection of European funding. **Motad**, which moved to Walsall from London in 1980 to be closer to its suppliers, makes bespoke exhaust systems for popular Japanese motorcycles from the 1970s, 80s and 90s. It currently sources the majority of their components from within a 10 mile radius of the Black Country.

Aldridge based precision toolmakers **Phoenix Tooling and Development** celebrates its 25th anniversary. Phoenix, which now employs 13, has successfully built up a loyal customer base of both UK and international customers across a wide range of industries and markets including automotive, aerospace, white goods and electronics.

**Walsall College** announces £300k investment in a new engineering manufacturing workshop

**Assa Abloy** sees a 13% boost in first quarter sales, from strong growth in Europe, the Middle East and Asia.

The **Forum for the Built Environment** (FBE) – which boasts 2000 members nationwide from a wide variety of professionals working in the construction industry showcases some of the exciting regeneration projects taking place in Walsall town centre with their "Spotlight on Walsall" conference.

**Brownhills Glass** acquires Crawley's Tufwell Glass from Laidlaw Interiors Group for £2.4m.

**Blakemore** announces a £150m deal to supply Butlins resorts and Haven caravan parks in the UK. The five year deal means another 20 workers at its Darlaston base and more than £1 million spent on new vehicles.

Walsall's £400m 'Gigaport' business and office corridor receives a major boost with plans to build a new headquarters for **Jhoots Pharmacy** being given the go ahead.

The **Talent Navigator Enterprise Hub**, based at the award-winning Walsall Waterfront development celebrates its official opening.

Apprenticeships training and recruitment provider **The Pathway Group** expands its Walsall operations with the acquisition of the former home of Jerome K Jerome.

DIY curry kit firm **Hare's Moor** secures investment from Coleshill-based IM Group to help finance expansion plans. The investment secured – an undisclosed amount – will enable them to expand its product range, build relationships with the major UK supermarkets and move to larger premises.

**Walsall Housing Group** (whg) teams up with local developers **Jessup Build Develop** on a £5 million scheme, which will provide 44 specially adapted apartments for people aged over 55.

History was made at the Banks's Stadium as triumphant **Walsall FC** landed their first-ever trip to Wembley Stadium. Thousands of fans erupted in jubilation as the Saddlers held Preston North End to a goalless draw in the second leg of the Johnstone's Paint Trophy northern area Final

West Midlands-based discount retailer **Poundland** reports record Christmas trading.

**New Growth Hub** launched in the Black Country to give the area's businesses – especially those involved in manufacturing – better access to funding and other support.

Walsall housing provider **Walsall Housing Group** (WHG) appoints Keepmoat to build more than 400 homes in the borough as part of a £50m regeneration scheme

Construction group **Wates** acquires 100% of Walsall-based **Purchase Group** for an undisclosed sum. With an annual turnover of £30m and 120 employees, the Purchase Group is a family-owned construction and maintenance services business that works with housing association and local authority clients in the affordable housing sector in the Midlands and Wales.

Construction of the new **Primark** store in Walsall Town Centre has reached the halfway stage. The scheme is being funded by Walsall Council from its own cash reserves. The

£7.8m project, which began in March this year and will be completed Spring 2015, will also house a **Midcounties Co-operative Food Store** in the first phase redevelopment of the Old Square Shopping Centre.

Walsall College's proposed £11m **Business and Sports Hub** remains on course for opening in 2015 after initial drilling operations started on the site, which forms part of Walsall Council's long-term £400m Gigaport initiative.

**Home Serve** see's its policy of targeting the US market paying off. In November the Walsall-based group announces it is to invest £5m into its US operation after seeing business levels escalate. Announcing its interim results for the six months ended September 30, the firm revealed customer numbers in the US have now reached 1.7m, an increase of 20% over the period.

**Chamberlin's** secures a contract worth €26m (£21m) over eight years with a European automotive industry components and parts supplier.

**Goold Estates** sells the first part of its Stamp Factory industrial scheme in Walsall to **Synergy Biologics**

The Government's **Growth Deal funding** sees The Black Country LEP receive £35m in 2015-16, with approval for 14 of 16 projects submitted in the LEP's Strategic Economic Plan.

The Black Country is leading the way in the success of its business start-ups. New research has been published, showing they have grown to reach £1m turnover within three years.

Willenhall-based company **AlphaDrive Engineering Services**, which supplies and repairs the fabrication of bearings, industrial gearboxes, motors and power transmissions, see's sales increase to £320,000 after landing contracts in the aggregates, food and beverage and paper making sectors

August 2014 saw a new **record for company registrations** in Walsall

Professional services group **HCB** strengthens its presence in the Black Country with the acquisition of a Walsall law firm. **HCB** takes over the legal practice of **Clive Shepherd & Co**, moving the staff into offices in Lichfield Street which were acquired in 2011 when the group absorbed fellow Walsall legal firm **Hadens**.