

# Swindon & Wiltshire Growth Hub Impact Report: March 2021/22



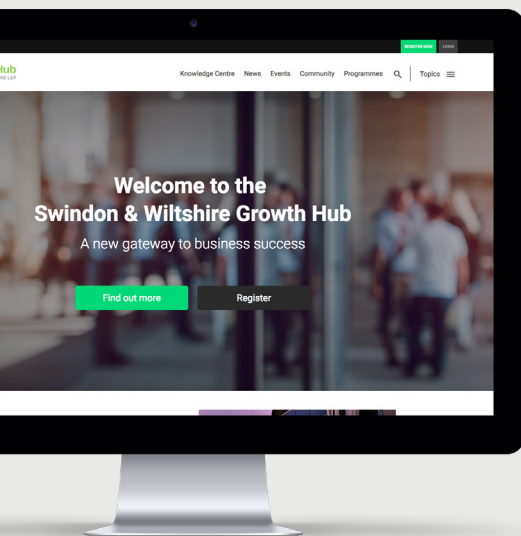
**Growth Hub**  
SWINDON & WILTSHIRE LEP

Part of the Swindon & Wiltshire Local Enterprise Partnership



# About the Swindon and Wiltshire Growth Hub

**The Swindon and Wiltshire Growth Hub is an integral part of the Swindon and Wiltshire Local Enterprise Partnership (SWLEP).**



The SWLEP was established in July 2011 by central Government as a private sector led partnership between local businesses, Swindon Borough Council, Wiltshire Council the military and the education sector.

In January 2019, SWLEP was incorporated as a company limited by guarantee with the objective of bringing about sustainable economic growth.

The company continues to play a central role in determining local economic priorities and undertaking activities to drive inclusive economic growth, working closely with Swindon Borough Council and Wiltshire Council alongside a wide range of local private sector organisations and the military.

The SWLEP is able to access Government

funding to channel investment into the area and in particular to support its strategic objectives in skills and talent (people), ideas, infrastructure and place, and the business environment.

Swindon and Wiltshire offers a highly competitive economy, ranked 12th out of the 38 Local Enterprise Partnerships in England.

By 2026, the SWLEP wants the area to be renowned for innovation, entrepreneurialism and great quality of life. The Swindon and Wiltshire Growth Hub supports that aim, providing fully funded (free) advice, guidance and brokerage with direct delivery, supporting businesses from pre-start to scale-up.







# About the Swindon and Wiltshire Growth Hub continued...

## The key support it provides includes:



- **Starting your business** – Get your business idea off the ground with a range of advice and resources available
- **Growing your business** – Scale-up support
- **Funding and finance** – Understanding and accessing finance and growth funds
- **Digital Capability** – Helping businesses develop their digital skills and digital offering
- **Skills support** – Free and impartial practical advice and support
- **Innovation and technology** – Support on how to maximise the effectiveness of technology in your business
- **Marketing and sales** – Methods for creating need and immediacy
- **Tax and compliance** – Ensuring your business operates legally and fairly
- **Sustainable business** – Providing tools and support to help your business become more environmentally conscious and reduce its carbon emissions
- **Strategy** – Helping you to identify and build your differentiating business capabilities
- **New product development** – Support to help you move from concept to customer
- **Import and export** – Advice and guidance including helping businesses navigate the UK's exit from the European Union
- **Coronavirus advice** – Up to date news, advice and funding support

**This report documents the work of the Growth Hub from March 2021 – March 2022.**



# Contents

Click to go directly to the page you'd like to visit. Click the home button (top right) to return to this page at any time.



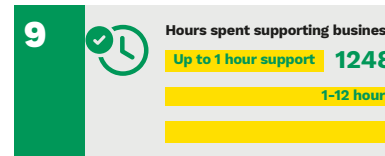
5 Foreword from the CEO



6 A note from the Growth Hub Manager



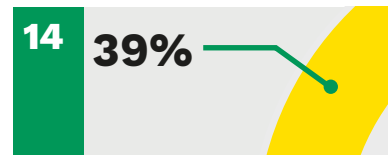
7 Growth Hub Priorities and Objectives 2021/22



9 Growth Hub support in numbers



10 Peer Network Success



14 Business support provided by area



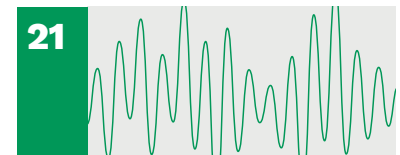
15 Going green



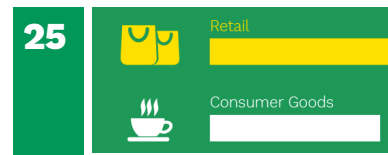
19 Digital support



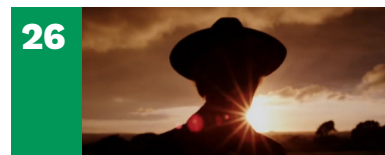
20 Web interaction



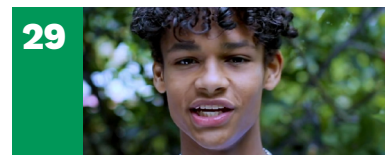
21 This Way Up



25 Interactions with business sectors



26 A GPIF success story: The Black Farmer



29 Kickstart: Boosting career opportunities



30 Matching skills to the right jobs



34 To the future



35 Find out more about SWLEP

## CASE STUDIES



CASE STUDY 11 Exeat



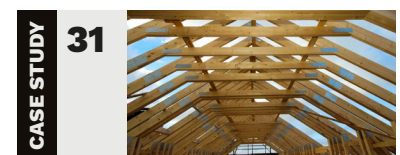
CASE STUDY 16 Packaging Not Included



CASE STUDY 22 Wylve Coyotes



CASE STUDY 27 Westwire Harnessing Limited



CASE STUDY 31 Stoneleigh Timber Engineering Limited





# Foreword from the CEO

Paddy Bradley is Chief Executive Officer of the Swindon and Wiltshire Local Enterprise Partnership of which the Growth Hub is an integral part.



We continue to be proud of the support our Growth Hub provides and in the last year it has seen further adaption to match the business community's needs.

The extent of Swindon and Wiltshire Growth Hub's work in 2020-21 was unprecedented as we rose to the challenge of the effect of the Covid-19 pandemic on businesses. The team provided thousands of local businesses with support and guidance during this time, including assistance with the various Government Coronavirus grants, loans and job retention schemes. They worked incredibly hard to ensure that our business community had access to timely guidance and reliable information.

During 2021-22, we moved into the next phase of the Growth Hub's development and how we could deliver more to create a greater impact. The Growth Hub's flow of work in 2020-21 was very transactional, people coming in, getting information, and leaving. A lot of high-volume contact with low level interactions. What changed in 2021-22 was a reduction in low level

support and a move to more medium/high intensity work where we engaged with businesses over a longer period of time. This was good for our overall knowledge of the businesses and enabled us to tailor our support. We exceeded our Government target in medium level support for businesses for up to six hours by 200% and we also focused on the number of new businesses that we were trying to reach.

We pride ourselves on working openly, transparently, and also vigorously to ensure we make the most of every pound we get from Government. In 2021-22, we underspent by 7p and delivered on all the objectives set for us in return for the funding.

The Growth Hub is a well-run team, and we engage in a modern way, one to many with webinars, followed up as necessary with individual support. We also broadened our services in 2021-22 to provide a skills clinic, designed for people to drop-in and meet with our training advisors. This is to meet the needs of businesses large and small which are currently struggling to recruit

and employ people with the right skills and to help in our campaign to increase the take up of apprentices.

Looking to the future, the Government's Growth Hub funding is set to be reduced by 50%. Funding has been cut throughout the country. We're now looking at what we can offer for free and what we can offer at a commercial rate. Moving forwards, we will be offering a new Growth Hub Plus offering which will include additional elements of support beyond the core free offer. The extra elements will provide added value, for which we will be charging a fee. It is all aimed at providing a targeted business support service which ignites growth for our area. I encourage you to get in touch and find out how we can help support your business.

**Paddy Bradley**

Chief Executive Officer,  
Swindon & Wiltshire Local Enterprise Partnership



# A note from the Growth Hub Manager

Whilst some level of (new) normality has been restored over this last year, we are not out of the woods yet.



The Central Government's message has still been that of caution and despite the lifting of restrictions and the economy unlocking, this has been reflected in the mood of the Swindon and Wiltshire business community.

We continue to see businesses feeling the longer-term effects of the pandemic combined with new challenges and threats brought about by national and international events such as the cost-of-living crisis and the economic impact of the conflict in Ukraine.

The response of companies has been see-sawing with the pandemic infection waves. However, with the vaccination roll out and the aforementioned 'caution' exercised, businesses are moving into a more solid state of recovery, with some stability. They are able to plan, for their time ahead and understand more about what their future trading environment looks like.

Swindon and Wiltshire Growth Hub continues to play a crucial frontline

role, providing information, advice, guidance, brokerage and direct support to businesses across multiple and sometimes complex issues. As you might expect, access to finance has remained a prominent concern for many and with the acceleration of digital communications and services, more and more businesses require support with their digital capability, an area into which the Growth Hub has deployed specific resource.

With the growing importance of achieving Net Zero by 2050, the Growth Hub continues to provide direct, specialist support to businesses with the ambition to reduce their carbon emissions. SWLEP itself has joined the SME Climate Hub, a UN and UK Government initiative, and made the pledge, leading by example, joining the international business community in efforts to reduce carbon emissions.

The issue of skills continues as an area to explore for businesses reviewing workforce development and seeking to understand what options are available

to them, particularly apprenticeships. Our Growth Hub has a dedicated skills team, servicing this need in partnership with regional training and education providers.

The Growth Hub has shown versatility in being a Gateway Organisation for the Department for Work and Pension's Kickstart Scheme, brokering and facilitating over 100 young people moving into employment.

Through a combination of webinars, workshops and one-to-one support, leveraging funding from the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy and the European Regional Development Fund, our Growth Hub continues to deliver business support services as part of SWLEP, from pre-start to scale-up for financial year 2022/23.

**Chris Stevens**

*Growth Hub Manager,  
Swindon and Wiltshire Local Enterprise Partnership*





# A year in review

## Growth Hub Priorities and Objectives 2021/22

**With the pandemic still at large moving into financial year 2021/22, a key focus of the Swindon and Wiltshire Growth Hub remained being the conduit between the SME business community and Local Authorities (LAs) in providing information, advice, guidance and brokerage around eligibility and access to grant funding. This also worked in reverse, with LAs referring into the Growth Hub for businesses in need of further support.**



**The team enjoyed being able to get out into the community towards the end of the year, attending in-person events and business shows.**

Working individually and in partnership, the Growth Hub delivered comprehensive support to over 2,200 businesses, leveraging European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) funded projects also to ensure high value and a joined-up approach to working. Staple areas of business support delivered included access to finance, digital capability, green economy and skills, with specialist support carried out in partnership with carefully chosen organisations. Areas covered throughout the year include carbon emissions reduction, data solutions, cyber security and health and well-being – specifically relating to managing change.

Business support has been delivered in both digital/virtual and physical environments, combining one-to-one sessions, webinars and workshops.

The Growth Hub team started the year firmly home-based but as restrictions lifted and more freedom afforded in the workplace, towards the end of this financial year staff had started to return to the office with the SWLEP operating a hybrid working arrangement.

The team enjoyed being able to get out into the community towards the end of the year, attending

in-person events and business shows. Conditions have continued to be tough for business but there has been a real sense of togetherness with all our region's business support organisations continuing to work collectively for the area's success.

As the financial year came to an end, concerns about the rise in the cost of living and the conflict in Ukraine dominated the headlines. Data insight specialists Maru/Blue conducted a national business survey which reported the top issues keeping small business owners awake at night.

Top issues keeping small business owners awake at night:

- Prospect of Ukraine crisis turning into a European war: 22%
- Impact of Ukraine crisis on fuel crisis and cost of living: 19%
- Retaining business: 19%
- Recruitment: 16%
- Managing cash flow: 15%

*This research was conducted by Maru/Blue among a representative sample of 272 small business decision makers between 5th-7th March 2022*



# A year in review

## An overview of the Swindon and Wiltshire Economy in 2021

**Conditions have continued to be tough for business but there has been a real sense of togetherness with all our region's business support organisations continuing to work collectively for the area's success.**

- Population 727,000 living in Swindon and Wiltshire
- 60% working age (16-64)
- Slightly higher levels of employment than UK average 79% vs UK av. 75% but 1% fewer in full-time jobs (76% compared to 77% in the UK)
- High level of self-containment with 80% of residents living and working within Swindon and Wiltshire
- On average Swindon and Wiltshire residents earn around £30,500 per annum, £800 less than UK average
- Women earn on average £25 less per week than the UK average and men £12 less per week
- 30,000 businesses across Swindon and Wiltshire in 2020.
- In 2021, there were 29,000 businesses across Swindon and Wiltshire
- In December 2021, unemployment stood at 3%, lower than the UK average of 4%

	Swindon	Wiltshire	UK
Micro (0 to 9)	90.2	90.1	89.7
Small (10 to 49)	7.5	8.1	8.4
Medium-sized (50 to 249)	1.6	1.4	1.5
Large (250+)	0.7	0.3	0.4

© Wavehill: social and economic research April 2022







# Growth Hub support in numbers

The Growth Hub team has provided assistance to a real cross-section of business sectors, including: aerospace, advanced manufacturing, creative industries, life sciences, media, transport, professional services and more.



## Hours spent supporting businesses March 2021- March 2022

Up to 1 hour support

**1248 Businesses**

1-12 hours support

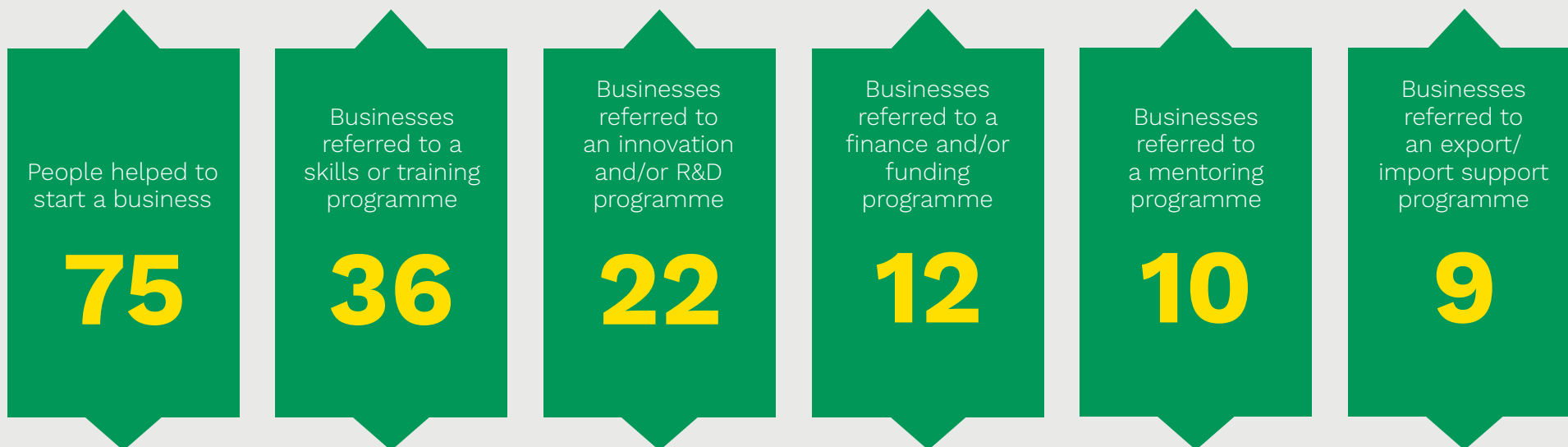
**921 Businesses**

12 hour+ support

**233 Businesses**

## The Growth Hub's interventions contributed to the safeguarding of 149 jobs and £8.4m GVA

*Gross Value Added (GVA) is the measure of the value of goods and services produced in an area, industry or sector of an economy.*





# Peer Network Success

**The Peer Networks programme funded by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) launched in October 2020 and ran until the end of March 2022.**



Its objectives were to focus on reducing the UK productivity gap by helping business leaders find practical solutions to strategic and operational challenges.

The programme was open to SME businesses which had operated for at least one year, had at least five employees and a turnover of £100,000+ with aspirations to grow.

In the last year, Peer Networks:

- Supported 35 businesses
- Included three cohorts (Women in business, Manufacturing and Professional Services)
- Achieved 100% retention

The Growth Hub team tailor-made the cohorts based on need. During the length of the programme further groups were established including food and drink, tourism, sports, health, rural, retail and community.

Each cohort received 18 hours of free intense business support delivered over a two-to-three-month period. This consisted of both one-to-one support with a dedicated mentor and group work.



**To find out more about Peer Networks email:**  
[peernetworks@swlep.co.uk](mailto:peernetworks@swlep.co.uk) or call: 01249 477 287





**CASE STUDY**

## **Exeat: a start-up tale**

**English haute courtwear for tennis goddesses**







**Business:** Exeat  
**Location:** Tisbury  
**Founded:** 2019  
**No of employees:** 5

**“A Growth Hub session around business strategy enabled us to develop much tighter global positioning for the brand.”**

## Growth Hub Impact:

- **Helped define Exeat’s business vision which in turn helped the company break into the US market which is now responsible for 60% of the firm’s revenue**
- **Growth Hub networking created invaluable business contacts which has helped with exporting operations**

EXEAT is a luxury, sustainable tennis apparel brand for women, launched by Wiltshire entrepreneur and tennis enthusiast Laura Ward.

Laura saw a niche in the market for chic, fashion-led tennis attire with beautifully cut, flattering items made from sustainable fabrics.

Here she shares how the Swindon and Wiltshire Growth Hub has supported EXEAT’s start-up journey and the company’s challenges and successes over the past year.

## Game Set Match

I discovered the Growth Hub through Wiltshire Council. Since then, I have attended at least 20 of the fantastic online training sessions covering everything from leadership skills and trading post-Brexit to sustainability. Each session has been incredibly high quality and I came away with a plethora of knowledge to put into play within the business.

The operational sessions around team management and leadership were brilliant in helping us to define our vision and get the broader

team enthused and passionate about it.

EXEAT is now the UK’s most exported luxury, sustainable tennis brand and fundamentally a Growth Hub session around business strategy enabled us to develop much tighter global positioning for the brand. In turn this helped us break into the American market at speed and scale. The US is now responsible for 60% of our revenues.

Through the Growth Hub we have also met with other business owners in similar areas with whom we were able to share knowledge and grow our contacts. For instance, being connected to a tremendous freight forwarder has transformed our operation in mainland Europe.

## Pandemic Challenges: Break Point

The pandemic periodically destroyed our supply chain, as all our factories shut. This meant we faced six months of delays in manufacturing for both our fabric and our garments. This baptism of fire taught us resilience and ingenuity and having

weathered the storm, we’re now stronger and better as a business.

Despite the challenges, there was one major silver lining for EXEAT. During Covid, tennis was one of the only sports people were allowed to play. This created 30 million new players globally turning tennis into the fastest growing sport in the world which has exponentially benefitted us as a business. The world caught the tennis bug!

## Bouncing Back

As a British business owner who trades internationally on being an ‘English tennis brand’ it didn’t feel authentic to me that EXEAT’s manufacturing was being done overseas. In 2021, we made the decision to relocate our entire production from Portugal to the UK. Only 10% of British fashion brands actually manufacture in the UK as it’s cheaper to do so abroad. It’s been difficult and expensive but utterly worth it.



**Web:** [www.exeatweekend.com](http://www.exeatweekend.com)

**LinkedIn:** Exeat



You can't beat the sense of pride seeing international customers experiencing the quality of a British made product and that EXEAT is supporting the UK economy. I hope our move back home acts as a blueprint for other British fashion brands to follow and that Britain will once again become a major hub for fashion manufacturing.

## Smashing it

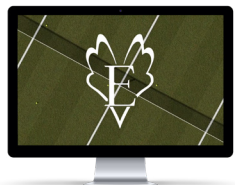
Our biggest achievement in the last year has been successfully breaking EXEAT into the North American market and being appointed an Export Champion by The Department for International Trade in recognition of EXEAT's fast international growth.

Exporting is the life force of our brand, responsible for 80% of our revenues. I can't encourage other businesses strongly enough to think internationally and get exporting.

## Holding Court

Looking ahead our aim is to maintain EXEAT's position in the top 1% of sustainable fashion brands globally, thanks to our pioneering sustainable fabric and award-winning factories. We will continue to innovate and this coming year we're investing in some hugely exciting emerging eco-technologies around fabric, cotton and water reduction which will future proof our supply chain. Green is the future of fashion!

**As we were publishing this document it was announced EXEAT won Global StartUp of The Year 2022 at the The National StartUp Awards.**



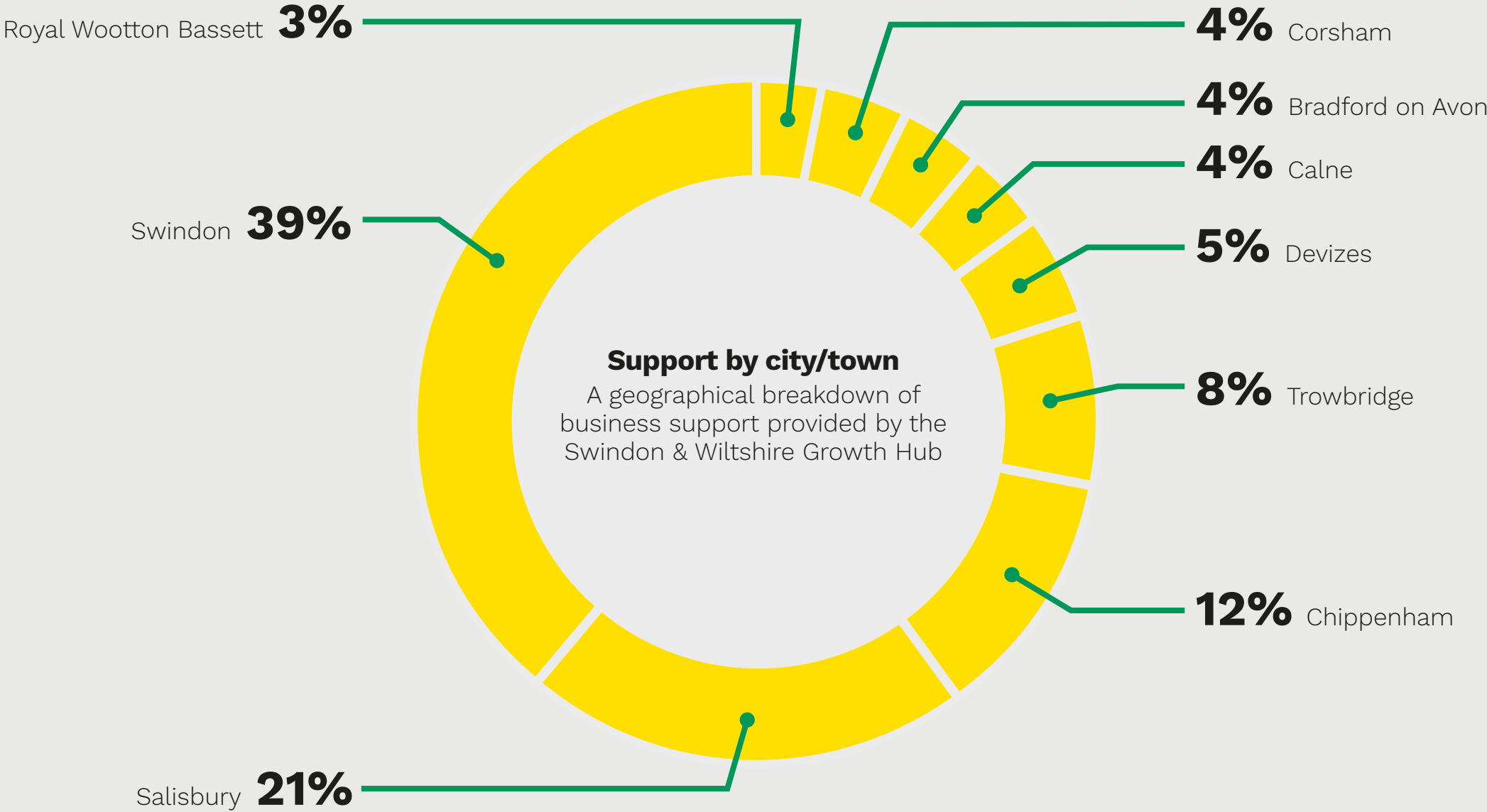
***Click here to watch the behind the seams footage.***



***“In a world where just 1% of fashion brands are sustainable, we're raising the game.”***



# Business support provided by area



# Going Green

Over 40 SMEs have benefited from direct Growth Hub support in the last year to help reach Net Zero targets, from accessing advice on how to reduce carbon emissions to guidance on implementing a green business strategy.



This support was delivered in a combination of ways from one-to-one sessions to workshops, which helped businesses understand their overall carbon footprint and develop a plan to lower their emissions.

Tailored sessions were provided by Growth Hub partner Carbon Lens, local experts in providing carbon and cost-saving solutions.

Watch the Going Green webinars on demand, click on the following links:

[Going Green – Measuring made easy](#)

[Tips for a simple sustainable strategy](#)

**In January 2022, the Growth Hub as part of the Swindon and Wiltshire Local Enterprise Partnership decided to lead by example and signed up to the United Nations and UK Government endorsed, SME Climate Hub Commitment. It sets out an aim to reduce carbon emissions by 50% by 2030 and to be carbon neutral by 2050.**



**Click here for video...**

**To find out more and to join the thousands of businesses tackling climate change visit: [www.businessclimatehub.org/uk/](http://www.businessclimatehub.org/uk/) to pledge your support.**





**CASE STUDY**

## **Packaging Not Included: A tale of sustainability**





# CASE STUDY



**Business:** Packaging Not Included Ltd

**Location:** Marlborough

**Founded:** 2018 (shop opened early 2019)

**No of employees:** 2

***“As a business concerned with the green agenda it was important for us to embrace sustainability in all areas of our work.”***

## Growth Hub Impact:

- **Received fully funded green business support including a carbon emissions audit with Growth Hub partner Carbon Lens**
- **Improved digital strategy and increased organic website traffic to company website**

Packaging Not Included is part of a new wave of supermarkets with an aim to end excess packaging and minimise the impact of consumer habits.

The shop essentially acts as a refill station. Customers visit the store, choose their desired products and either bring their own containers to fill or use the paper bags provided.

Packaging Not Included's stock list includes flours and sugars, pastas and grains, dried fruit and chocolates, nuts and seeds, herbs and cereals, beans and pulses, spices and coffee, as well as eco-friendly household cleaning and personal care products.

All the store's produce is organic, ethically produced and responsibly transported encouraging people to think more about where their food is from and how far it has travelled.

Founder Hayley Lambert shares her start-up journey.

Before setting up Packaging Not Included, I was a saxophone teacher. My passions for organic food,

sustainability, a healthy lifestyle and the need to reduce our impact on the environment came together to inspire me to open a zero-waste shop. Everything sold in our store has an organic or fairtrade focus, and foods are traceable from farm to fork. It is important to us to know exactly where our food is coming from and that it hasn't been air freighted. Many of our products travel less than 20 miles. We sell eggs from Purton House Organics, honey from Wiltshire Bee Centre and rapeseed oil from local firm Gears' Oil.

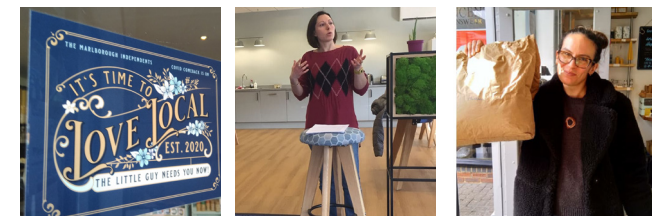
## Practicing what we preach

As a business concerned with the green agenda, it was important for us to embrace sustainability in all areas of our work, assessing our impact on the environment and striving for continual improvement.

I received support from the Growth Hub around this and attended a Growing Your Green Strategy workshop. I found out Packaging Not Included qualified for some fully funded support hours through the Growth Hub with local carbon management experts, Carbon Lens, who carried

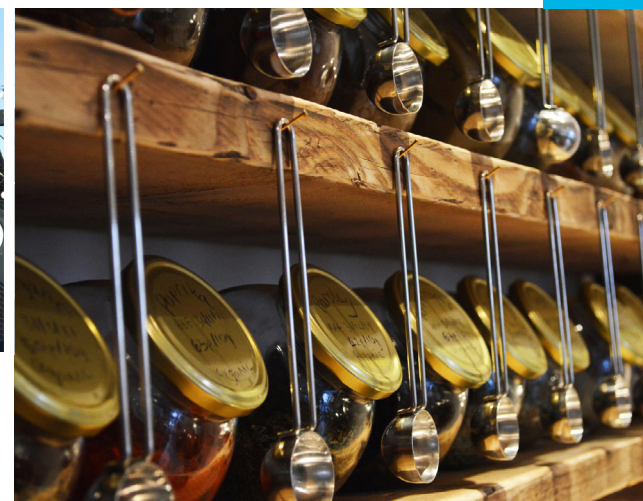
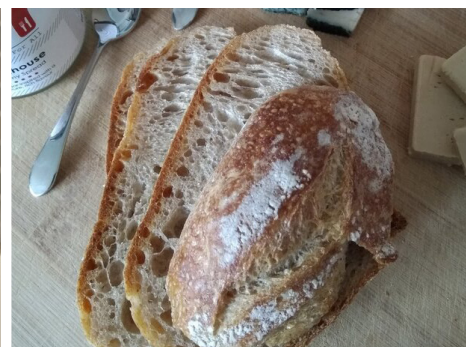
out an audit of our carbon emissions, assessing our use of Scope 1 and 2 emissions which include business electricity, purchase choices, commuting and waste. As a direct result we have implemented the following changes:

- Upgraded the shop's lighting to LED
- Switched to green energy and installed energy efficient appliances
- Challenged suppliers about packaging that we are unhappy with
- Reduced the frequency of our deliveries that have to travel further
- Changed policy to ensure we buy in the largest quantities that we can manage in terms of storage and preventing food waste
- Signed up to the United Nations Climate Neutral Now initiative and achieved the Climate Neutral Now badge - This is a great thing to share with customers to tell the story of what we are doing



**Web:** [www.packagingnotincluded.co.uk](http://www.packagingnotincluded.co.uk)

**Email:** [hayley@packagingnotincluded.co.uk](mailto:hayley@packagingnotincluded.co.uk)



as a business to reduce our impact.

## Embracing digital

I've watched a number of the Growth Hub's recorded webinars including one on crowdfunding which was very useful. I was considering crowdfunding to move to a bigger premises, but those plans are on hold at the moment.

Through the Growth Hub, I also accessed a free digital consultation which helped me to improve traffic from Google searches to my website.

## Pandemic bites

I think that the whole green movement has been set back by the pandemic and pushed down the agenda. There seems to be a new acceptance of plastic packaging, when pre-pandemic, there was a real push towards reducing single use packaging and take away cups. We had to switch to click and collect in the first lockdown which was incredibly labour intensive. We were working more hours for far less profit. We have definitely lost customers who got out of the habit of refill shopping and have generally had lower footfall. We are very lucky that we have a core of loyal and lovely customers and we have seen new people coming to the shop over the last six months. There is sometimes an assumption that refill shopping will be expensive, but we're actually cheaper than the supermarket on lots of products.

The conditions post pandemic are continuing to be a challenge with the cost of living increase impacting people's buying behaviours. Our aim in the coming year is to keep supporting our customers and the community through working with small, local, ethical makers and growers and giving back through free talks, food bank donations, charity collections and community fridge donations.

## Green dreams

Our future plan is to keep expanding our product range based on what our customers would like to see. I plan to organise a 'Great Big Green Week' (Climate Coalition initiative) in Marlborough in collaboration with the community, including the local independent cinema. I would also like to start some 'Sustainable Social' evenings and design a Carbon Literacy course. These things might encourage new people into the shop, but importantly, they will hopefully help to inspire people to make changes towards a greener, lower carbon life and empower them to push for changes that they would like to see, whether that's in their child's school, at work or writing to their MP. It's really exciting to be a green business at the moment, we need everyone on board with carbon reduction.

**Visit Packaging Not Included at:  
7 Hughenden Yard, Marlborough, SN8 1LT**





# Digital support

In the last year, the Growth Hub has supported 100+ organisations develop their digital skills and digital offering. This was through a range of one-to-one sessions, workshops and specialism support.



From November 2021, the Growth Hub partnered with the local Chambers of Commerce to run digital support workshops. Working with:

- Trowbridge Chamber
- Chippenham Chamber
- Salisbury Chamber
- Salisbury BID  
(Business Improvement District)

Through these workshops the team supported 76 businesses.



The workshops covered a wide range of digital marketing subjects, all tailored to the business community's needs. The workshop sessions ranged from 3-6 hours and were all delivered face-to-face.

***“I found the workshop extremely helpful. I learned a lot that I can transfer into my business.”***

Alice's Initiative

***“One of the best presenters I have seen and I have seen a lot!”***

Summer Bell Ltd

**If you or your business needs digital support, please get in touch.**  
Call: 01249 477 297 or email: [hello@swgrowthhub.co.uk](mailto:hello@swgrowthhub.co.uk)



# Website Interaction

March 2021-March 2022





# This way up

## Webinar support series for Swindon and Wiltshire businesses

‘This Way Up’ was launched in 2020 to help local businesses deal with the impact of the pandemic and thrive beyond it.

***In total, 59 webinars were delivered which have been viewed over 1,372 times***

One of the key drivers for the initiative was to provide guidance on the current challenges businesses were facing and offering knowledge to allow them to grow.

Working with local experts to bring the webinars to life and support the Swindon and Wiltshire economy, the Growth Hub facilitated a fully funded webinar series covering a wide range of topics to enable businesses to trade online

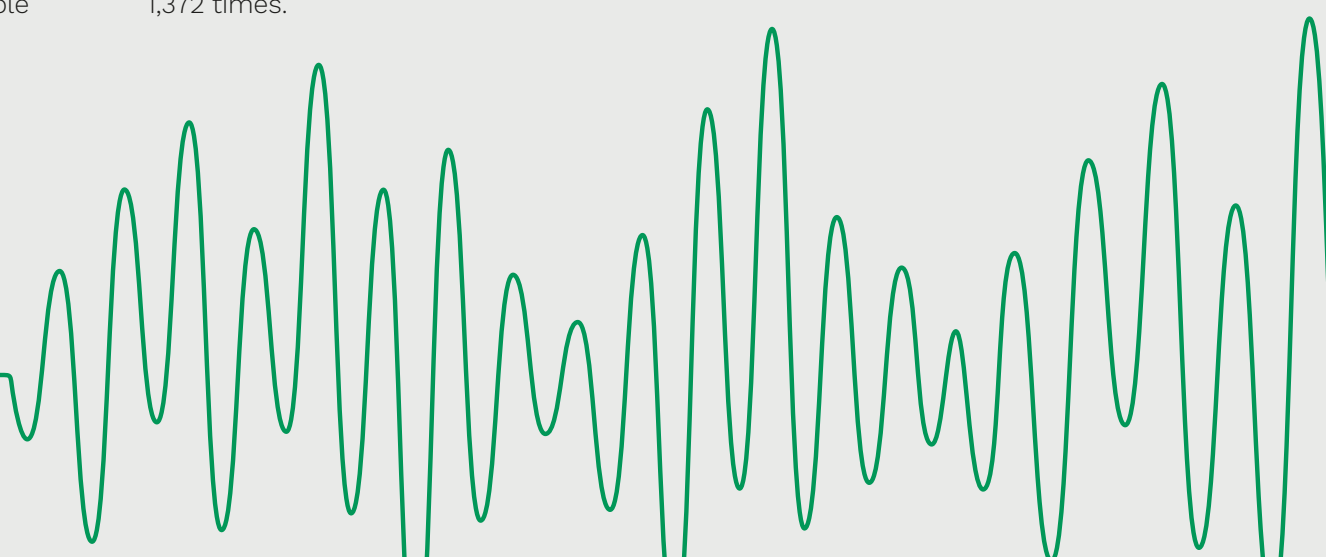
and cope with remote working through the lockdowns.

Due to the programme’s success as a proven, valid source of information, This Way Up continued in 21/22. Popular topics covered included search engine optimisation, looking good on LinkedIn, grant applications, going green and creating a brand. In total, 59 webinars were delivered which have been viewed over 1,372 times.



**Click here to view the This Way Up webinar series on demand**

*free to view webinars*







**CASE STUDY**

## **Wylde Coyotes: Kids, community and saving the planet**





# CASE STUDY



**Business:** Wylve Coyotes  
**Location:** Codford, near Warminster  
**Founded:** 2009  
**No of employees:** 10

**“Working with the Growth Hub has really helped us focus on what we need to do and has provided us with the confidence to take the steps to do it.”**

## Growth Hub Impact:

- **Helped Wylve Coyotes develop a green strategy**
- **Provided access to fully funded support through Growth Hub partners Carbon Lens and Severn Wye Energy**
- **Wylve Coyotes is now looking at solar panel options to power its building’s electricity needs**

Wylve Coyotes is a community hub which brings neighbourhood groups together through a range of activities and services. Its trading income comes from providing out of school childcare offering a breakfast club, after-school club, and holiday club. Surplus profits from these activities fund other non-profit activities which serve the community such as a toddler group and a community café with an affordable menu for senior residents and families. It also runs the Codford Community Larder.

Director Kate Brayne tells us more about the Social Enterprise and how the Swindon and Wiltshire Growth Hub has supported Wylve Coyotes.

## The evolution of Wylve Coyotes

Wylve Coyotes started as an afterschool club run by Wylve Valley Primary School. It became a Social Enterprise in 2009 and it was at that point that we started expanding, such as adding the toddler group to our offering. In 2011, we moved into our

own premises. Wiltshire Council offered us a parcel of land which we pay a peppercorn rate for next to the primary school, and then gave us a building. We then fundraised for subsequent extensions, which enabled us to extend our services to become more of a community hub. Our model is to plug the gaps in our rural community’s needs whilst at the same time providing employment and training opportunities. Demand for our childcare services is high and we’ve never been busier. The number of children we look after has doubled compared to pre-pandemic levels.

## Providing local employment for local people

We have 10 part-time, local employees. Our youngest is 17 and the eldest is 58. A lot are young mums or perhaps people who never succeeded in school or found their niche. We fit around childcare needs and understand the challenges that parents face.

We partner with Wiltshire College Early Years Department and since we started, 13 members

of staff have achieved an NVQ Level 3 Early Years qualification. We’ve also had four advanced apprenticeship students working with us who have gone on to have successful careers in early years education.

## A larder love

We operate the Codford Community Larder. It’s a larder, not a food bank, which is run with food donations from FareShare South West via Waitrose and a Community Champion at Morrisons. We also encourage local households to share surplus groceries. The whole idea is to stop food from going to landfill.

Since we started the larder in 2019, we’ve collected 4,203 kilos of food that would have otherwise gone into landfill, the equivalent of 10,000 meals and 13,449 kilos of CO<sub>2</sub> savings.

We try and educate our community that by collecting the food they are saving the planet. It’s not about being greedy or taking stuff from other



**Web:** [www.facebook.com/wylvecoyotes](https://www.facebook.com/wylvecoyotes)  
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people, they're doing something positive.

The pandemic raised our profile as we collected all FairShare donations and worked with the local church to organise deliveries to vulnerable households and elderly people who couldn't get into town. It made people talk about us and become more aware of our services.

## Sustainability at heart

As well as the community larder, we also have a community veg patch. This was created for families without gardens to get green fingered and learn about food.

Although sustainable projects are an important part of Wylde Coyotes work, we're always looking for ways to get better. I had been aware of the Swindon and Wiltshire Growth Hub and its work for years, but the catalyst for our recent connection was when I noticed its green strategy work. It was very timely for what we were looking to achieve at Wylde Coyotes. We were starting to talk as a board of directors about sustainability, but we didn't really know where to start.

## Developing a green strategy

Working with the Growth Hub has really helped us

focus on what we need to do and has provided us with the confidence to take the steps to do it.

We took part in three Growth Hub workshops to help us develop our green strategy. The first was entitled 'Going Green Measuring Made Easy'. From this we discovered Severn Wye Energy's Target 2030 project. They came out to visit us and conducted an energy efficiency survey on our building. This was funded through the Growth Hub. As a direct result, we're now gathering quotes for solar panels and looking at other recommendations to improve our building's energy efficiency.

The second workshop I completed was 'Growing Your Green Strategy' and from this we were introduced to Growth Hub partner Carbon Lens to receive a fully funded carbon measurement review. We're currently going through this process and look forward to making changes in the near future.

Thirdly, I did the 'Stage 3 Measurement Workshop', and the next big challenge is working out quite how we're going to do this but it's great to be on our way to being more sustainable and having a plan thanks to the Growth Hub's support.







# Interactions with business sectors

The Growth Hub team provided assistance to a real cross-section of business sectors throughout the year, including aerospace, advanced manufacturing, creative industries, life sciences, media, transport, professional services and more.





# A GPIF success story: The Black Farmer

In May 2021, The Black Farmer moved to Chippenham following support it received from the Swindon and Wiltshire Investment Service and Swindon and Wiltshire Growth Hub. It was attracted to the area because of the proximity to the M4 and the ease of regional distribution, as well as Wiltshire's attractive countryside.

The Black Farmer applied for a £156,000 loan from SWLEP's GPIF loan fund to support its investment.

Wilfred Emmanuel-Jones MBE, Founder of The Black Farmer tells us more...

The Black Farmer brand has long been recognised by consumers for the high quality, high welfare and most importantly tasty food products stocked in supermarkets across the country. In 2020, lockdown drove more shopping online and offered an opportunity for us to open an online

farm shop, offering a much broader range of products, all with the same 'flavours with frontiers' ethos.

As this online business became established it was clear that we needed more space, and more staff in a dedicated



fulfilment centre and with the help of a GPIF loan for £156,000 we were able to move to our current site at Bumpers Farm outside Chippenham.

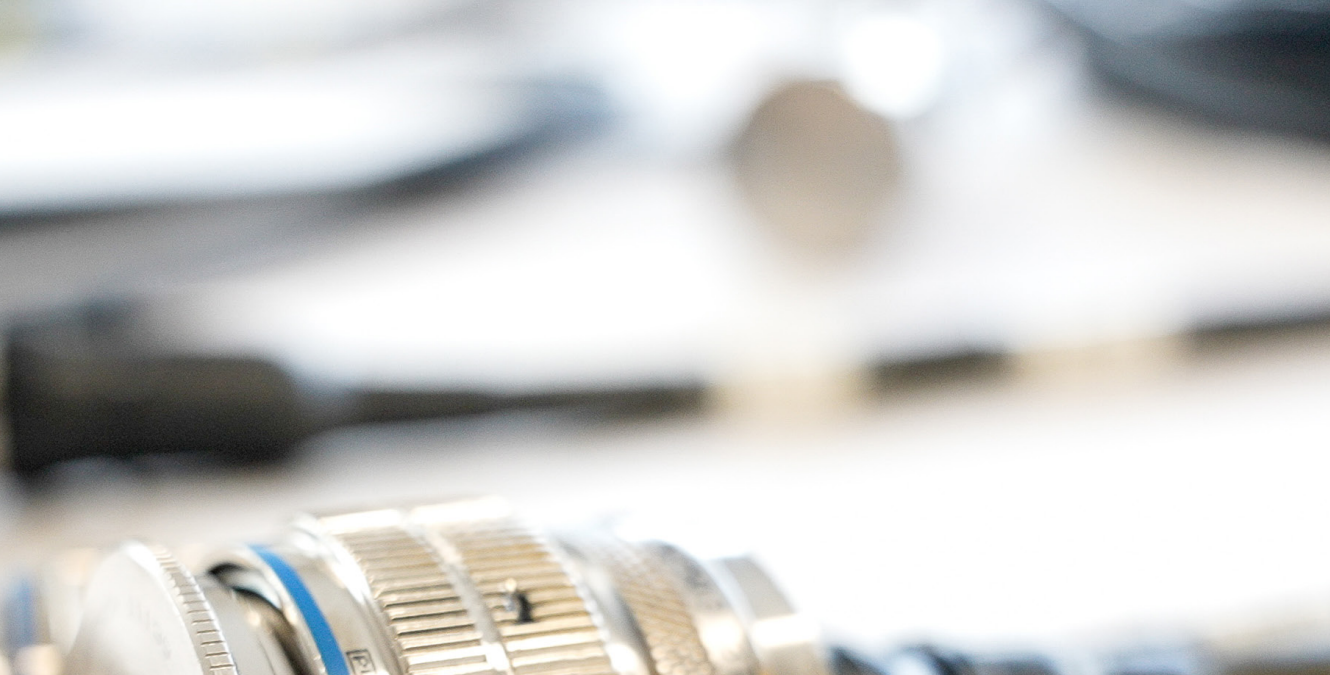
The loan financed the purchase of specialist equipment to turn the warehouse into a chilled storage and distribution hub which enables us to take in food products from a wide range of suppliers across Wiltshire and offer them for sale via our website. This allows our customers to sample the best that Wiltshire has to offer and we buy from 26 local businesses.

Having a dedicated fulfilment centre has allowed the online farm shop to grow and this part of our business now supports six staff full time between the site and other home-based roles. We were also able to employ a trainee through the Kickstart Scheme.



Click here for video...





**CASE STUDY**

# Westwire Harnessing Limited: A scale-up story





# CASE STUDY



**Business:** Westwire Harnessing Limited

**Location:** Swindon

**Founded:** 1987

**No of employees:** 36

**“We have been able to realise our growth ambitions by successfully applying for the SWLEP GPIF loan scheme.”**

## Growth Hub Impact:

- **Growth Hub support helped Westwire increase its revenue by 15%**
- **Westwire Harnessing has employed four new team members**

Westwire is one of the UK’s leading Aerospace, Defence and Rail, Electrical Wiring and Interconnect Solutions providers, working with many of the UK’s leading defence and aerospace companies such as BAE, Lockheed Martin, Ultra Electronics, NP Aerospace and Parker Hannifin as well as Network Rail for Railway products. The company prides itself on providing high quality products and services and engineering solutions.

Martin Kirkham is the firm’s Managing Director and in the last year he’s been working closely with the Swindon and Wiltshire Growth Hub team to realise Westwire’s growth ambitions. Martin tells us more.

We were introduced to the Growth Hub by DIT (Department of International Trade) Connections. Since then, the team have supported Westwire in many ways including:

- Conducting a website review with improvement recommendations
- Assessing our carbon footprint
- Funding opportunities (SWLEP capital funding)

- Providing training courses and training opportunities

This support has helped us to increase our revenue by 15% and grow our headcount from 32 to 36 people. We have also been able to realise our growth ambitions by successfully applying for the SWLEP GPIF (Growing Places Infrastructure Fund) loan scheme.

## Embracing technology

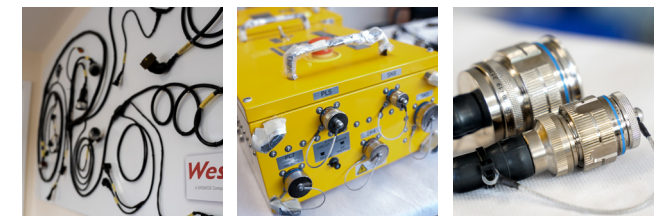
The pandemic impacted our ability to procure materials on-time which was a real challenge. Shoring up for the future, we are in the process of deploying a new ERP (Enterprise Resource Planning) system to integrate with our other facilities which will help with procurement, project management, risk management and supply chain operations.

## Celebrating achievements

In September 2021, Westwire was acquired by Indian company SASMOS HET Technologies Ltd. We’re proud that whilst the business was going through a period of transition, it has continued to grow, successfully retaining existing customers

through the merger, integrating with the new owner’s systems, and establishing new internal systems and procedures to stabilise the business and provide a solid platform for growth.

The future is looking very bright. We are planning an increase in revenue of 20% in the financial year 2022/23 through the implementation of greater capability and capacity in the business. This includes enhancing our harness and electromechanical capabilities and the introduction of a fibre optical assembly line.



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# Kickstart: Boosting career opportunities for over 100 local young people



**Youth unemployment  
rose to 14.5% between  
August & October 2020**

The Growth Hub team had a busy year as one of the area's Kickstart Gateway Providers, raising awareness of the scheme and creating six month placement opportunities amongst local employers.

In return, Department for Work and Pensions matched unemployed young people who were at risk of becoming long-term unemployed with the vacancies.

In total, 111 young people were placed into Kickstart roles by the Swindon and Wiltshire Growth Hub.

***The Kickstart Scheme was a Government initiative devised to help tackle youth unemployment which rose to 14.5% between August and October 2020.***

***The scheme ran from September 2020 and closed for applications in December 2021. All young people had to start their job on or before 31st March 2022.***

***The Government provided funding for each Kickstarter which covered:***

- ***100% of the relevant National Minimum Wage for 25 hours a week***
- ***The National Insurance contribution***
- ***Employer minimum automatic enrolment contributions***



# Matching skills to the right jobs

The Skills Team at the Swindon and Wiltshire Growth Hub continually work with local and national partners including the military, the Restart Scheme (enhanced support for Universal Credit claimants who have been out of work for at least nine months to help them find jobs in their local area), and the Department for Work and Pensions.



The team listen to the needs of the local business community and work with organisations on their employment strategy to build talent pipelines.

A large part of the Skills Team's work in the last year has been converting work through the Kickstart Scheme into apprenticeship positions, ready for when the final cohorts finish their placements. It is too early to report on the team's success, but the Growth Hub will publish the stats once the Kickstart scheme has come to an end and apprenticeship positions have started.

Throughout the year the team has actively been encouraging employers to take on apprentices. During

National Apprenticeship Week in February 2022, the Skills Team reached out to businesses to promote apprenticeships. The Growth Hub also ran a series of webinars with guest speakers focusing on how to attract apprentices, how apprentices can fill a skills gap and how to use apprenticeships to upskill and motivate staff.

In 2022 the team is concentrating on attracting 50 businesses which have never employed an apprentice before to take one on. That is in addition to helping any business to employ an apprentice in our area.



**If you or your business needs skills support, please get in touch.**  
Call: 01249 477 288 or email: [skills@swggrowthhub.co.uk](mailto:skills@swggrowthhub.co.uk)





**CASE STUDY**

# Stoneleigh Timber Engineering Ltd: Kickstarting success





# CASE STUDY

**Business:** Stoneleigh Timber Engineering Ltd

**Location:** Steeple Ashton, Trowbridge

**Founded:** 2000

**No of employees:** 12

STONELEIGH  
TIMBER ENG. LTD.



***“I can hardly begin to describe how supportive the Growth Hub team were and are.”***

customers, developing business relationships, understanding costings, as well as the general problem solving that comes with the type of dynamic working environment.

The third Kickstarter works in the factory. He was taught on similar lines about the different materials we use before going on to learn how to use the specialist equipment required to manufacture the products we sell.

## **How has Kickstart scheme helped your business?**

Our business is very niche and finding people locally that already have the skills to design trusses is next to impossible. That means we have to train folk and that's a slow, relatively expensive and risky process, particularly for a small business like Stoneleigh Timber.



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## **Growth Hub Impact:**

- **The Growth Hub's support with the Kickstart scheme in turn helped to create three new full-time jobs growing the company's headcount from 9-12**
- **Accelerated the growth of the business by 2-4 years**

Adrian Hall is Managing Director at Stoneleigh Timber which specialises in the manufacturer of roof trusses, floor joists, stairs and timber wall components.

During the summer of 2020, Adrian realised he needed to grow the business's design, quote, and manufacture capacity due to increased demand but had the challenge of finding the right people to do the job. Adrian shares his Kickstart story...

## **How did you find out about the Kickstart scheme?**

At first, I heard about it on Radio 4. I then discovered one route was through the Swindon and Wiltshire Growth Hub. I'd already been talking to the team about some of the other support they offer, so it was the obvious path to take.

## **How did the Growth Hub help you?**

I can hardly begin to describe how supportive the Growth Hub team were and are. They made the Kickstart process very easy and smooth.

They guided me through the various questions and forms. At every step, I knew that if I ran into a problem, I could turn to them and they would help. It was a very supportive and positive experience right from the start.

## **How many Kickstarters did you take on?**

I applied for three, with them joining in May, July and November 2021. At the end of each of the respective six-month periods I took them all on as full-time employees.

## **What have they been working on?**

The first two Kickstarters were engaged to learn how to design and quote for roof trusses and floor joists. In a structured way, working with a software provider, we taught them about structures and building construction before going on to show how we use the computers to design a roof structure, or floor, and then generate a quotation. At the same time, we gave them a general education on how to work in a commercial environment. For example, how to speak to





The Kickstart process allowed us the chance to build up turnover before the full ‘weight’ of the additional employees’ salary came to bear – effectively giving us a running start.

Without a shadow of a doubt, Kickstart allowed us to grow at an accelerated rate. I think it probably brought our development forward by two to four years. It’s highly likely that we will employ more people, more quickly, than we would otherwise would have done.

As a company, we are looking to grow people as well as new products. And, as we grow, the young people we take on will grow with us. Inevitably they are the key to the company’s future, and I look forward to achieving a positive outcome for them as well as the business.

It’s sad that the Kickstart scheme has come to an end, in my experience, everyone’s a winner. Why wouldn’t society want to keep this going?





# To the future

## Introducing Growth Hub Plus



After a tough central Government spending review and despite Growth Hubs incurring a national funding reduction of 50%, Swindon and Wiltshire Growth Hub will continue to deliver its core business support services free of charge to the SME community.

In efforts to enhance the Swindon and Wiltshire Growth Hub offer, protect its longevity and become less reliant on Government funding, 2022/23 will see the launch of Growth Hub Plus.

The Growth Hub Plus sub-brand will provide support aimed at intermediate and advance level interventions for businesses with development and growth aspirations. Whilst retaining its core fully funded initial support, services delivered under the Growth Hub Plus banner will be chargeable and delivered at exceptional value.

Chris Stevens, Swindon and Wiltshire Growth Hub Manager, said, “With a contemporary approach, it is with immense pride we continue to support our SME community’s needs with agility and flexibility always in mind.

Growth Hub Plus will provide targeted business support designed to ignite further growth for our area. Please get in touch if you would like further information on any aspect of the Swindon and Wiltshire Growth Hub’s business support service. We’re here to help you.”

***“It is with immense pride, we continue to support our SME community’s needs”***



**To find out more about the Swindon and Wiltshire Growth Hub and its Growth Hub Plus offering** email: [hello@SWGrowthHub.co.uk](mailto:hello@SWGrowthHub.co.uk) call: 01249 477287





# Find out more about the work of the Swindon and Wiltshire Local Enterprise Partnership

Whilst this report focuses on the support the Swindon and Wiltshire Growth Hub has delivered directly to businesses, together with the trading environment our SMEs are experiencing, the service collaborates closely with several other programmes and projects delivering sustainable economic development within the Swindon & Wiltshire Local Enterprise Partnership.



For reporting and information on SWLEP's Growing Places Infrastructure Loan Fund, the Business Cyber Centre and other exciting projects, please refer to the SWLEP's Annual Review via the link to the right.



[Click here for SWLEP's Annual Review](#)



Visit the SWLEP online at:  
[www.swlep.co.uk](http://www.swlep.co.uk)





# Join our community

**The Swindon and Wiltshire Growth Hub provides a single gateway to access support, whether you are starting, running or growing a business.**

Accessing the Growth Hub, you can find direct support from our telephone helpline or arrange a face-to-face meeting with an impartial business adviser. The Growth Hub directs you to a wide range of impartial business support and advice, as well as providing valuable insights, access to events, specialist programmes and funding to help your business thrive.

Conceived as a collaborative platform, the Growth Hub provides the Swindon and Wiltshire business community with a connected network to share ideas and information. You can build your contacts, share your news, events and opportunities or offer help to encourage other businesses to succeed.



**Get in touch and register as a Growth Hub member for free via the website:**

[www.SWGrowthHub.co.uk](http://www.SWGrowthHub.co.uk)

**e:** [hello@SWGrowthHub.co.uk](mailto:hello@SWGrowthHub.co.uk)

**t:** 01249 477287

**@SW\_GrowthHub**

**Swindon & Wiltshire Growth Hub**



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