



# Independent View

A large selection of independent businesses in Northampton have benefited from the Borough Council's Business Incentive Scheme (BIS) grants over the last five years.

At a time when the town centre is looking to adapt in the face of mounting challenges for retailers, Town Centre News is speaking to some of the independent businesses who have put their faith in Northampton.

In the ninth of the series, we speak to Rob Palmer and Tom Clark, owners of the Black Revolver Film Studios in Dunster Street.

Tell us a bit more about your business.

We started Black Revolver Films Ltd in 2010 and have since become an established video production company, employing one full-time and two part-time members of staff and a network of local freelancers.

We began working on local music videos and weddings and over the past nine years have gradually created a portfolio of work with established and long-term clients such as Madame Tussauds, SONY and Addison Lee.

In January 2019, we purchased our first commercial property, a vacant ex-industrial unit in the centre of Northampton town. We're converting the property into a contemporary, state-of-the-art photography studio and office space and plan to create one of the best independent studios in the Midlands.

The studios will be available to rent to local, Midlands and London based photographers and once established will become an important and useful space for Northampton's blossoming creative community. **People can find us at [www.theblackrevolver.com](http://www.theblackrevolver.com)**

What persuaded you to take the step in establishing a town centre business?

We felt that the town centre was an ideal place to build our business as both Tom and I live here and we think Northampton has huge potential when it comes to creative businesses, due to its proximity to London and the rest of the Midlands. There's also a fantastic, growing university here and so much contemporary and exciting work happening just under the surface.

Being in the heart of the town is the best place to be if you want to establish connections with all the other businesses and be a part of the developing and exciting artistic community.

How have you benefited from the Business Incentive Scheme?

The incentive scheme has made the difference between us making a good and a great photography studio. To be honest, it's really made the entire project possible! We hit a lot of problems during the

development and the extra funding helped us past those obstacles.

How is business for you?

Business is good for us this year! We depend upon local and London based companies using our services to produce video content for websites and social media. The current trend of short, impactful, high turnover films has been very good for a small company like ours.

We can work with smaller budgets and be flexible and that works well for most productions. We've found a niche that suits our setup.

We were missing a studio that we could provide for our clients without incurring high costs, so the studio development will allow us to cater for a lot of clients that require a controlled studio environment, but don't have the budget for a London studio. We also plan to rent the studio to local businesses and creatives on a daily basis, as well as local groups such as dance and yoga clubs.

We will offer photography and video services at the studio. So if we work with a business that has a product or idea, but doesn't have a photographer, we can provide the entire service. Even supplying the final photos or videos in a format that's ready to go on a website or on social media.

What percentage of your business is online?

All of our business is online whether it's studio bookings or requests for our video/photography services. Although the initial contact and final output might be digital, we always enjoy meeting our clients in

person, as we feel it's really important for the success of a project.

What do you think are the major factors behind the decline of the high street and how should it adapt?

I feel the decline of the high street is down to the convenience of internet shopping. Prices and options are so good online that a company with overheads, storage limitations and premises to maintain just can't compete.

I think that the only way a company can stay competitive is to provide a personal experience that online shopping can't yet offer. With our studio we're trying to create an environment that offers great photography facilities but is also a welcoming and interesting place to spend a day on set. Just small things really, like free coffee, a vinyl record player, good Wi-Fi and interesting décor. These touches made the difference to us when we hired studios in London, so we're keen to replicate them in Northampton.

What are Northampton town centre's strengths?

Northampton is a rough diamond with lots of potential! You only have to look above the empty and unloved shopfronts to see the rich history of the buildings and how beautiful the town could be.

The town has a fascinating history, and it feels like after a slight hiatus, we're set for a new age of growth for this hidden gem of a town. Places like London, Bristol and Brighton are known for being interesting and artistic hubs. As far as we're concerned, Northampton is perfectly placed to join these cities on the UK creative map.



Anyone thinking of setting up a business in Northampton town centre can find out more about Northampton Borough Council's Business Incentive Scheme at: [www.northampton.gov.uk/bis](http://www.northampton.gov.uk/bis) or by contacting Suzanne Holmes, either by telephone on 01604 837504 or by email [sholmes@northampton.gov.uk](mailto:sholmes@northampton.gov.uk)

# TOWN CENTRE NEWS

September 2019

## Town could benefit from additional £25 million investment

Central Government has invited Northampton to submit further regeneration proposals which could result in up to £25 million of additional funding.

The town is one of 100 places across the country shortlisted for the Towns Fund, which will see communities, businesses and local leaders draw up plans to transform economic growth prospects, with a focus on improved transport, broadband connectivity, skills and culture.

The announcement on 6 September made by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, is in addition to the current bidding process for up to £25 million from the Future High Streets Fund, which Northampton has already been successfully shortlisted for.

The funding will help the new Northampton Forward board deliver on its ambitious

plans for the town, making it possible to deliver even more progress.

Northampton Borough Council leader and Northampton Forward Chairman, Councillor Jonathan Nunn, said: "This is clearly very exciting news and something we welcome wholeheartedly.

"Our outline masterplan for the town centre was largely well received by the public and we are in the process of developing a detailed proposal, incorporating the responses we received as part of the consultation. We plan to publicise details of the responses in the near future.

"We're looking forward to further detail about the latest tranche of funding available and what we will need to do to access it."

The consultation on the masterplan proposals drawn up by 5plus Architects ran from mid-May to the end of June and headline responses were published in August's Town Centre News.

These will form part of the detailed plan which will be submitted to the Government for a slice of the Future High Streets Fund announced earlier this year.

Speaking about the Towns Fund, Local Government Secretary, Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP, said: "We want to level-up our great towns, raising living standards and ensuring they can thrive with transformative investment in transport, technology, skills and culture.

"I hope these deals will provide the investment and the impetus for long-term renewal ensuring each town can look to the future with a new optimism."



## Fake rating could lead to prosecution



It is an offence to display a fake sticker.

This summer, Trading Standards found six premises displaying an incorrect food hygiene rating sticker and more have been told to remove their old ratings by the Food Safety Team.

Although businesses are not obliged to advertise their food hygiene rating, the law does prohibit misleading or deliberate falsification by businesses of their rating. Businesses can be prosecuted for this offence and could be fined more than £1,500.

## New websites outline journey to unitary

Two new websites have launched to provide information about the move toward unitary governance. 'Future Northants North' and 'Future Northants West' carry the same core information while outlining the separate processes being followed in the north and west of the county.

On 1 April 2021, the eight councils in Northamptonshire will be replaced by two new unitary councils, which will provide all local government services in the county.

Northampton Borough Council will become part of West Northamptonshire Council, along with Daventry District Council and South Northamptonshire Council. The remaining four district and borough councils will form North Northamptonshire Council, and the county council will cease to exist.

[www.futurenorthantswest.org](http://www.futurenorthantswest.org)  
[www.futurenorthantsnorth.org](http://www.futurenorthantsnorth.org)



## Street artists come together to celebrate Northampton

More than 100 street artists came together in Northampton at the beginning of September to create a range of colourful murals celebrating the town's diverse culture.

The 'Wall Games' project was coordinated by local artist James Thompson, with support from Northampton Borough Council, who sourced the locations and provided £500 towards spray paints and materials.

The project saw over 100 walls in and around the Mayorhold Car Park, near the bus station, on Lady's Lane and at St James Retail Park transformed by street artists from across the county; including Northampton, Milton Keynes, Leicester, London, Nottingham and Luton.

Featured local artists include Dpendz, Leanne Conroy, Binty Bint, Selometric Art and Ruelo, along with leading artists from further afar, such as Tizer, Pad303, Kak, This One, Jim Vision, Posea, and Boaster.

Councillor Anna King, Cabinet member for community safety and engagement, said: "We are so pleased to have supported this bright and innovative project which aims to brighten the

town and deter offensive graffiti by transforming spaces with street art.

"We want to thank James, the volunteers who prepped the walls, and the many street artists who came forward, using their own time to take part in this project and showcase their fantastic skills in areas of the town which often get forgotten about or misused.

"We hope people enjoy spotting and seeking out the different art pieces and look forward supporting James to grow the project with partners and businesses each year."

James Thompson said: "Thanks to the council's sponsorship, the event brought internationally renowned artists work in to help us brighten up the drab, dreary and forgotten spaces in an around the town centre.

"The event was an amazing social and cultural experience for everyone who came, and we look forward to involving Northampton residents and businesses for next year's event - it was only possible thanks to the hard work of volunteers and the artists that took part, I encourage everyone to go and visit the spaces to see the art for themselves and see just how amazing it all is!"



## Traders wanted for annual Christmas Market

Traders are invited to have a stall at Northampton Market's Frost Fair on Sunday 1 December.

The Christmas themed market, which takes place between 11am and 4pm, gives local producers and crafters the opportunity to showcase their products during December's busy shopping period.

This year, the Borough Council have teamed up with Vintage Guru on St Giles' Street, to expand the event and really celebrate the town's creative makers and artists.

The market is part of wider Christmas celebrations that day, which include a children's Christmas head dress workshop at 11am, and a Narnia inspired Christmas Parade at 1pm.

A choir will also provide a seasonal soundtrack throughout the day and mulled wine and cider will be available from a pop-up bar for visitors to enjoy as they wander around the stalls.



To book a stall at this year's Frost Fair, please visit: [www.northampton.gov.uk/info/200301/market-square/2330/apply-to-become-a-trader-at-the-frost-fair](http://www.northampton.gov.uk/info/200301/market-square/2330/apply-to-become-a-trader-at-the-frost-fair)

## Preparing for Brexit

To minimise disruption and uncertainty, businesses are urged to read available advice ahead of the United Kingdom's scheduled departure from the European Union on 31 October. Links to government guidance are available at [northampton.gov.uk/brexit](http://northampton.gov.uk/brexit)

## Extra policing reduces anti-social behaviour

Additional police resource and partnership working helped to improve town centre safety and reduce anti-social behaviour during the summer holidays.

Northampton Borough Council funded two additional police officers for the town centre and coordinated local agencies to provide support between 24 July and 4 September.

Activities included patrols to provide community and business support and increase police visibility in key areas such as the Market Square and Abington Street. Enforcement action was also taken to administer the town centre Public Spaces Protection Order, tackling street drinking, begging and anti-social behaviour.

Across the six week period, the two police officers covered 576 patrol hours in Abington Street, The Drapery, Gold Street, St Peters Walk, the Market Square, Guildhall Road and Bridge Street. They performed 154 alcohol seizures, 88 warnings to cyclists riding their bike in pedestrian areas, 24 arrests relating to shoplifting, drugs and domestic assault and offered 10 instances of traffic restriction advice to drivers.

In addition, the partnership engaged with and moved on 30 beggars, offered support to rough sleepers, interacted with businesses and market stall holders regularly, and provided eight offers of first aid assistance to members of the public.

Councillor Anna King, Cabinet member for community engagement and safety, said: "It has been really fantastic working alongside Northamptonshire Police again this summer, to help improve the town centre environment and reduce anti-social behaviour in the area.



"The activities which took place across the six weeks, built on the success of the support we provided together last summer and have not only provided more positive outcomes, but have also generated some great feedback from both businesses and visitors to the town centre."

Chief Inspector James Willis, said: "These results demonstrate what a great partnership between two organisations can achieve and I look forward to more good results in the future as we continue to work closely with Northampton Borough Council."

## Floral displays get gold

Judges from the Royal Horticultural Society have given the Borough Council a gold award for the town's entry into this year's East Midlands in Bloom competition.

At the beginning of July, the judges visited Northampton to assess floral displays planted by businesses, community groups, residents and the Borough Council, following months of hard work and preparation.

11 businesses in and around the town took part in the competition, including George's Café, Carlsberg, the Pomfret Arms and 78 Derngate, along with hundreds more who had colourful hanging baskets on the outside of their buildings.

And as part of the competition, over 100 shops and businesses participated in the quirky Shoe Plants project coordinated by St Giles' Terrace in Bloom and

Northampton Town Centre BID, displaying a planted pair of shoes in their windows and doorways.

Northampton also came out top in the city category, with judges describing the business contribution to the competition as 'particularly pleasing'.

Town Centre News would like to extend a BIG THANK YOU to all the businesses who took part!