

Cheshire West & Chester Council

UKSPF End of Year Report 2024-2025

Delivery Projects

Detailed information and results from all project activity undertaken.

Key Statistics

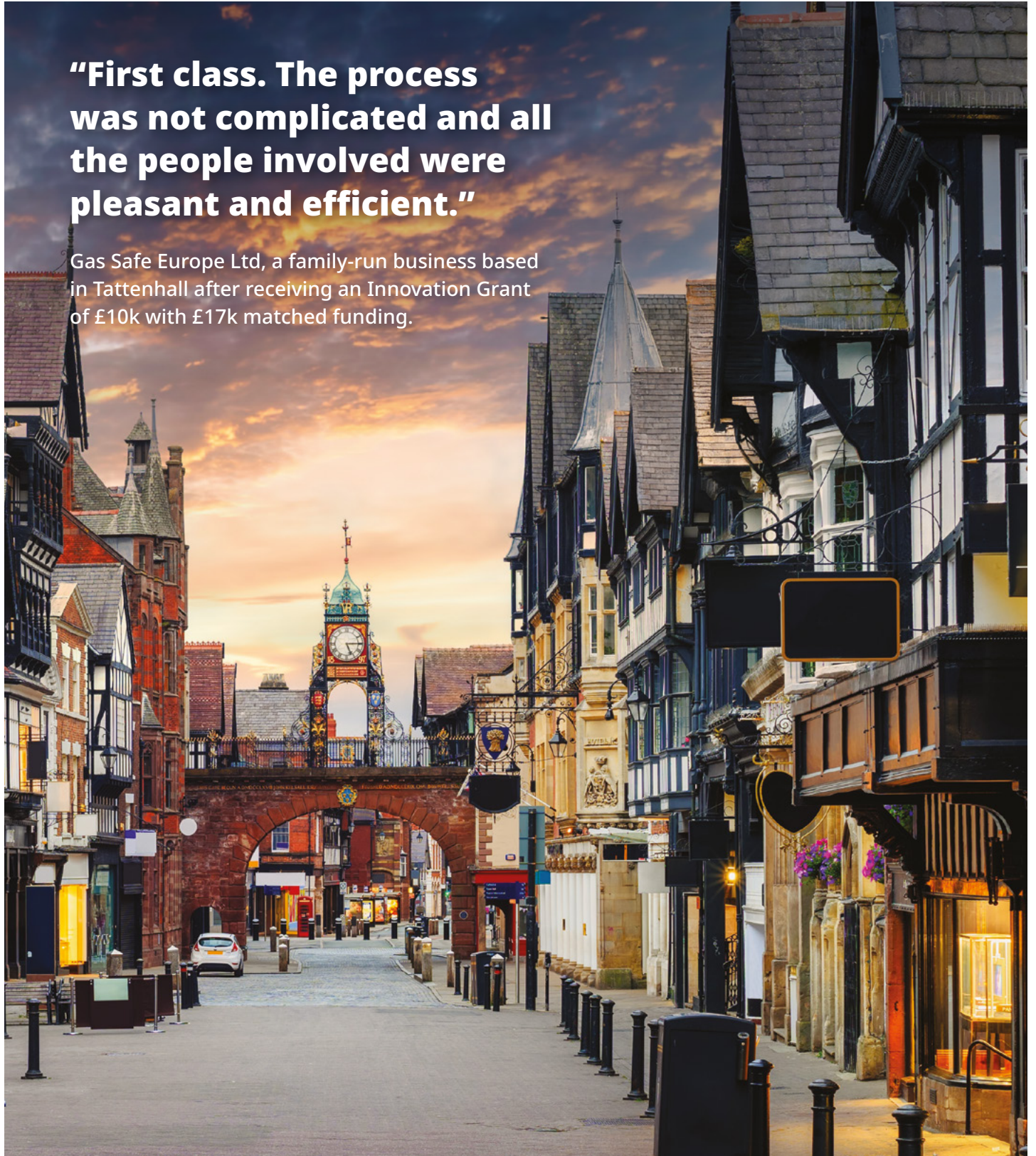
Understanding all results and the benefits to businesses.

Case Studies

Learn more about some of the businesses who benefitted.

"First class. The process was not complicated and all the people involved were pleasant and efficient."

Gas Safe Europe Ltd, a family-run business based in Tattenhall after receiving an Innovation Grant of £10k with £17k matched funding.



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UK Government



Cheshire West
and Chester

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The 2024-2025 report highlights the Council's commitment to supporting business across the borough. Through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, the Council's Business Growth Team has worked with a range of internal and external partners, at a local, regional and national level to deliver a comprehensive package of support to encourage enterprise, growth and new investment into the borough.

The report focuses on the impact of the programme on key sectors, the different types and size of businesses supported and the wide geographical spread throughout the borough.

Furthermore, the report highlights some of the wider interventions that the programme has supported including the Council's inward investment campaigns, our approach to market towns and the development and sustainability of the third sector.

The collaborative partnership between a range of partners has enabled the delivery of a comprehensive and wide reaching programme which will provide a strong basis for future business support programmes.

Councillor Nathan Pardoe, Cabinet Member for Inclusive Economy, Regeneration and Digital Transformation.



Introduction

What To Expect From The Report

This document details the information collected throughout the 2024-2025 Programme for Cheshire West and Chester Council, outlining project funding, businesses involved and impacts across the borough.

Summary of Council support for local businesses

Cheshire West and Chester Council provide a wide range of support for businesses who are starting up, growing or investing. The support available is aimed at making businesses more resilient, sustainable and inclusive, with benefits for the borough as a whole.

Throughout 2024-2025, businesses of all sizes engaged in the full range of economic activity and accessed support, with projects implemented and delivered by a number of experienced partners.

This included a mix of delivery one to one, online and through physical locations.

Activities

Delivery Partners Activities Undertaken

West Cheshire and North Wales Chamber of Commerce

Business Advisory Project

- Enabling businesses to better understand the local and national business support landscape and potentially access grants from local UKSPF projects and national programmes.
- Encourage new businesses to start and help new and young businesses (trading less than 24 months) to develop their skills and experience to be able to grow from a strong business base.

Employer Training Grant Project

- The purposes of the project were to help local employers upskill their workforce, support businesses to grow, diversify and become more inclusive and enable employers to offer more employment opportunities to local residents.

Origin HR Forum Project

- Providing opportunity for like-minded businesses operating within Ellesmere Port Industrial Area to come together to discuss the challenges and opportunities that can be solved or realised working together in partnership.

Groundwork Cheshire Lancashire and Merseyside

Decarbonisation Project

- Providing advice, guidance and support to help West Cheshire businesses develop and adopt sustainable, low carbon, energy reduction opportunities and lower their carbon footprints.
- Key elements were the capital grants programme and production of carbon audits advising businesses on how they might reduce their carbon footprints.
- Groundwork also led on the project to undertake a health check and engage with businesses in Frodsham and Tarporley market towns.

Helping Employees Achieve IEMA Certification

- This separate project, funded through the People and Skills programme, aimed to help employees achieve IEMA (Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment) certification.

The Innovation Programme Partners

The University of Chester

Innovation Grant project

- Designed to provide grant support to encourage West Cheshire businesses to become more innovative and invest in projects leading to increased productivity, growth and the introduction of new technologies and products.

MMU Centre for Enterprise

Innovation Cohorts project

- Designed to enable 3 cohorts of West Cheshire businesses to discover, develop and adopt innovation in their business. The project also provided a series of workshops to stimulate innovation among businesses that were not yet ready to join the cohort programme.

Nexus Earth

Innovation Access to Excellence Project

- This aimed to raise awareness of and encourage more engagement with existing providers of local and national innovation support programmes.

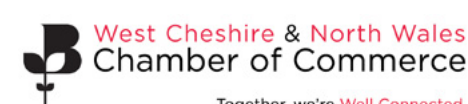
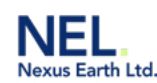
Two other delivery partners managed significant projects:

Cheshire Community Action

Provided enhanced business support to social enterprises and other third sector organisations.

Gro Space Limited T/A INDUSTRY

Managed and gathered data on the usage of the new BIG hub venues at Meridian House in Winsford and the HQ building on Chester. A new BIG hub venue was also established at Theatre Porto in Ellesmere Port.





Activities

Additional Projects

The Supporting Local Businesses theme has provided additional support across a number of other initiatives including.

Digital Connectivity

- Support SMEs with digital connectivity in rural industrial estates through investment in 5G infrastructure to improve mobile connectivity.

Inward Investment Support

- Launched a dedicated website 'Invest Chester' alongside additional promotion of the Origin brand for Ellesmere Port to promote key investment propositions. Funding was also secured to produce the annual commercial property review highlighting key investments in office, industrial and retail schemes across the borough.

Supporting our Towns

- Development of business engagement programme within our key towns with a focus on Frodsham and Tarporley and the setting up of business forums to encourage business to business collaboration and increase the vitality within these centres.

Go4Growth

- Stimulate local procurement through an online platform which provides advice and guidance for SME's to bid for public sector contracts.

Develop the Visitor Economy

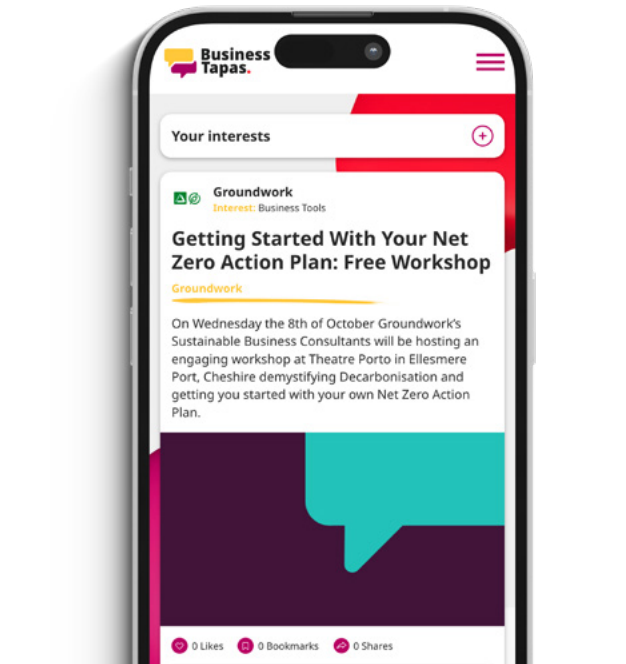
- A number of initiatives have been supported across the borough including work to secure an Accommodation Business Improvement District for Chester City, the potential to create a Film office across the sub-region , and a series of events to promote the borough to specialist travel trade.

Online Tools

- The fund has been utilised to support the ongoing development and support of dedicated digital support for SMEs. This includes accessing support for procurement through Go4Growth, marketing support for business via Loyal Free and access to business intelligence through Growth Flag.

Supporting our Markets

- The fund has provided investment in additional market stalls to allow for additional seasonal events to take place in Winsford, Northwich and Ellesmere Port alongside the major capital investment taking place within these sites.



Business Tapas

A free online educational hub for businesses, providing bite-sized information about a range of topics to help with education and development. The Business Tapas platform is a digital knowledge hub, bringing together a wealth of resources, tutorials and advice on core business topics.

Free to use, this resource provides insight into a range of topics, from business management and finance to digital marketing, design and social impact. Each 'bitesize' piece of information presented in the platform signposts the latest guidance from industry sources, providing users with an easy 'one-stop shop' to learn, develop and grow.

In November 2024, Cheshire West and Chester Council's **Business Growth Team** won the **Most Innovative Project of the Year** category at the prestigious **Institute of Economic Development (IED)** awards for the **Business Tapas** platform.

The IED awards recognise outstanding achievements in both the public and private sectors, acknowledging projects that have transcended traditional approaches, delivering significant benefits through innovation.

Business Tapas continues to evolve, ensuring that local businesses have ongoing access to up-to-date, practical knowledge and support to thrive in a rapidly changing economic landscape.



Most Innovative Project of the Year Winner

Business Tapas
Cheshire West and Chester Council





Key Statistics

Investment

£700k Capital Grants

- Provided through the Innovation and Decarbonisation projects to 63 businesses generated £1.3m of match funding and total project investment of £2m.

£120k Revenue Grants

- Provided through the Employer Training Grant programme attracted £16k in match funding.
- Over 220 tonnes of carbon saving per year generated through the Decarbonisation grants project.

Table 1

Programme	No of grants	Value	Private match	Total project	Carbon saved
Decarbonisation UKSPF	30	£354,367.71	£817,606.99	£1,171,974.70	139.89
Decarbonisation Climate Emergency Fund	12	£149,999.60	£257,048.59	£407,048.19	83.73
Innovation	21	£199,999.91	£225,330.95	£425,330.86	-
Decarbonisation & Innovation Totals	63	£704,367.22	£1,299,986.53	£2,004,353.75	223.62
Training	70	£120,000.00	£15,912.19	£135,912.19	

CEF: Climate Emergency Fund

Employer Training Grant

70 businesses were provided with grants to allow for bespoke training based on business need.

Training accessed included: Digital Skills Training, Leadership and Management Development, Health and Wellbeing in the Workplace, Technical Upskilling, Customer Service, EDI Workshops and Sustainability.

The programme's goal to support at least 60 employers was exceeded. Impacts on the 70 businesses supported through the programme include:

- Improved staff retention and morale
- Increased productivity and business resilience
- Enhanced competitiveness
- Support for inclusive growth
- The programme's goal to support at least 60 employers was exceeded, reaching 70 businesses, which is a strong sign of demand and impact

Origin engagement:

- 269 businesses engaged
- 100+ general feedback
- 66 detailed feedback via- online consultation

Tarporley and Frodsham engagement:

- 273 businesses engaged
- 194 Frodsham / 89 Tarporley

BIG Hub events bookings:

- Meridian House: 86
- HQ Room 1: 27
- HQ Room 2: 52
- Theatre Porto: 35
- Total: 200

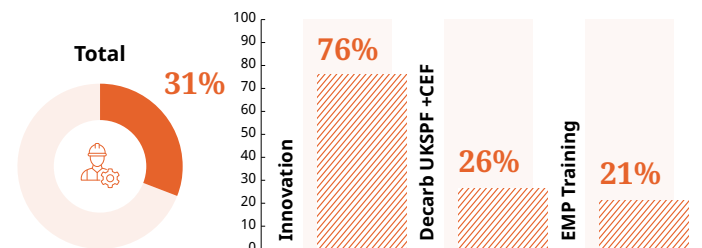
The vast majority of businesses awarded grants were micro or small (Less than 50 employees) and came from a variety of industry sectors.

Sector Impact

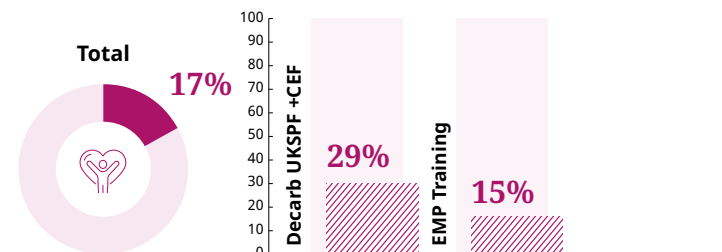
- Innovation grants were dominated by the **manufacturing/engineering sector at 75%.**
- Decarbonisation grants were more broadly spread, however **manufacturing/engineering** and **wholesale, retail, hospitality and leisure** both accounted for **25% each.**
- The distribution of Employer Training Grants showed **healthcare, social, community and personal services** accounting for 30% and **professional and business services/management consultancy/IT** for 26%.
- **Third sector organisations** receiving grants included Changing Lives Together, St Luke's Hospice, Hospice of the Good Shepherd, Cheshire Wildlife Trust, Healthbox CIC, DBA Sport CIC and Cheshire West Voluntary Action.

Table 2 - Broad Sector Breakdown

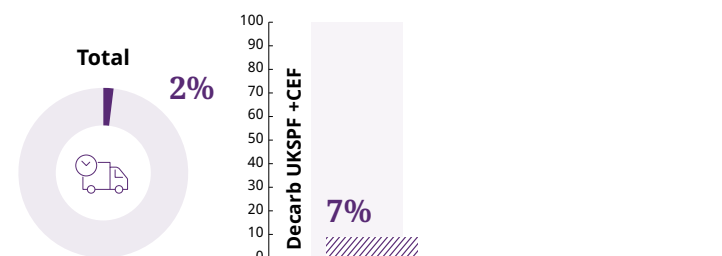
Manufacturing/Engineering



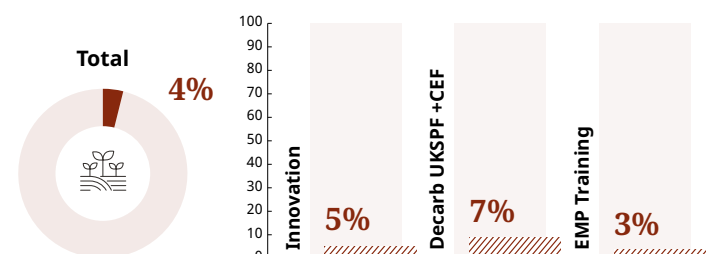
Wholesale, Retail, Hospitality, Leisure inc Sports Clubs



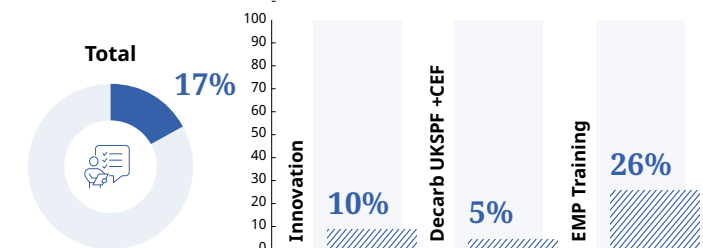
Transport and Logistics



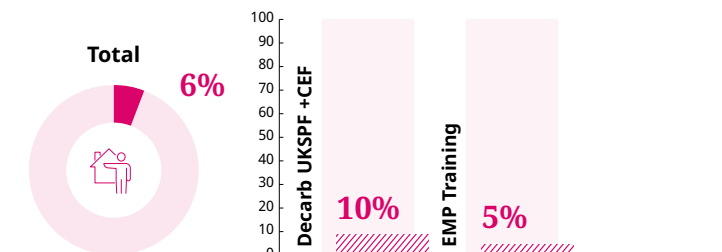
Agriculture/Environment



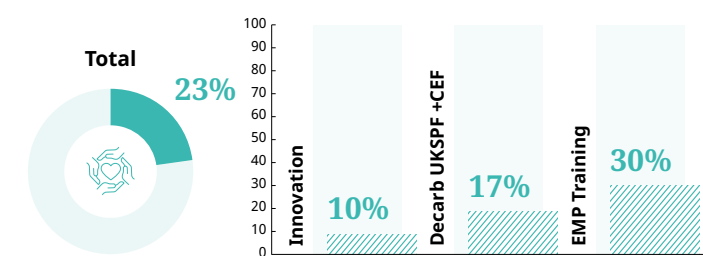
Professional & Business Services/ Management Consultancy/IT



Property Development/Landlord/ Serviced Office



Healthcare, Social, Community and Personal Services

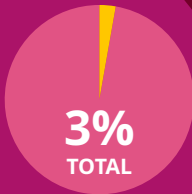


Geographical Impact

- 21 Innovation grants broadly spread across **Chester (4), Ellesmere Port (6), Mid-Cheshire – Northwich and Winsford (7) and rural locations(4)**
- A third of decarbonisations grants awarded to businesses based in Chester with a similar number in Mid-Cheshire (**14 – 34%**).
- Employer training grants broadly spread, but with a relatively high concentration in Chester (**24 – 33%**).
- Overall distribution: **highest concentration in Chester** (perhaps not surprising) but a significant representation of rural businesses

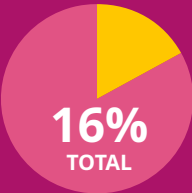
Neston

Innovation.....	0%
Decarbonisation – UKSPF +CEF...	2%
Employer Training.....	4%



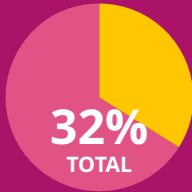
Ellesmere Port

Innovation.....	29%
Decarbonisation – UKSPF +CEF...	7%
Employer Training.....	18%



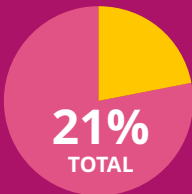
Chester

Innovation.....	19%
Decarbonisation – UKSPF +CEF...	36%
Employer Training.....	33%



Rural

Innovation.....	19%
Decarbonisation – UKSPF +CEF...	21%
Employer Training.....	21%



Neston

Ellesmere Port

Chester

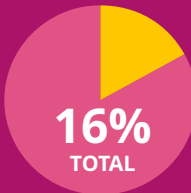
Northwich

Winsford

Rural

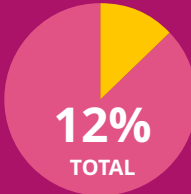
Northwich

Innovation.....	24%
Decarbonisation – UKSPF +CEF...	17%
Employer Training.....	14%



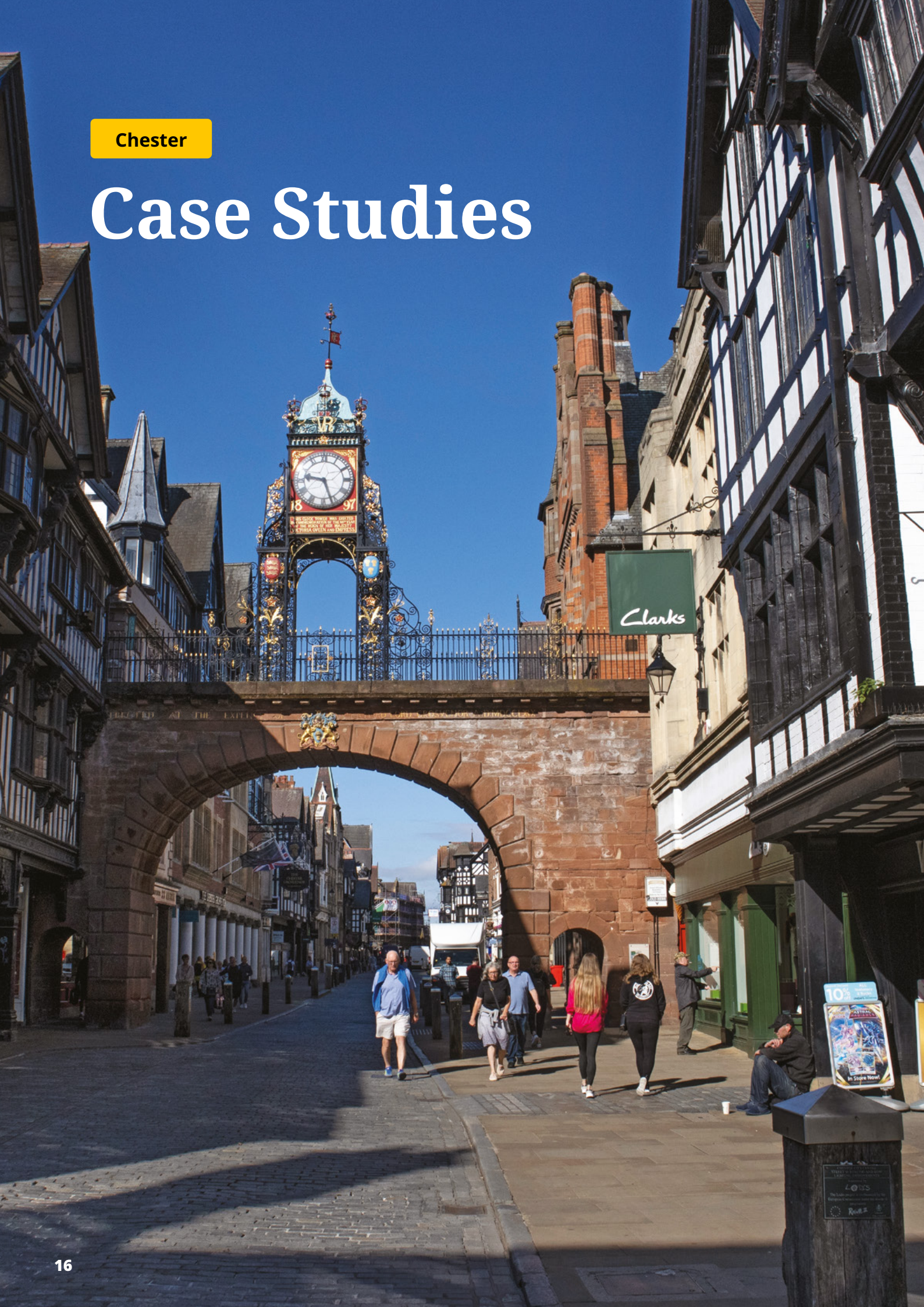
Winsford

Innovation.....	10%
Decarbonisation – UKSPF +CEF...	17%
Employer Training.....	11%



Chester

Case Studies



Case Study 1

Sartori Audio Technologies (Chester)

Sector: Manufacturing

Innovation Grant: £4.4k

Match: £4.4k

Overview

Sartori Audio Technologies has been trading for under a year and has already launched its first product, fully designed and built in Chester. It is now collaborating with Mouse Design on a second, entirely new-to-market product.



BAT

ENRICHED SOUNDS



We're really grateful for this grant – Sartori Audio Technologies is a start-up business and this type of support makes a huge difference.

With the innovation grant we've been able to take our new product from just an idea through to a prototype, enabling us to take advantage of a gap in the market.

Case Study 2

Storyhouse (Chester)

Sector: Retail Hospitality Leisure
CEF Decarbonisation Grant: £25k
Match: £79k

Overview

Storyhouse is a cultural venue and charity in Chester, combining a library, theatres, an independent cinema and a restaurant. It serves as a vibrant community hub offering a range of creative and social activities, including theatrical performances, film screenings, and festivals.



The grant has been fundamental in enabling us to deliver a solar PV installation at a scale to really maximise our available space to make a significant impact into our usage of grid power.

The yearly savings of over 48,000kg of CO2 are a huge step forwards in realising our sustainability goals. Working with Groundwork to enable this project has meant that we've been able to deliver the project in the most efficient way possible by completing the full project all at one time.



Case Study 3

Ash Tree Day Nursery (Blacon, run by Chestnut Nursery)

Sector: Community Services
UKSPF Decarbonisation Grant: £14.2k
Match: £26.7k

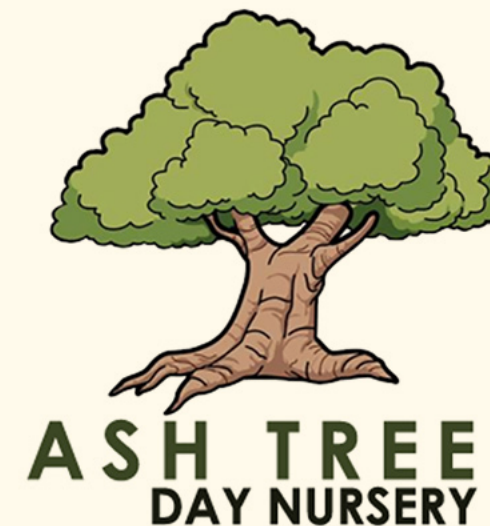
Overview

Ash Tree Day Nursery, run by Chestnut Nursery, is a premier childcare facility situated in the heart of the Blacon community. Offering full and part-time nursery places, pre-school, after-school club and holiday club services for children aged 0 to 11 years, Ash Tree provides comprehensive childcare solutions to meet the diverse needs of local families.



I just wanted to thank you for all your hard work and guidance, in helping us get our solar array up and running. The project, however arduous, has finally started to bear fruit, as today we commissioned and signed off on our 60kW solar array. We are now producing enough electricity to offset the consumption of all three of our settings in Blacon and Saughall. Without your assistance and the grant money we would never have made it to this point.

As I have mentioned before this is the first stage in our organisation (Chestnut House Nursery Limited) becoming more efficient and carbon friendly. I would like to think as childcare providers, we are continuously looking at the future of our children and the impact we are having on it. By reducing emissions, we are hopefully setting an example for others to follow. Thank you again, this has a long but ultimately fruitful experience.





Ellesmere Port and Neston

Case Studies

Case Study 1

Syntol Lubricants (Thornton IE)

Sector: Manufacturing

Innovation Grant: £10k

Match: £13k

Overview

Syntol Lubricants, established in 2019, builds on generations of motorcycle racing experience. Prior to launching as an independent manufacturer in the North West, the team spent over a decade supplying bespoke engine and transmission lubricants to UK race teams.



The financial support from the UKSPF has been a great help in building our new site. The production facility can now produce increased volume of our industry leading products. Without the financial aid from the UKSPF we would have had to take a lot longer to develop the site therefore slowing down production and the business itself.

Case Study 2

North West Industrial Estates (Pioneer House)

Sector: Property

CEF Decarbonisation Grant: £14.2k

Match: £27.3k

Overview

North West Industrial Estates is a provider of commercial property solutions within the UK, offering high-quality office and industrial spaces tailored to modern business needs.



We have been assisted greatly throughout the process of applying for a grant, supporting and feeding back on the application and seeing the process through. Advice, speedy responses and practical help coupled with the funding support has allowed the Pioneer House team to install a cost effective solar solution that will generate 25% of the electricity used by the centre and its occupiers via renewable sources.



Case Study 3

International Pheromone Systems (Neston)

Sector: Manufacturing

CEF Decarbonisation Grant: £20k

Match: £38k

Also received training grant support.

Overview

International Pheromone Systems (IPS) provides sustainable, pheromone-based solutions for insect monitoring and control. Operating from a combined research and manufacturing facility, the company prioritises energy efficiency and environmental responsibility.



The support has been pivotal in enabling IPS to take the first big step towards achieving Net Zero. The costs for a business to install a solar PV array can be quite daunting but with the assistance in identifying a great supplier and enabling grant funding for the project plus making the whole process as easy as it could be, we have finally been able to achieve it.



Mid-Cheshire: Northwich and Winsford

Case Studies



Case Study 1

Shadow Foam (Anderton)

Sector: Manufacturing

Innovation Grant: £10k

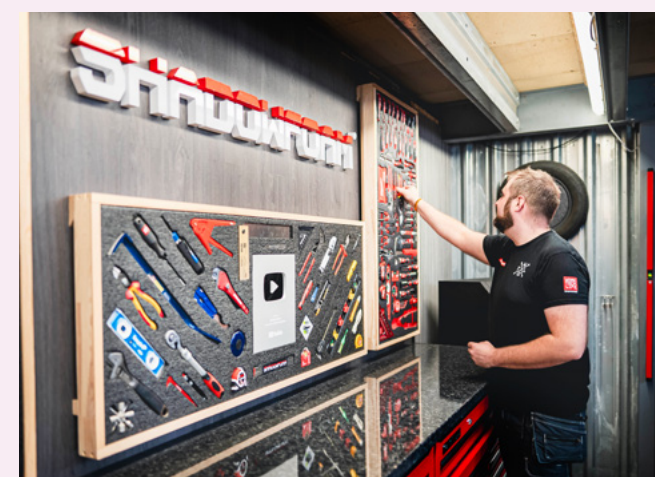
Match: £10k

Overview

Shadow Foam has been trading for over 12 years, designing and manufacturing proprietary customisable foam inserts for all major toolbox brands. As a leader in protective solutions, the company identified a market gap for safeguarding sensitive equipment.



The grant support has been instrumental in accelerating the research and development of our innovative new product. By alleviating the financial pressures during the initial development phase, we will be able to expand our team earlier than anticipated, which not only helps us fast-track the product launch but also ensures job security for our existing staff.



Case Study 2

Alphabond Technologies (Gadbrook Park)

Sector: Manufacturing

Innovation Grant: £15.7k

Match: £24k

Overview

Alphabond provide high-performing adhesive solutions for packaging and labelling, trusted by major international manufacturers.



The support provided in enabling Alphabond to have a bespoke R&D laboratory instead of the shared R&D and QC laboratory space has ensured that our R&D facility is primed for success in 2025 – Projects planned for 2025 will absolutely be executed – without the worry that the lab space and facilities will be hijacked by QC test requirements which has been the case in recent years with the shared lab space.

R&D success is crucial to the business, and will enable us to stay ahead of the competition in the development and launch of new products. It will enable faster project delivery, keeping customers/ prospects engaged in the development journey, maintaining momentum, enabling products to get to market faster and target “next up” potential customers.

Case Study 3

Changing Lives Together (Winsford Industrial Estate)

Sector: Charity

UKSPF Decarbonisation Grant: £14.6k

Match: £3.6k

Also received training grant support

Overview

Changing Lives Together (CLT) tackles environmental and social challenges through community-focused services that improve wellbeing and local life. Their work includes family support, community hubs, food distribution, reuse stores, and wellbeing programmes. CLT also offers training, volunteering, and employment opportunities to help people build skills and confidence.



Changing Lives Together operates many of its community services from a large industrial unit in Winsford. The building is used by our staff, volunteers and employees, one of the key issues users of the site raise is the lack of heating within the building.

As a licensed waste carrier we have permission to burn waste timber from our waste collection services which cannot be recycled, the existing burner was over 21 years old and was no longer providing heat to the building, the grant provision under the Shared Prosperity Fund has enabled us to purchase a new more efficient wood burner which will also recycle waste heat into the building. This will change the environment for over sixty employees, seventy volunteers and hundreds of customers who visit our retail store within the building as well as ensuring a reduction in lost energy.

Case Study 4

Winsford Youth & Community Forum

Sector: Community Development
Employer Training Grant

Overview

The **Winsford Youth & Community Forum (WYCF)** secured a grant of £348,000 over five years from the National Lottery Community Fund's Reaching Communities programme. This funding will primarily support the salaries of both existing and new staff, strengthening the organisation's capacity to deliver its community objectives.

The UKSPF Employer Training Grant enabled WYCF to engage specialist consultancy support to prepare their Stage 1 application, which was successful. Following this, WYCF was invited to submit a more detailed Stage 2 application, which was also prepared with consultancy assistance. With an 80% success rate at Stage 2, the odds were favourable.



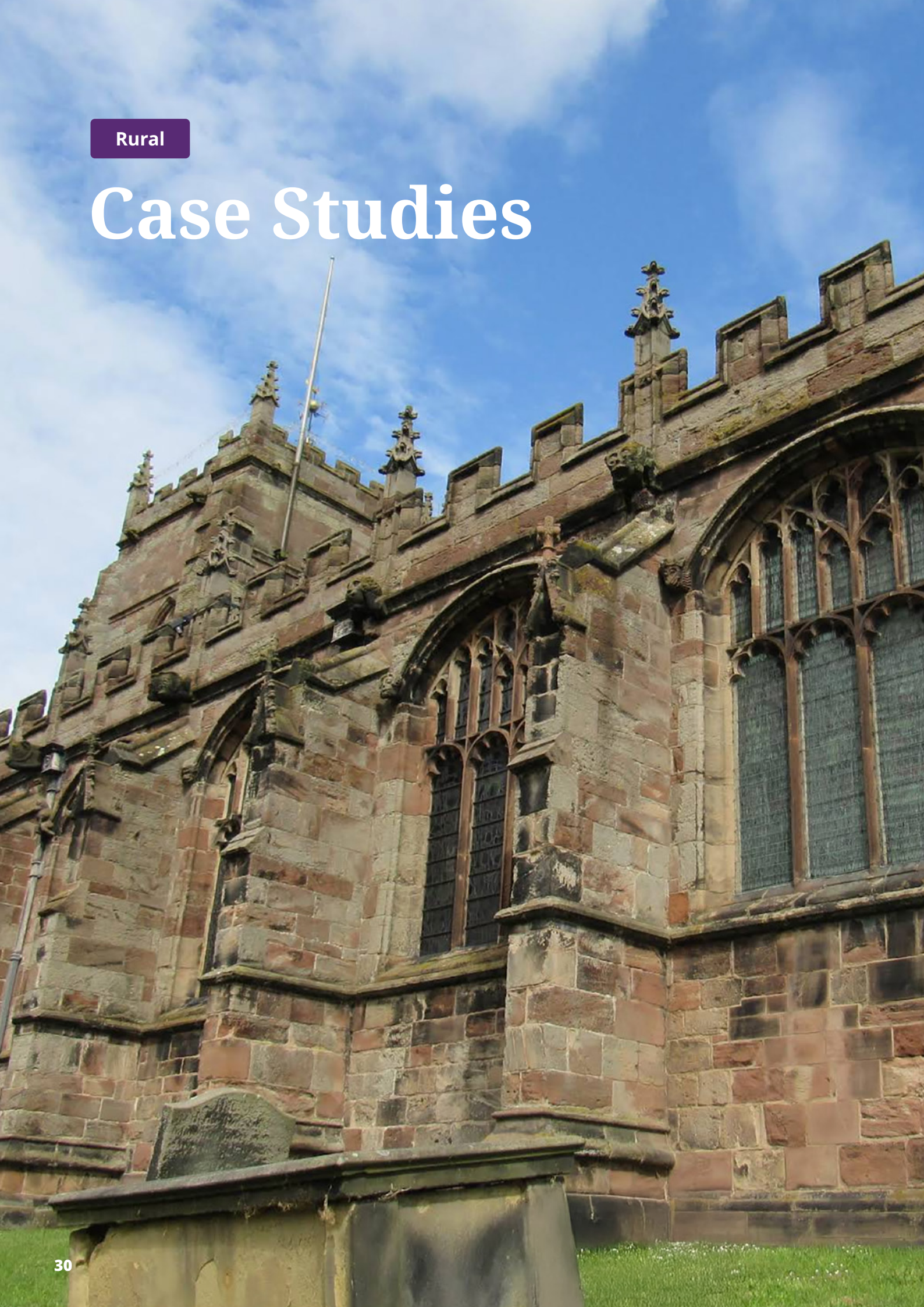
WYCF's request for consultancy support focused on upskilling and coaching staff and Trustees in grant application processes to enhance long-term sustainability. This demonstrates the value of targeted capacity-building initiatives supported by the UKSPF grant fund, which not only aids project delivery but also strengthens organisational capabilities.

This case illustrates the strategic benefit of the Council's approach in funding bid-writing support, leading to significant financial outcomes for community organisations.



Rural

Case Studies



Case Study 1

Lady Heyes Holiday Park (Frodsham)

Sector: RHL

UKSPF Decarbonisation Grant: £25k

Match: £137.6k

Overview

Lady Heyes is a privately owned, year-round holiday park offering glamping pods and pitches for caravans, motorhomes, and tents. Set across 14 acres, the site has transformed from a mid-20th-century agricultural business into a modern leisure destination. It features a range of facilities and is home to independent businesses such as a vehicle garage, antiques centre, furniture stores, beauty services, and more.



On behalf of Lady Heyes Holiday park I would like to express our thanks for the funding recently awarded to us. We had already planned to invest a significant amount of money into the new roof mounted solar system ourselves as part of our Action Plan & commitment to be more eco friendly & demonstrate carbon savings. With the additional finances we have been able to add in some extra panels to increase the overall system size & then finish with the edge trims to protect the panels against wear & tear & damage from birds roosting. This is really valuable & a significant step up so adds a huge benefit.

Case Study 2

Gas Safe Europe (Chowley Oak)

Sector: Manufacturing

Innovation Grant: £10k

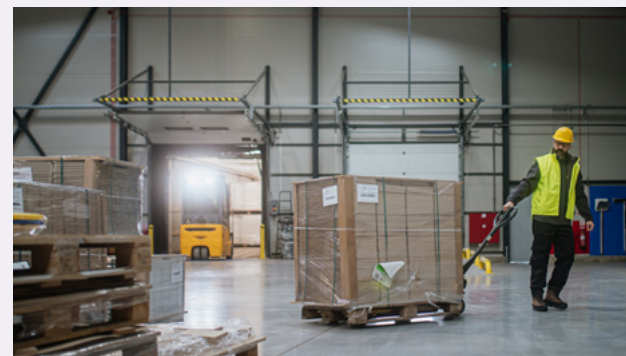
Match: £17k

Overview

Gas Safe Europe Ltd, a family-run business based in Tattenhall, has been operating for over 14 years. The company is a multi-award-winning innovator in life safety, specialising in the design, manufacture, and supply of carbon monoxide and fire detection equipment for both B2B and B2C markets.

“

First class.
The process was not complicated and all the people involved were pleasant and efficient.



Case Study 3

Maxton Engineering (Kingswood)

Sector: Manufacturing

CEF Decarbonisation Grant: £10.7k

Match: £10.7k

Overview

Maxton Engineering, founded in 1971, began by producing components for racing motorcycles. Today, it manufactures high-performance suspension products for both professional race teams and private road bike clients worldwide. Based in a purpose-built unit South West of Frodsham, the business benefits from strong transport links via the M56, with easy access to Liverpool and Manchester.

“

I would just like to say how easy the whole process of having solar panels installed has been. The support given has been excellent. This is the first time I have purchased solar panels, so had a lot of questions about the process. I was apprehensive, but yourself and your colleagues gave me great advice, putting my mind at rest, giving me the confidence to move forward with the project.



Getting the grant towards the solar panels, was what allowed us to have them installed. Without the grant, the project was too expensive to justify, in our changing manufacturing industry.

Long term, having solar panels will save us money, allowing us to invest the money in new production machinery and staff. This will modernise and expand our manufacturing capabilities, and help it move forward.



Conclusion

In conclusion, the delivery of programmes throughout 2024–25 has provided the Business Support Team with valuable experience, enabling them to prioritise and focus activity effectively within a reduced budget for 2025–26.

Furthermore, the robust evidence collected during the UKSPF period will play a crucial role in informing and strengthening the case for the continuation of business support in the future.



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