



Stoke-on-Trent City Council

# Business Bulletin

Issue 2 - March 2012

## Key Indicators

**136 business start ups  
in January**

**87 planning  
applications received  
in January**

**16 investment  
enquiries in January**

**62,238 people visited  
the 'visitstoke.co.uk'  
website in February**

**Job Seekers  
Allowance claimant  
rate 5.5% in  
December**

**W**elcome to the second edition of the Stoke-on-Trent Business Bulletin. This report will provide background and context to the business environment in which we work, and help to monitor the range of services we offer to help companies grow and flourish in Stoke-on-Trent.

We want the information to be interesting, useful and informative so please tell us if you have any suggestions.

## Headline Summary

- Stoke-on-Trent nominated as one of the top 10 European cities for inward investment, economic growth and business expansion.
- Pottery firms in Stoke-on-Trent win orders to the value of £2 million from the 'Top Drawer' event in London.
- The British Ceramics Biennial festival deemed a major success for Stoke-on-Trent by generating over £2 million in economic activity and attracting over 32,000 visitors.
- Usage of our Enterprise Centres remains high, with 130 businesses now operating from our six centres providing employment for more than 750 people.
- Stoke-on-Trent celebrates record apprentice figures for young people.
- Almost four million people visited Stoke-on-Trent in 2010, spending £203 million and supporting 5,617 jobs.
- 1,185 people visited the 'Make it Stoke-on-Trent' website (which promotes inward investment) in January, an increase of 213% compared to the previous year.
- The Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire LEP sign the Planning Charter Mark to help support businesses through the planning process.
- Development Management report strong growth in the number of pre-application planning enquiries.
- The Stoke-on-Trent & Staffordshire Business Helpline receives over 125 calls in the first five weeks of operation.

## This issue



PG2  
Summary  
of Business  
Conditions

PG4  
Help for  
Business

PG10  
News

[stoke.gov.uk](http://stoke.gov.uk)



# Summary of business conditions

- Retail sales grew in January, up by 0.9 per cent on the previous month, the largest monthly gain since April 2011.
- The level of activity in the housing market is still generally very subdued.
- Investment intentions continue to weaken, due in large part to heightened uncertainty about the economic outlook.
- Goods exports however are still growing at a fairly strong rate, but the pace of expansion has slowed compared with last year.
- Manufacturing output for the domestic market continues to grow gradually, but the growth rate had edged down again, with reports becoming more mixed.
- The growth rate of turnover in business services eased further, reflecting both weaker activity and downward pressure on prices.
- Employment intentions in the private sector continue to weaken, and suggest that employment is unlikely to grow over the next six months.
- Annual inflation in the price of imports remains elevated.
- Manufacturing output price inflation is expected to decline, due to slowing in the pace of inflation in input costs. Inflation in business services prices has also softened in recent months, reflecting more intense competitive pressures.
- Annual consumer price inflation remains elevated, but has fallen slightly, due to heavy discounting in both goods and services.

## Business start-ups in Stoke-on-Trent

Small business start-ups	Limited Companies	Sole Traders	Other Start-ups	Commercial Enterprises	Not For Profit	Total
January 2012	59	61	7	127	9	136
compared with						
December 2011	↑	↑	→	↑	↑	↑
January 2011	↑	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓
YTD	↑	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓

- Banksearch Consultancy report that 136 new businesses started up in January, 54 more than in December but 13 less than the corresponding period of last year. This equates to a current start-up rate of 9.1.
- The top three industry sectors where these start-ups occurred were Real Estate and Professional Services (41), Wholesale and Retail (37) and Construction (14).
- The most prevalent areas for business start-ups were Longton (20), Burslem (17), and Hanley (16).
- County Court Judgments (CCJs): Of the 15 industrial sectors (as defined by Bureau van Dijk) five recorded an increase in the number of CCJ's issued, down from 12 in January.
- Businesses contained within the Business Activities sector again recorded the highest number of CCJ's rising from 13 to 20.



## British Ceramics Biennial a major success for Stoke-on-Trent

The evaluation report of last year's festival, which ran from 30 September to 13 November 2011, was published in February. Highlights from the report show that 32,700 visitors were attracted to the three main festival venues, it generated over £2 million in economic activity and achieved £1 million worth of media coverage. In addition it also enabled over 700 adults and 200 school children to participate in workshops and activities.

## Business indicators

- The Development Management Team (Planning) received 87 applications in January, including a proposal for 131 houses at The Square, Meir.
- During this period a further 78 applications were determined, of which 86% were approved, including the extension to the Potteries Shopping Centre in the City Centre which will provide five restaurant units and a multi-screen cinema.
- The Development Management Team also reported strong growth in the level of pre-application enquiries received by the authority. In January 36 enquires were received, more than double the monthly average for 2011.
- Enterprise Centres: Business utilisation of our Enterprise Centres remains high with all six reporting occupancy rates above 76%. In particular, the Burslem Enterprise Centre is currently running at 91% capacity mirroring the figures reported from Banksearch Consultancy of new business formation in the area.
- There are currently 130 businesses operating from the six centres providing employment for more than 750 people.
- The Enterprise Programme which comprises Enterprise Coaches, Test Trading and Small Business Grants are responsible to date for 42 business start-ups.
- City Centre: A total of 663,796 people visited the City Centre in January 2012. This is a decrease of -14.5% month-on-month and a -3.5% decrease year-on-year. Nationally footfall was down -29.7% with many consumers both shopped out and spent out after Christmas, so in comparison our City Centre fared much better.
- Vacancy rates in the City Centre remain circa 20%, above both national and regional comparators (14%).
- The Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Conference Bureau (Tourism) in January recorded 62,238 hits on their website, sent out 709 Tourist Information packs and fielded 58 enquiries with an estimated value of £98,500.
- The recently released Economic Impact Assessment shows that 3.9 million visitors came to Stoke-on-Trent in 2010, spending approximately £203 million and supporting 5,617 jobs.

## Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent is a finalist in the Meetings and Incentives Travel Industry Awards 2012

The Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Conference Bureau are also a finalist in the 2012 Meetings & Incentive Travel Industry Awards. The M&I Industry Awards recognise and reward excellence, and are the result of voting by the readers of Meetings & Incentive Travel magazine - with votes audited and verified by the independent Audit Bureau of Circulations. The M&I Awards are the oldest established awards programme in the meetings industry.



## Help For Business

### **The National Loan Guarantee Scheme (NLGS) was launched by Rt Hon George Osborne on the 20 March**

The scheme allows businesses to access loans at one percentage point below average. Participating banks are Barclays, Santander, Lloyds TSB and the Royal Bank of Scotland. Firms with a turnover of up to £50 million will be able to participate. This is part of a wider Government initiative to improve credit easing.

### **A third round of bidding under the Regional Growth Fund is now underway**

This Government money, in the form of a grant can help business grow and diversify. Bids will be accepted from private bodies and public private partnerships across England on a challenge basis. It is envisaged that bidding partnerships could include a combination of private sector players, small and medium sized enterprises, and social enterprises, coming together with public partners. The minimum size of a bid is £1 million, and the deadline is the 13 June 2012. For more information about RGF, visit the website [here](#).

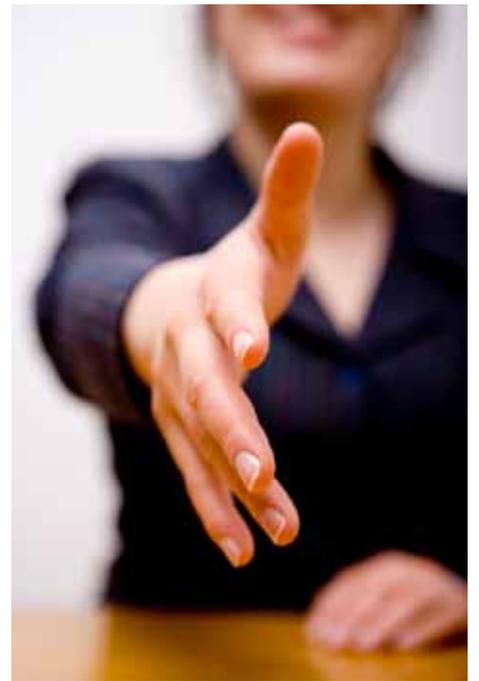
For help in making a bid, please contact the city council's Economic Development Unit on 01782 232747.





## Small Business Loans now available in Stoke-on-Trent

The Black Country Reinvestment Society (BCRS) which has operated a successful business loan scheme in Staffordshire for the last three years, has now been asked by the city council to fund similar loans in Stoke-on-Trent. The council has invested £100,000 in the Stoke-on-Trent Loan Fund, which has been doubled by BCRS; if the scheme is a success, the council is likely to grow this fund further. The Fund can make loans available of £10-50,000 to companies who employ 50 people or less. Contact BCRS on 0845 313 8410 for more information.



## Transforming Enterprise in Stoke-on-Trent (TEST)

TEST is a city council funded programme designed to help deliver the Mandate for Change. It was launched by Councillor Meredith, Cabinet Member for Economic Development on 27 February and has two elements, assisting new business start ups and helping existing business to grow and create jobs. TEST comprises business enterprise coaching, test-trading, mentoring, help with access to finance and recruitment, understanding supply chains and bespoke business intelligence.





## Business Development

### Inward Investment

# Make it | **Stoke-on-Trent & Staffordshire**

- The Make it Stoke-on-Trent & Staffordshire Inward Investment Service continues to report an increase in Foreign Direct Investment enquiries. This includes this month:
  - Renewables: China
  - Manufacturing: China
  - Education: USA
- The team also received 12 property and 4 general enquiries in January.
- They estimate that the top 20 opportunities they are working on could lead to the creation of 1,463 jobs and the safeguarding of a further 990 jobs.
- In January 2012 there were 1,185 visitors to the 'Make it Stoke-on-Trent & Staffordshire' website. This is an increase of 213% compared to the same period last year.
- In addition, 340 people/organisations now follow 'Make it Stoke-on-Trent & Staffordshire' on Twitter which equates to an increase of 19.5% since the turn of the year.

### **Stoke-on-Trent has been selected as one of the top 10 cities in Europe**

Stoke-on-Trent is one of a handful of European cities to be picked for a prestigious award recognising places with the best prospects for inward investment, economic growth and business expansion in the fDi Magazine, part of the Financial Times, European Cities of the Future Awards for Micro Cities. The independently researched award, which recognises leading cities with a population of less than 250,000, picked out Stoke-on-Trent for its strong transport links and business connections across Europe - putting the city 6th in this year's listing. It is proposed that the trial will last 6 months, which started 1 February 2012, after which a full evaluation of the service will be undertaken. The capital, revenue and training costs of the trial are to be met from the LEP Start-up Fund.



## Pottery firms land £200k orders at fair

Ten ceramics firms which joined forces to promote both themselves and the city in a major London trade fair have already received over 50 orders. The companies formed a stand called 'Ceramics, Designed and Made in Stoke-on-Trent, England' at retail fair Top Drawer which took place at Earls Court. They recorded almost 500 serious enquiries and leads, at least 50 of which translated into orders at the show itself. The firms estimate their attendance has resulted in over £2 million in sales - a combination of orders taken at the show and the potential for more over the next six months. The group was supported by Stoke-on-Trent City Council and the Ceramic Industry Forum in promoting business opportunities both for themselves and the city.



## The Store

The Stoke-on-Trent & Staffordshire Skills Shop in partnership with Signal Radio hosted a "Get a Job" day at The Store on the 26 January. A number of organisations were in attendance including E.ON, Alton Towers and Autonet. All 3 organisations were recruiting with interviews taking place throughout the day. Over 450 people came through the doors, looking for employment or training, all of the employers in attendance rated the day as a huge success.





## JSA Claimants December 2011

- In Stoke-on-Trent, the JSA claimant rate is currently 5.5% which is above both regional (5.0%) and national comparators (4.0%).
- Between December 2010 and December 2011 there was a 12.3% increase in the number of claimants in Stoke-on-Trent. This is the fourth consecutive month where there has been a year-on-year increase in claimant numbers.
- Since the height of the recession in April 2009, the claimant rate has fallen by -0.9 percentage points.
- Against this milieu the number of notified job vacancies decreased by -6% in the last year. This year-on-year fall in vacancy numbers follows the slight increase reported in last months bulletin.

## Support for the unemployed

- Work Programme: Has helped 47 people into work in February and supported a further 193 in looking for work. The cumulative total of people into work since the start of the programme is 478.
- The council's JET Service (Jobs Enterprise Training) is running inductions and job searches twice a week for customers to fulfill demand.





## Youth Employment

City apprenticeships have grown by nearly 25 per cent in the last year as Stoke-on-Trent celebrates record apprentice figures for young people. This year Stoke-on-Trent City Council has supported 77 young people through apprenticeship placements in the city compared to an average of 60 for past years. Placements range from sports development to childcare with Stoke-on-Trent City Council directly supporting 63 placements as well as supporting recruitment for external posts in companies including Brazilian Soccer Schools, 21st Century Gym, Stafford Borough Council, Stoke City Football Club and Tamworth Borough Council. The city council, through organisations such as Learn4work and JET, work with young people and businesses in the city to match budding young workers with suitable placements. Apprenticeships not only provide businesses with the opportunity to develop their staff of the future but give young people the opportunity to get real on the job training. New opportunities for apprenticeships are due to become available on Friday 1 June.



Jake King - apprentice at Fenton Manor Leisure Centre

## Grants for apprentices announced

The National Apprenticeship Service (NAS) will provide up to 40,000 Apprenticeship Grants to small/medium size employers recruiting 16 to 24 year olds with a value of £1,500, to encourage new employers to take on new apprentices. Priority will be given to small-medium size employers with less than 50 employees and NAS expects to support at least 20,000 of these to recruit an apprentice for the first time. The National Apprenticeship Service can support a further 20,000 employers with up to 250 employees who may be recruiting their first or additional apprentices; their focus will be to support employers who are new to apprenticeships. Employers will be expected to allow apprentices to complete their studies (usually one day a week during term time) and to pay the minimum apprenticeship wage of £2.60 per hour.



## News from the Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire LEP

### The Stoke-on-Trent & Staffordshire Business Helpline

The Business Helpline, which was launched on 1 February, has received 125 enquiries in the first five weeks. Approximately 70% of calls were resolved or successfully referred on first contact, with the most frequently asked questions concerning: start-up support, funding and finance, international trade (UKTI) and the investor development service. Almost two-thirds of calls have been received from the ST postcode.

**Stoke-on-Trent  
Business helpline  
0300 111 8000**



Image: Council Leader Cllr. Mohammed Pervez and North Staffordshire Chamber of Commerce Chief Executive Sara Williams at the Business Helpline Desk



## Councils commit to support business growth

Councils are committing to support businesses through the planning process to make development in Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire flourish.

On 12 February the Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Local Enterprise Partnership signed a Planning Charter Mark to commit to support businesses through the planning process.

The event, held at the New Vic Theatre in conjunction with the North Staffordshire Chamber of Commerce and Industry, saw all local authorities in the Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire area, (including Stoke-on-Trent City Council and Staffordshire County Council), sign up to the charter in front of more than 130 business representatives.

The Planning Charter Mark concentrates on five main areas –

- clarity and consistency
- effort and focus
- competence and respect
- accuracy
- fairness and dialogue and understanding – to create clear advice for businesses looking to expand or develop.

## Top financiers offer small businesses advice on accessing funding

A team of top financiers gave small businesses advice on how to access essential funding despite the challenging economic times. The Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Local Enterprise Partnership ran an Open Access to Finance event on 27 February. It followed the success of the first such event run by the LEP in January which attracted many local companies.

The Open Access to Finance events are being run in conjunction with the Black Country Reinvestment Society (BCRS), which operates the Staffordshire Business Support Fund in conjunction with Staffordshire County Council.

Experts from commercial banks, small business loan funds, law firms and business schools were on hand as well as corporate financiers, financial advisors, accountants, angel investors and business advisors. There will be more dates to follow in April 2012.

## Apprentices recognised for contributions to business

Apprentices in Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire who have made a real difference in their workplace were recognised at an event during National Apprenticeship Week.

The first Apprenticeship Recognition Awards event, organised by the Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP), was held at the Kingston Centre in Stafford. The awards gave employers, learning providers and ambassadors working on apprenticeships the opportunity to nominate outstanding apprentices. Seven apprentices from Staffordshire received the Special Recognition and Personal Achievement Awards, presented by Ken Stepney, Chair of the LEP's Enterprise and Skills Group.



## Media Monitoring

### E.On solar deal with the council

UK energy provider E.On, have signed a £4 million deal with Stoke-on-Trent City Council to install 4,000 solar panels on council properties. E.On has agreed to invest £2.3 million with the city council providing £1.8 million. The project is generating approximately 100 jobs and aims to help improve unemployment within the city.



### Stoke-on-Trent College and UHNS reach clinical support agreement

Trainee clinical support workers are being given job opportunities in North Staffordshire thanks to a new agreement between the University Hospital of North Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent College. The college has designed a recruitment strategy for the area's biggest hospital to ensure they have a regular supply of temporary staff.

### Expansion for GSH will bring jobs to the city

Facilities management company GSH has been granted permission to build an energy monitoring and research centre at its site in Etruria. The company expects the expansion to create 54 new jobs, although not all of these jobs would be created straight away.

### New telecoms jobs created in Newcastle

Business telecoms firm Qualitel has expanded its headquarters in Newcastle-under-Lyme and created five new jobs in the process.



## A new Asda for Longton

Plans have been unveiled for a new Asda supermarket in Longton, based on the former Somerfield site. A planning application for the store is expected to be submitted shortly. If granted the store is expected to create up to 400 new jobs.

## Good news for RBS in Newcastle

The Royal Bank of Scotland has announced that there will not be any job losses at its site in Newcastle-under-Lyme, despite announcing that 3,500 jobs will be cut worldwide. The bank currently employs around 300 people at its site on Brampton Road in Newcastle.

## New superstore to create 100 jobs

The Range is to open a new home, garden and leisure superstore in Stoke-on-Trent in April, creating up to 100 full and part-time jobs.

## McCamley UK looking to expand

McCamley UK has chosen the Keele University Science and Business Park (KUSBP) as its new base to launch a new style of wind turbine designed to fit on rooftops in urban settings. The company currently employs four people but has plans for growth.

## KFC applies for new restaurant

KFC has applied to open a new restaurant in Meir, potentially creating 20 full-time and 20 part-time jobs.

## Co-operative Group announce restructure plans

As a result of last year's merger between The Co-operative Travel and Thomas Cook, the Co-operative Group has announced plans to restructure its financial shared services operation in Burslem. The restructure will involve the 92 members of staff at the site applying for just 35 positions, although there may also be opportunities for redeployment, possibly outside of the area.

## Remploy to close

More than 100 disabled workers are to lose their jobs after their factory was earmarked for closure. The Government-funded Remploy plant at Trentham Lakes is to close "within the year" with the loss of 114 jobs.



# Upcoming Events



- **Fabric First and Refurbishment Excellence:  
Up-skilling to deliver The Green Deal and beyond**  
Thursday 17 May 2012 9 – 4.30 pm. for more information and to book your place click on the link [www.core-skills.com/events](http://www.core-skills.com/events)

---

## Contacts

### **Alison Knight**

Assistant Director - Economic  
Development, Culture and Sport  
t: 01782 233455  
e: [alison.knight@stoke.gov.uk](mailto:alison.knight@stoke.gov.uk)

### **John Willis**

Head of Inward Investment  
t: 0300 111 8005  
e: [john.willis@stoke.gov.uk](mailto:john.willis@stoke.gov.uk)

### **Jonathan Phipps**

Strategic Manager Economic  
Development and Programmes  
t: 01782 232747  
e: [jonathan.phipps@stoke.gov.uk](mailto:jonathan.phipps@stoke.gov.uk)

### **Scott Grindey**

Senior Officer  
Intelligence and Analysis  
t: 01782 238327  
e: [scott.grindey@stoke.gov.uk](mailto:scott.grindey@stoke.gov.uk)