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# Flying start for Buckinghamshire's free business growth service

A free business consultancy service aimed at helping Buckinghamshire businesses that want to grow has proved an instant hit. Launched in February, The Investment Readiness Service is well into its stride, with 15 leaders of small to medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) enrolled and receiving high calibre advice.

Among the first wave of SMEs taking part are a distributor of heating and cooling products, a marketing agency, pet food manufacturer, 'green' energy specialist, online fashion and homeware boutique and a niche catering company.



**Adam Stronach and IRS specialist Amandeep Dhillon in action at one of the workshops looking at funding options for small businesses**

Delivered by Harwood Hutton as part of Buckinghamshire Business First's Growth Programme, the Investment Readiness Service offers eight hours of complementary guidance from corporate finance expert Adam Stronach.

The Service combines bespoke one-to-one consultancy with a series of interactive workshops on themes such as budgeting, forecasting and understanding different types of finance. There is also a Dragon's Den-style session where businesses can learn the secrets of presenting their business plans and vision to potential backers.

David Pitt of Enertecgreen Limited is looking to raise a multi-million pound figure to accelerate the growth of his business. Jackson Bavinton, a member of David's team, said: "As a small company, we don't have the expertise to seek investment, so the opportunity to sit down with experts has been invaluable to set us up to go out to investors. The programme has enabled us to improve our business plan, update our

financial model and provided us with new investment teasers. This has led to interest from the right sort of investors, and as a direct result we are now in the process of engaging with some of the largest investors in our industry.”

Food and healthcare sector consultant Mike Iddon, a former director at Compass Group, is working on a strategy to distribute a natural essential nutrition product in the UK. “The quality of advice on offer from Adam and his team is outstanding,” he said. “The fact that it comes free of charge makes the Investment Readiness Service a no-brainer, as far as I’m concerned.”

Carly Ward is trying to build a new dog food brand. She is looking for the best options to develop her business. “The Investment Readiness Service team are so knowledgeable and genuinely want to help my business grow,” she said. The group sessions have been very well run, informative and to the point. The one-to-one sessions have given me a tremendous insight. The whole programme has been a very positive experience and enabled me to think about my business in a different way.”

Adam Stronach said the Investment Readiness Service was a distillation of his and Harwood Hutton’s extensive experience of helping SMEs secure growth funding. “We will help with the creation of the business plan or refine an existing one and then, following the workshops, we will work on how to pitch that plan to a potential investor.”

Adam said the Investment Readiness Service was ideally suited to companies in their early stages and achieving annual revenues of up to £2 million, although the programme can cater for businesses of up to £44m.

## **THE GROWTH PROGRAMME**

The Investment Readiness Service is a core element of The Growth Programme, funded by the European Regional Development Fund and delivered by local Growth Hub Buckinghamshire Business First.

*continued*



***Above: Mike Iddon refines his presentation during 'Pitch to Win', one of four free IRS workshops***

***Below: Adam Stronach can help find the best source of business growth funding for SMEs***



“There has never been a better time for SMEs to grow their business, with such an abundance of support on offer,” said Philippa Batting, Managing Director of Buckinghamshire Business First. “We encourage any Buckinghamshire-based business with growth ambitions to get involved.”

The Growth Programme is part-funded by European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and therefore eligibility criteria apply. If a business is not eligible, Buckinghamshire Business First can signpost them to other local and national business support programmes available.

## **CONTACT**

If you run a Buckinghamshire business looking to raise growth finance, contact Adam Stronach or Amandeep Dhillon on 01494 739500 or write to [amandeepdhillon@harwoodhutton.co.uk](mailto:amandeepdhillon@harwoodhutton.co.uk)