

Region ranks fourth in the UK's start-up hub stakes, says study

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YORKSHIRE is the fourth largest hub for start-up businesses in the UK, according to a new study.

The research from the British Business Bank highlights the wide variety of fast growing businesses that have decided to establish a base in the region.

The British Business Bank's Start Up Loans programme has lent £500m to UK small businesses since it was set up in 2012, with more than £44m going to firms in Yorkshire and The Humber, according to official figures.

Of the 63,920 loans issued to fund small business across the UK, 5,377 went to aspiring business owners in Yorkshire and The Humber, with the average loan amount-

ing to £8,235. Of those who received a loan, almost four in 10 (38.4 per cent) were women, almost one in 10 (9.9 per cent) came from black, Asian and minority ethnic communities (BAME), and almost three in 10 (30.1 per cent) were unemployed when they applied for the loan, reflecting the diversity of the UK start-up community.

The Start Up Loans programme, which is part of the British Business Bank, has lent money and provided mentoring support to aspiring business owners in every part of the country and its impact has been particularly noticeable in areas of deprivation.

A Start Up Loans Heatmap shows that the North West was given the highest number of loans outside of London, receiving 7,841 loans worth £60m.

The South East follows with

5,680 loans worth £48m followed by Yorkshire and The Humber with 5,377 loans worth £44m. There were 3,879 loans in Scotland worth £29m and 2,904 loans in Wales worth £26m.

Yorkshire business owners supported by Start Up Loans have used the funding to set up businesses in a wide range of sectors.

They include Razan Al-Sous, *inset*, the founder of Yorkshire Dama Cheese, who set up her business making halloumi cheese after fleeing war-torn Syria with her husband and three children and struggling to find work, despite having a degree in pharmacology.

Yorkshire Dama Cheese now has

a turnover of £189,000, with products sold at Morrisons as well as online.

It has also won a number of awards, including the World Cheese Award Gold Prize 2016.

Razan Al-Sous, the founder of Yorkshire Dama Cheese, said: "My business is going from strength to strength and I'm thrilled that my traditional halloumi made with local ingredients is being enjoyed by people up and down the country."

"Starting a business requires passion and determination.

"There are many highs but also many lows.

Start Up Loans supported us every step of the way and we re-

ally wouldn't be where we are today without their help and expertise."

Patrick Magee, chief Commercial officer of the British Business Bank, said: "We're absolutely delighted that we have supported so many fantastic small business owners from up and down the country.

"The hard work and determination of the UK's 5.7 million small businesses make a huge contribution to society, and it's great to see latest research showing that the economic benefits of the Start Up Loans programme are nearly six times its economic costs."

He added: "We're committed to helping small businesses prosper and grow and we look forward to supporting many more in the future."



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BRIEFLY

Textile specialist reaches for the sky

Flight: Technical textiles specialist Arville has worked with academics and industry pioneers who have developed a new type of unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV).

Wetherby-headquartered Arville has worked with the project team, including researchers from five universities and several companies, to develop the lighter-than-air, 15-metre long, 120kg Phoenix aircraft. Arville was given the job of devising a specialist fabric for the central, helium-filled fuselage of the prototype craft. It has the appearance of an airship, with wings and solar panels.

KCOM wins national connectivity award

Telecoms: KCOM has claimed a national award for its Lightstream full fibre broadband rollout.

The Hull-based telecoms provider scooped the Fibre Connectivity Award at the Connected Britain Awards in recognition of its Lightstream broadband network. KCOM competed against 13 other finalists to take the award. Sean Royce, KCOM's managing director, said: "I'm absolutely delighted to be bringing the Fibre Connectivity Award home to Hull. Our full fibre rollout has been a massive achievement. It has taken seven years and £85m to complete."

Hull College Group wins £3m funding

Education: HCUK Training, part of Hull College Group, has secured £3m from the European Social Fund to provide fully funded training, qualifications and business support to SMEs.

The organisation will deliver the Skills Support for the Workforce (SSW) and Skills Support for the Unemployed (SSU) programmes until July 31, 2021. The training will be open to firms in priority growth sectors identified by the Humber Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP). It is the first time HCUK Training has been awarded the SSU programme.

Hudson Freelance launches

Hudson Contract has launched a new company to protect businesses against the potentially disastrous fallout from new tax legislation.

Hudson Freelance enables firms to engage self-employed consultants, professionals and technicians without the financial fear and administrative burdens of IR35 reforms.

Bridlington-based Hudson Contract, led by Ian Anfield, managing director, is one of Yorkshire's largest family-owned businesses and originated the market for secure self-employment in construction in 1996.

Hudson Freelance is initially aiming its model at construction firms which rely on self-employed CAD technicians, project managers, civil engineers, quantity surveyors, contracts managers, structural engineers, estimators, planners, logistics managers and health and safety advisers.



Ocado offloads beauty business to retailer Next

Ocado has offloaded a beauty business to high street retailer Next in a move which bosses partly attributed to a strategic shift following its tie-up with Marks & Spencer.

Fabled by Marie Claire, a premium beauty store and website, has been acquired by Next in a deal which will be worth about £8m to Ocado.

The high street retailer paid a small upfront fee and will pay at least £3m as part of an earnout agreement, giving

Ocado a cut of sales for the four years to 2024.

Tim Steiner, chief executive of Ocado, said the decision was a result of the new joint venture (JV) with Marks & Spencer, which is due to launch towards the end of next year.

"The recent JV with M&S has meant that the centre of gravity at Ocado Group has shifted," he said.

"In the light of our strategic evolution, and given the success of

the collaboration between Next and Fabled, we decided that it would be in the best interests of all parties to now pass the baton so that Next can take Fabled forward. We wish them all the best in this endeavour."

Next has already been collaborating with Fabled over the past eight months to sell more than 100 beauty brands through next.co.uk including Smashbox, Burberry and Estee Lauder.

Simon Wolfson, chief executive of

Next, said: "Fabled's experience and expertise bring an opportunity for the Next Group to develop an extensive premium beauty business supported by our online and retail platform."

Marie Claire and Ocado launched Fabled as a joint project in 2016.

Amanda Scott, managing director of Fabled, said: "We now have an exciting opportunity to combine complementary capabilities with Next."

Premier Inn owner reveals sales drop

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Premier Inn owner Whitbread has revealed a sharp drop in UK sales as Brexit uncertainty continues to take its toll on business travel.

The group said like-for-like UK accommodation sales dropped 4.6 per cent in its first quarter, while revenue per room – a key measure for hotel firms – tumbled 6.3 per cent.

The firm – which last year sold its Costa Coffee business to Coca-Cola in a £3.9bn deal – said UK like-for-like food and drinks sales also fell, down 2.1 per cent in the quarter.

It warned that hotel demand in the regional business market – where most Premier Inns are located – was being knocked in particular by the Brexit uncertainty, while it is also seeing rising costs.

Its first quarter update showed like-for-like sales in the London market dropped 4.2 per cent, but the regional business saw a 4.7 per cent decline.

It said while forward bookings look positive, "caution remains on the UK hotel environment given ongoing political uncertainty and the impact this has on business confidence".

Shares in the group dropped more than 1 per cent after the gloomy update.

Alison Brittain, chief executive of Whitbread, said: "We have delivered a resilient performance in the first quarter despite more challenging market conditions and we continue to make good progress with our efficiency programme, which is helping to partially offset another year of high industry cost inflation."

SMEs losing out to big guns in bid for tech talent

The UK's SMEs (small and medium-sized enterprises) are losing out to big players in the battle to recruit top tech talent, according to Robert Half UK's new report, Recruiting for the future: The challenges for UK SMEs.

The white paper, which was based on an independent study of Chief Information Officers (CIOs) across the UK, found that three quarters (75 per cent) of CIOs believe that it is more challenging for SMEs to attract tech talent because they prefer to work for larger technology companies.

Matt Weston, managing director of Robert Half UK, commented yesterday: "Digitalisation has created a fast-changing business environment and a significant number of SMEs are in danger of being left behind."

"Successful SMEs recognise that times are changing and they equip themselves with the necessary digital skills to be able to compete and thrive through collaboration and innovation."

Mr Weston added: "Unfortunately, many of them are losing out to big tech companies, who have significant pulling power when it comes to hiring high-quality candidates."

A DAY IN THE LIFE

Why I am proud to work at iconic Yorkshire estate

Lisa Ellen Riley, Events Co-Ordinator and Receptionist, The Round Foundry & Marshalls Mill Estate.

I am usually up at 6.30am and carry out the standard morning routine of showering and having breakfast.

I make sure to feed my cat, Trixie, and check for any wildlife he may have brought into the house as he is an avid hunter.

I am vegetarian so we have had the odd disagreement about this.

I then have a short commute of 10 minutes in the car from home to the estate that I am very grateful for.

On the rare occasion that I can't drive, the train station is only a ten-minute walk from the Mill, which is very useful.

I start my day at my desk by responding to all of my emails. I am the first point of contact at the estate and spend my time helping commercial and residential tenants with anything they might need.

I'll also liaise with contractors who may be fitting out offices that have been recently let to their

new specifications. It's always interesting to see what individual stamp a new organisation in the mill will add to the space.

We have some fantastic office fit-outs on the estate that are extremely creative.

I will also help the estate manager, Steve, with the day to day running of the estate. Steve and I take great pride in looking after Marshall's Mill and The Round Foundry estate with lots of behind the scenes work to maintain the heritage of the buildings.

We are extremely proud of our heritage here at the mill. The main Round Foundry building no longer stands, but Dry Sand Foundry and Green Sand Foundry along with some other buildings which date from as early as 1798 are now restored and occupied by tenants.

The current Marshall's Mill building, pioneered by capitalist industrial John Marshall in 1815, now provides quirky urban office space to businesses of Leeds.

Organisations are drawn to the estate for the mix of original features with contemporary space that provides the best of both worlds.

We were delighted to be awarded with our blue plaque last year to commemorate John Marshall and the impact he had on the South Bank and Leeds in general.

On my lunch break I walk into the city centre, which is a lovely short walk along the canal and under the arches.

There is so much urban wildlife on our doorstep so it would be a shame not to take advantage of it.

I have also taken up running recently and the canal is ideal for training as well as being conveniently close to the estate. Leeds has so much to offer so I often browse in the galleries and shops or go over to Kirkgate Market.

Afterwards, I meet a friend for a bite to eat in one of the amazing cafes that are situated on the estate.

On occasion during a lunch hour, I'll attend events hosted by our tenants. Our digital and creative community on the



LISA ELLEN RILEY: 'We are extremely proud of our heritage here at the mill.'

South Bank are at the forefront of innovation and often host workshops and seminars that are really insightful.

In the afternoon I continue to arrange and manage the ongoing and upcoming events on the estate, such as professional development workshops,

yoga and relaxation classes, charity collections, and food pop-ups.

I liaise with stakeholders for the larger seasonal events that we hold at the estate like the charity 10k, tenant summer BBQ, and Halloween extravaganza.

The bigger events take all year

to plan for a reason – they are so much fun.

I really believe that wellbeing is important and giving tenants a chance to unwind is a large part of life at The Round Foundry & Marshall's Mill.

We also like to encourage members of the public to attend and to see what we are all about.

I always take five minutes of an afternoon to take photos of the estate for our Instagram account. I can always find something to photograph and I love to stand back and really appreciate the architecture that gives the area its identity.

We get the odd tourist visiting the estate and it makes me feel privileged to work in a building with so much history and heritage whilst also supporting the growth of new and established businesses.

Unfortunately, there is a lot of mill space across the country that has fallen into disrepair, so we are lucky that The Round Foundry and Marshall's Mill has been transformed into such quirky and exciting space while still keeping a lot of its original features and charm.

I love to stand back and appreciate the architecture that gives the area its identity.