

# More than 500 jobs created through multimillion-pound County Durham Growth Fund

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More than 500 jobs have been created so far through the multimillion-pound County Durham Growth Fund, its directors have revealed.

The fund was set up in April 2019 as a £8.9m capital grant scheme, providing grants to small and medium enterprises in County Durham to accelerate their growth.

To date, £5.4m has been given to 21 companies from across the county, helping to collectively create 518 jobs.

The funding has been secured from the England European Regional Development Fund, as part of the European Structural and Investment Funds Growth Programme 2014-2020.

It is managed by Business Durham, the economic development arm of Durham County Council, in partnership with UMi, which has a dedicated team of advisors ready to help with initial eligibility checks and funding applications.

On top of the £5.4m total awarded over the last two years, the fund brought in a further £8.66m in private sector investment.

Each of the companies supported has secured a sizeable

investment grant to enable them to purchase new equipment, increase their capacity, improve efficiency or expand into new markets and create new jobs.

Businesses to benefit include radiography pioneer SafeRad Ltd, modular housebuilder CoreHaus, steel specialist Raisco, manufacturing companies BTS Fabrications, Durham Box, Central Dorset Manufacturing and BD Fabrications, commercial cubical and locker manufacturer ALM Products Ltd, automotive specialist Darren Oliver Auto Electrics, educational CIC Heartwood Skills, repair specialist Furniture Clinic and printer Howarth/Newton Press.

Bishop Auckland-based BD Fabrications, which manufactures architectural products, facades and cladding for projects across the country, secured £30,000 grant funding to purchase a new electric punch machine to increase the firm's efficiency and improve production.

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Director Jason Patterson said: “We are very proud to say that it was a record year for us on all fronts, exceeding all targets whilst retaining all of our staff and having a big recruitment drive into 2021.”

Corrugated packaging manufacturer Durham Box is undergoing a significant period of growth following the acquisition of additional land near the original site.

The company has been awarded a £200,000 grant to build a 20,000 sqft extension to its site in Bishop Auckland and re-design existing space to improve production facilities.

It will eventually occupy a 110,000 sqft site to scale-up the business and the project will lead to the creation of 20 new jobs.

Director Dan Morris said: “The acquisition of the land and investment in new machinery has put us in an ideal position to expand our client base and improve efficiency.

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"However, to facilitate this increase in volume and to cope with the rise in demand of our products and services, the company needed to re-design the factory layout, and with the support of the County Durham Growth Fund we have been able to do just that."

Sarah Slaven, Business Durham's interim managing director, said: "We are delighted to have been able to help 21 businesses with their capital investment projects over the

last two years, to enable them to achieve their ambitions through expanding into new markets, becoming more productive and increasing their workforce.

“The County Durham Growth Fund is just one of the ways in which we support our businesses, and we hope it will continue to play an important role in encouraging businesses to invest and expand their operations here.”