

Stoke City chairman Peter Coates donates £20 million to help create next generation of entrepreneurs

The co-founder of Stoke-on-Trent gambling giant bet365 has donated £20 million to Staffordshire University for a new course which aims to create the next generation of entrepreneurs.

Peter Coates – who is also the chairman of Stoke City Football Club – has teamed up with the university to launch The Peter Coates Fast Forward programme.

Funded by Peter's charity – the Peter Coates Foundation – the new course aims to put Stoke-on-Trent on the map as a leading city for innovation and wealth creation.

Starting next year, participants will study for 12 months to gain the newly-created Peter Coates MSc in Entrepreneurship at Staffordshire University.

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The programme will offer emerging entrepreneurs the skills, funding and support they need to start new, high-tech businesses in the city. Full bursaries will be available from the Peter Coates Foundation and non-academic criteria will be used to support applications.

At the end of the course, up to 30 teams of graduates will be able to pitch for up to £200,000 of investment in their business idea and the opportunity for ongoing mentoring and start-up support.

Peter Coates, who was awarded an honorary degree from

Staffordshire University in 2008, said: “With this programme, we want to help our city and region by accelerating its entrepreneurial success. We want to give everyone who has ambitions to start a business the necessary practical business skills, funding and support, in order to give them the best chance of succeeding.

“I want to create a legacy of a thriving and growing ecosystem of new businesses to drive the economy and the region forward. Educating and empowering our next generation of local entrepreneurs is the key to the regeneration of our city.”

Staffordshire University vice-chancellor and chief executive Professor Martin Jones said: “We are delighted to be teaming up with Peter and the Peter Coates Foundation on what could literally be a life-changing opportunity for individuals accepted on to the course.

“Working with and alongside those SMEs who are currently involved in the university’s Innovation Enterprise Zone, we believe the new one-year course will help to create a dynamic enterprise cluster and bring new job and wealth creation to our city and region.

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“This is very much in keeping with our responsibilities as a civic university to improve the regional economy, support quality of life in our local communities and develop higher level skills in business and industry through the retention and development of entrepreneur graduate talent.”

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