



# Better Business for All

*A local partnership between Businesses and Regulatory Services to promote growth*





# 'Cutting red tape is vital'



*Heena Prajapati explains why the Better Business for All scheme, aimed at easing business red tape, is working so well*

**B**usiness people like order. They like being able to plan ahead; they like to know they are competing on a level playing field; and they like to see customers go away happy because they know they'll get repeat business.

Good regulation is a vital part of ensuring this virtuous cycle, so why doesn't everyone play by the rules? It doesn't help that businesses may not always know about regulations or how to implement them.

There are so many regulations affecting all business sectors it can be confusing and complicated to know where to go for advice.

In the past, businesses have complained that it's not easy to contact regulators or access good information and advice promptly.

That's why in Leicester and Leicestershire we have developed the Better Business For All scheme which is part of the Leicester and Leicestershire Enterprise Partnership (LLEP).

It encourages businesses to grow by making business regulations easier to access and understand.

Through hard work from the regulators and business partners, the scheme has made a fantastic step forward in building relationships of trust and confidence.

Simple things like getting regulators and businesses to sit around the same table and really work through issues that matter to local businesses has worked.

The scheme has gone from strength to strength. It is independent and has one free point of contact, saving businesses time and effort, instead of being passed from pillar to post. Businesses are signposted to

the right agency or agencies who can help them.

What we are really proud of is the start-up packs which give information on the different regulators and agencies with key contacts so businesses can see what's relevant for them. LLEP is now leading the way as one of two Government pathfinder local enterprise partnerships.

The scheme has been so successful that we now have local enterprise partnerships around the country wanting to follow our model.

I am extremely passionate about this project as I want consumers to be able to buy products and services from good local businesses who want to get it right and grow.

Regulators want to support those good businesses while tackling rogue traders to make sure we have that level playing field.

Being part of the Better Business for All scheme opens the door to valuable help and advice from regulators, and a close relationship that can help a business grow.

For more details about the Better Business For All scheme and a free start-up pack, call 0871 384 3185, e-mail [bbfa@llep.org.uk](mailto:bbfa@llep.org.uk), or visit:

[www.llep.org.uk/betterbusinessforall](http://www.llep.org.uk/betterbusinessforall)

■ *Heena Prajapati (pictured) of the Better Regulation Delivery Office is the new head of the Better Business For All programme in Leicester and Leicestershire.*

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## Michael Fallon, right, the Minister for Business, on boosting growth by putting regulators on the side of business

**C**reating the conditions in which business can grow and create jobs is the number one priority for the Government. This means not just fixing the economy and dealing with our debts, but removing the red tape that holds back enterprise.

Driving through new ways of regulating business and enforcing the rules intelligently so that the highest standards are promoted without holding back law-abiding firms, demands that regulators gain a better understanding of how businesses actually work.

Leicester and Leicestershire Enterprise Partnership (LLEP) is playing a vital role in this.

It is forging a new relationship between businesses, the local authority and other regulators, to reduce both real and perceived barriers to business growth.

To improve businesses' understanding of what regulators do, local business people are accompanying them as they visit firms.

Likewise, regulators are spending time with local businesses to find out what it's like to manage a firm day-to-day.

Regulators are now making their inspections simpler, better at rooting out malpractice and more responsive to the life cycle of businesses – so that companies that have only been going a few months aren't buried in pointless inspections or endless paperwork, for example.

As well as developing a charter between regulators and business as a commitment to work together for growth, developing a single point of access for advice and support by phone or online, and publishing a business start-up brochure to support new business, the LLEP is also running two important national pilot schemes that will help businesses benefit from more enterprise-friendly regulation.

In one, regulators explore new ways of sharing information and good practice, thus reducing the requirement for business to provide information to multiple agencies and helping regulators to target rogue businesses that are not playing by the rules.

The other aims to set a template for better regulation that will help restore diversity and prosperity to the British high street, building on recommendations made to the review last year by Mary



# 'We are backing entrepreneurs'

Portas. It will start by asking local businesses in the Charnwood Business Improvement District about the regulatory barriers and challenges they face, and will then develop recommendations on what must be improved locally as well as nationally to get businesses of all sizes and specialities moving forward.

All this feeds into a much wider culture change that I am driving across Government and its agencies.

We've introduced tough new rules to reduce the existing burden of regulation, and to prevent unnecessary new laws coming in.

Government departments must find savings worth double the cost of any new regulations on business. These initiatives will have saved business about £1 billion by June, with many more millions of savings still to come.

Inviting businesses to suggest which regulations are most in need of reform or abolition through the Red Tape Challenge is already saving business over £155 million per year.

Some 1,500 regulations have already been identified to be scrapped or substan-

tially reduced, from guidance on contaminated land, to rules on unfair dismissal to the licensing of live music.

Forthcoming deregulation measures will include removing hundreds of thousands of low risk businesses from unnecessary health and safety inspections, bringing in a new simple portable Criminal Records check which employers can view instantly online, and helping tackle the compensation culture.

And within the EU, which spawns too many meddlesome rules, I'm making the case for a more pro-enterprise approach which puts the needs of firms above the petty ambitions of bureaucrats.

Because representatives from local firms sit on the boards of Local Enterprise Partnership boards, like the Leicester and Leicestershire Enterprise Partnership, are proving more effective than their predecessors, the more costly Regional Development Agencies, in supporting enterprise.

This reflects the Government's approach: we back small business and entrepreneurs and will do all we can to support their efforts to promote growth.

[www.llep.org.uk/betterbusinessforall](http://www.llep.org.uk/betterbusinessforall)



# Taking first steps on the long road to reducing bureaucracy

Business leaders and regulators say a common sense approach to cutting red tape is providing a boost for businesses. *Tom Pegden reports*



'EXCELLENT': Maxine Aldred

**T**he Better Business For All (BBfA) programme was launched by the Leicester and Leicestershire Enterprise Partnership (LLEP) with the simple aim of improving the way local regulation of industry is delivered.

The idea is to break down the barriers faced by local businesses by bringing regulators together to make it as easy as possible for people to know what rules they need to follow and where to turn for help.

As a result, businesses should have more time to spend on making money rather than filling in forms.

The scheme was a pilot project in the county and is now set to continue for the foreseeable future.

Regulators which have signed up range from the county, city and district councils, to the fire service, Environment Agency, Health and Safety Executive and HMRC.

Martin Traynor, chief executive of Leicestershire Chamber of Commerce has been heavily involved in the programme.

He said: "In my experience, the vast majority of businesses here in Leicester and Leicestershire want to be compliant with regulations.

"However, the complexity and the volume of regulations often means that businesses either don't realise they are not compliant or lack the knowledge to become compliant.

"Through BBfA we are developing a relationship between business and the regulators where businesses feel that they can seek the advice of regulators without the



fear of the heavy hand of enforcement.”

Maxine Aldred, regional development manager for the Federation of Small Businesses, which is also signed up, said: “Working together to reduce the burden of regulation is crucial in supporting small businesses to thrive and grow.”

“BBfA encourages and gives small businesses the confidence to become and remain compliant which in turn could lead to a more successful business.”

## “ Better Business for All has helped businesses and regulators to understand each other’s needs

*David Bull*

“As an early step on the long and rocky road to reducing red tape and regulation, we firmly believe BBfA is an excellent example of what can be done.”

David Bull, head of regulatory services at Leicestershire County Council, said: “Better Business for All has helped businesses and regulators to understand each other’s needs, which should help businesses to act on our advice, helping them to prosper.”

Although the LLEP was one of two enterprise partnerships to pilot BBfA, it is now being rolled out in a dozen other geographical areas including the Black Country, Cheshire and Warrington, Coventry and Warwickshire, Leeds, Northamptonshire and Sheffield.



**EXPERIENCE:** Chamber of Commerce leader Martin Traynor

# Making regulations easier to understand

Better Business for All is Leicester & Leicestershire Enterprise Partnership’s (LLEP) response to the Government’s priority of reducing the regulatory burden on business.

It has been set up to encourage business growth by making business regulations easier to access and understand.

Better Business for All is a partnership between businesses and regulatory services.

The partnership believes:

- Compliance with regulations can support your business to grow.

- Compliance with regulations is not as onerous as is often believed.

- Regulators across Leicester and Leicestershire are committed to supporting businesses by providing advice and guidance that helps them understand and meet their responsibilities.

Through developing a new relation-

ship between businesses and regulatory services, Better Business for All aims to reduce both real and perceived regulatory barriers to business growth.

Better Business for All is a national pathfinder programme. Other areas of the country are looking to implement similar programmes to support better delivery of regulation.

Regulatory services are those public sector organisations that carry out inspections, visits and investigations to check that businesses are compliant with the law.

They also provide advice and guidance to businesses on how to achieve compliance. Services such as environmental health, trading standards and fire are all regulatory services.

The scope of Better Business for All includes food safety, health and safety, environmental protection, waste, licens-

ing, fire safety, trading standards, taxation, employment law, business continuity, and planning.

A range of regulation bodies have signed up to Better Business for All. They include Blaby District Council, Charnwood Borough Council, Harborough District Council, Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council, Leicester City Council, Leicestershire County Council, Leicestershire Fire & Rescue Service, Melton Borough Council, North West Leicestershire District Council, Oadby and Wigston Borough Council, Environment Agency, Health & Safety Executive, HM Revenue & Customs, Federation of Small Businesses, Leicestershire Asian Business Association, Leicestershire Chamber of Commerce, Leicester and Leicestershire Local Enterprise Partnership and Better Regulation Delivery Office.



# The BBfA is here to

It's easy to picture the stereotype of the pen-pushing council official with their clipboard and ball point, looking for any excuse to close down the local cafe or convenience store, writes Tom Pegden.

It is this image that Better Business for All is trying to address.

One of the ways it has been supporting, rather than hindering local companies, has been to give officials involved in areas such as licensing, fire safety, and taxation, a better understanding of how they are perceived by business rate-payers.

The theory is this will bust some of the myths and preconceptions the average businessman and woman might hold when a council officer, clipboard in hand, comes a-knocking.

Kathryn Preece, who helped launch the county's BBfA programme, said one of the biggest criticisms was that businesses spent too much time dealing with visits from regulators.

To find out more, BBfA conducted a survey of visits made for environmental health, trading standards and the fire service across the Charnwood area.

It suggested that of almost 700 inspections carried out over a two-year period, 78 per cent of businesses only received one visit.

**“Inspectors are not there to close businesses down**

*Kathryn Preece*

On top of that, only 16 per cent were visited by more than one regulator and less than 1 per cent were visited by all three regulators.

Ms Preece said: “I wasn't surprised by the results. Business inspections are targeted and it was good to have the evidence of that, as it showed we had to address the perception.

“If we are going to an address, it's because there's a reason to go, and regulators should always identify themselves unless they are doing a test purchase.”

Alan Twells is head of regulatory services at Charnwood Borough Council, and has been involved in BBfA from the outset. He said: “The survey actually showed businesses like regulators to come and visit to give them help and advice.

“Charnwood food safety officers carry

## Over 60 firms reaped benefits

Pilot Better Business For All schemes were launched in Leicester and Birmingham in 2011 to help councils and agencies cut red tape, work closer with businesses and help them grow.

With support from The Department for Business, the local programme was backed by the Leicester and Leicestershire Enterprise Partnership (LLEP), the local Chamber of Commerce as well as the councils and government bodies and services which signed up.

More than 60 county businesses received direct help from the scheme over the first 12 months, while more than 300 others received assistance via its website.

In fact, the programme has been seen as such a success it is being rolled out nationally – 12 areas launched their own BBfA schemes in January.

Dennis Kent, the LLEP board member heading the Better Business for All scheme in the county, said: “When I was asked to head up this steering group, we had the regulators on one side of the table and us on the other side. Now we can talk to one another much more openly.”

Mr Kent, a former business owner, spent six weeks working with Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service, trading standards officials and environmental health inspectors to get a better



feel for what they did. Among those who have benefited from the scheme is the Mercure Hotel in Granby Street, Leicester.

General manager James Conaghan (pictured above) said: “Our most recent dealings with a regulatory body was the local environmental health officer for food safety. We got a poor rating of two which I was unhappy about. I picked up the phone to the officer and explained I wasn't happy with the result and needed to understand the reasoning.

“She gave me clear guidance of how to go about getting a revisit and what we needed to do to get there. We did that and got a grade five, the highest available.”

out about 600 inspections each year of food businesses in the area – legal notices were only served on three occasions.

“Since 2009, we have helped food businesses improve their national food hygiene rating scores from 77 per cent achieving a level three score, to 92 per cent now.”

Ms Preece said another myth was businesses feared inspectors were there to close them down. “That's not true. If you call for advice we might not have to take action.

“If you have rats, for instance, there will not be punitive punishment – it's unlikely you will end up in court – but we can help.

“If you have concerns about how to comply with regulations, then contact the relevant local service for advice.”

Health and safety regulations are also seen as draconian, according to Ms Preece,

when, in fact, they are there to protect people. She said: “We all go to work and want to come home in the same state.

“I've inspected cafes with signs up saying they won't heat baby food for health and safety reasons – but it's not down to regulations, it's because they don't want to be sued.

“Health and safety is blamed, when it's really the claim culture we live in.”

A further myth surrounds the costs of compliance – and even if it does cost something now, Ms Preece said the benefits in the long-term could be priceless.

She said: “What we are also doing is getting officers to explain the economic implications of compliance, and helping find the most cost-effective solution.”

To find out more, call 0871 384 3185.



# help, not to hinder

**LEADING THE WAY:** Dennis Kent, the LLEP board member heading the Better Business for All scheme in Leicestershire







**FRESH IDEAS:** Kathryn Preece, left, at the launch of the city and county's Better Business for All programme

**C**ouncil officers and businesses have been sitting down together to help one another break down barriers and cut red tape, writes Leicester Mercury business reporter Tom Pegden.

A number of sessions have been held to help regulators understand the needs of local business and allow business people to see that the state is there to help, not hinder their work.

Put simply, Better Business for All is here to make it easier for firms – particularly small and medium sized ones – to navigate their way through all the statutory rules and regulations.

**Businesses can contact regulators and save money**

*Kathryn Preece*

Kathryn Preece, who was responsible for launching the local Better Business for All and is now overseeing the national roll-out, said in the past government officials often didn't have time to consult businesses on how they could work together.

She said: "A huge proportion of the project is working with regulatory services to improve their understanding of the most

# How working together clears obstacles in the way of success

beneficial way for businesses to receive their support.

"Part of addressing that has been encouraging businesses to contact regulators which can actually save them money by talking directly about an issue rather than employing a private consultant to do it for them.

"We've also got to make sure officers can respond in the right way and not be too officious, so we've been doing work with of-

ficers to make them think about their approach."

A number of officer training sessions have already been held, with another taking place this autumn.

The first saw 170 officers take part in a "speed dating" style event at the King Power Stadium to get to know their counterparts in other regulatory bodies.

Ms Preece said: "That was designed to help them understand the system they



# Enterprise Zone can attract investors

The MIRA Enterprise Zone (EZ) is a key LLEP site in attracting new businesses to locate in Leicester and Leicestershire and will provide local jobs and a much needed boost to the local economy.

Through the Better Business for All Programme and the collaborative working of regulatory services across the LLEP area, there is an opportunity for this Enterprise Zone to offer something that others around the country and in wider Europe have, as yet, been unable to do.

In simplifying the interactions that prospective businesses have with the regulatory system, it provides our EZ with a unique marketing opportunity and may help to secure the investment of overseas businesses in Leicester and Leicestershire.

MIRA's vision is to create a world class transport sector research and development technology park and premier research and development park in Europe.

MIRA wished to develop a new model for working with regulators for those businesses wishing to locate to MIRA, which would enable them to have a competitive edge.

A survey of existing and prospective businesses on or considering locating on the site established that one single point of contact to deal with all regulatory bodies would be a huge benefit.

With this in mind, it was agreed that a unique regulatory offer would be developed to respond to the needs identified by businesses on the site.



Businesses located within, or deciding to locate to, the Enterprise Zone at MIRA will have the opportunity to negotiate a bespoke regulatory offer dependant on the needs and nature of their business. The acceptance of this offer will be voluntary.

The negotiations could include elements of any of the following:

1) Access to the Regulatory Liaison Officer. The RLO will act as the single point of contact for all regulatory matters for the business until relationships have been established with appropriate individual officers.

2) A compliance audit from relevant regulatory services. This audit will provide the business with advice on compliance and improving standards. A schedule of works will be left with the business if appropriate.

3) Businesses can be confident that they can rely on the advice received and, assuming there are no changes to operations and ways of working, future officers will not require anything different.

4) Opportunity for Primary Authority Partnerships

5) Access to training to aid compliance eg First Aid and Risk Assessment

The regulatory services committed to supporting the regulatory offer are:

The Environment Agency, Health & Safety Executive, Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council, HMRC, Leicestershire County Council, ACAS and the Leicestershire Fire & Rescue Service.

The Regulatory Liaison Officer is Steven Merry, environmental health manager (commercial) working for Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council. He is currently working with MIRA.

are working in and gain a bit more credibility with businesses.

“We’ve also done sessions with volunteer businesses where officers went to speak in small groups to them about what it’s like dealing with the regulators, and to get the officers to look at things from a business perspective.

“For many it was the first time they had spoken to businesses in a non-regulatory capacity.

“Some 96 officers took part and we would like to repeat that again. They went back to their managers saying they needed time built into their work programmes so that they can talk to businesses about how they are doing.

“We are now looking at doing some training to sell the concept to businesses that being a good, compliant businesses makes you

more competitive. You can’t change a culture overnight, but as more businesses become more positive about regulators, it will give officers more confidence that the new approach is the right approach.”

**“I’ve seen a change in mindset from officers and businesses**

*Alan Twells*

Alan Twells is head of regulatory services at Charnwood Borough Council, with responsibility for areas such as environmental health and licensing.

He said: “I think the main problem is how businesses view us – even though we’ve always helped businesses comply with regulations and been willing to assist businesses.

“There’s also been a thought process from businesses that they do not want to come to us in case we prosecute them or take action.

“We have had officers attend a number of training sessions to help understand what other regulators are doing, and to go on business awareness sessions.

“I think I’ve seen a change in mindset from both officers and businesses.”

Victoria Clarke, environmental protection and safety manager at Melton Borough Council, said: “It’s been 18 months since we collectively started working with Kathryn to look at businesses in a different way. We get to see businesses that are starting up and rather than going out with a stick approach, we think it’s better to go out with a carrot approach and start helping them.”



# Scheme can help ease those recession blues



**MAKING A DIFFERENCE:** The Business Focus Panel, from left, Ron Marks, Melton Chamber of Commerce, John Merison, North West Leicestershire Chamber, Martin Traynor, Leicestershire Chambers, John Hardwick, FSB, Richard Matthews, Beer and Pub Association, James Bowie, Belmont Hotel, Kate Cowan, Spring to Action, Phil Bates, IOSH, and Ian Cooke, Nebosh

Over the past few months the Leicester Mercury has been looking at the work being done to make business people less wary of council regulators and make those same regulators do more to help the businesses they visit.

Better Business for All was set up to help businesses during the downturn by cutting red tape and bureaucracy, and by dispelling some of the myths surrounding the work of officers in areas such as food safety, licensing, health and safety and fire safety.

In Leicestershire, BBfA has brought in the help of a Business Focus Panel, made up of industry experts from trade associations and other groups who come together periodically to advise the scheme and ensure what it is doing actually helps business.

The BBfA has also created a number of Business Champions – officers within councils and agencies who are supporting

the project's principles and encouraging their colleagues to take on board the new mindset.

One recent meeting of the Business Focus Panel took place at Leicester's Belmont Hotel, and was chaired by Leicestershire Chamber of Commerce chief executive Martin Traynor.

Those sitting on it included Kate Cowan, a director of Spring to Action, a Leicester-based, not-for-profit organisation which supports fledgling businesses.

She said: "We are part of the BBfA steering group and the focus panel, so we are the voice of smaller business, trying to make

**Some say our work helps to level the playing field**

*Karen Edmonds*

sure the regulators talk to them more effectively. In the past, councils and regulators have come out with a lot of jargon and small businesses often don't understand that, which can leave them unaware of the support out there.

"Ultimately every business is interested in saving money, particularly nowadays, so hopefully we can help them do that and avoid the sort of legal heartaches that could shut their business overnight or cost thousands."

Someone else seconded onto the panel is Richard Matthews, Midlands regional secretary of the British Beer and Pub Association.

He said: "Within the licensees trade, red tape and regulations is an absolute minefield.

"My organisation is involved because we want to see the burden of regulation eased to allow licensees to get on with





**KEY ROLE:** Kate Cowan

## Business Focus Panel members include:



what they do best, which is running their business. This project helps them to get advice quickly and easily and helps them get in touch with the right people when they need to.

“There have already been some positives – one of the first things was to get a single point of reference. Then there have been start-up packs for new businesses.

“Now we are talking about making the website more accessible and making more use of social media to help businesses keep aware of what’s going on.”

Graham Coe, senior trading standards officer at Leicestershire County Council, recently signed up as a Business Champion to spread the pro-business message among colleagues at County Hall.

He said: “I think the reason I’m involved is that I’ve consistently tried to demonstrate at work that I am business-friendly. Our role firstly is to make sure businesses know

**“I’ve consistently tried to demonstrate at work that I am business-friendly”**  
*Graham Coe*

where to make contact when they need to talk to a council official.

“We want to get the message out that we are here to provide assistance and help with compliance rather than putting people before the courts.

“We tend to find we have lots and lots of repeat calls from businesses who have dealt with us in the past because they know you can save them money in the long term.

Business Champion Karen Edmonds is an environmental team leader at North West Leicestershire District Council, which has been involved in BBfA from the start.

Business Partners involved also include:

- National Federation of Retail Newsagents
- The Manufacturers Association
- Phoenix Square & LCB Depot
- Campus Enterprise Opportunities
- National Hairdressers Federation

Our vision is to improve the regulatory environment to improve the conditions for growth. If you have barriers to your business growth, we would be interested in talking to you. Please contact us on 0871 384 3185 or e-mail: [BBFA@llep.org.uk](mailto:BBFA@llep.org.uk)

She said: “Our key role is to protect people but that’s not at the exclusion of encouraging businesses to prosper.

“There’s still that perception of the council officer with clipboard in hand, but we are not like that.

“We have a high risk food project where we help advise businesses that are struggling.

“A lot of businesses are grateful to see us even if they have got complacent and standards have slipped.

“Others say our work helps level the playing field because it stops their competitors from cutting corners.”

Another Business Champion, Natalie Moore, a senior environmental health officer in Melton, said: “We are acting as a liaison between the authorities and businesses and are hopefully changing the way both view each other.”

[www.llep.org.uk/betterbusinessforall](http://www.llep.org.uk/betterbusinessforall)





**IMPRESSIVE:** The Better Business for all Regulatory Services Partnership. Front row, from left, Alan Twells, chair and head of Charnwood Borough Council, Caroline Harbour, of Blaby District Council, Heena Prajapati, of Better Business for All, Sue Thompson, of the Health and Safety Executive, Kauser Patel, of Better Business for All. Back row, from left, Paul Mountain, of Hinckley & Bosworth District Council, Sue Price, of Oadby & Wigston District Council, Victoria Clarke, of Melton District Council, Paul Davies, of Leicestershire County Council, Trevor McIlwaine, of Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Services, Lee Mansfield, of North West Leicestershire District Council, Ian Bartlett, of Harborough District Council, and Roman Leszczyszyn, of Leicester City Council

# Our regulatory partners

The following councils provide regulatory services such as food, waste, licensing and planning:

**Blaby District Council**

Area includes Blaby, Enderby and Countesthorpe and Cosby.

**Charnwood Borough Council**

Area includes Loughborough, Shepshed, Kegworth and Mountsorrel.

**Harborough District Council**

Area includes Market Harborough, Lutterworth and Magna Park.

**Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council**

Area includes Hinckley, Market Bosworth, Barwell and Earl Shilton.

**Melton Borough Council**

Area includes Melton Mowbray, Asfordby and Waltham on the Wolds.

BBfA is the local partnership between business and regulatory services created to improve conditions for growth. Local and national partners involved are:

**North West Leicestershire District Council**

Area includes Coalville, Ashby, Ellistown and Ibstock.

**Oadby and Wigston Borough Council**

Area includes Oadby, Wigston and South Wigston.

**Environment Agency**

The public body created to protect and improve the environment, and promote sustainable development. Plays a central role in delivering Government environmental pri-

orities. It provides advice and guidance to business either through local staff, customer contact centre or the website.

**Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service** Helps prevent problems by carrying fire safety inspections at business premises in the city and county. Inspections give a good opportunity to seek advice on all aspects of compliance.

**Health and Safety Executive**

The national independent watchdog for work-related health, safety and illness.



An independent regulator, it acts in the public interest to reduce work-related death and injury and investigates when things go wrong. It provides advice and guidance for business which can be found on the website.

#### HMRC

The UK's tax authority, responsible for bringing in taxes and making sure money is available to fund the public services and to help families, individuals and businesses with targeted financial support. The HMRC Business Education & Support Team offers a range of educational products for businesses on variety of subjects.

#### Food Safety Agency

Works alongside local councils to enforce food safety and hygiene regulations and also has staff in UK meat plants. It also commissions research related to food safety. It developed the Safer Food: Better Business toolkit.

#### Leicestershire Police

As well as dealing with crime and disorder, the county force will have dealings with businesses when addressing issues such as anti-terrorism, anti-social behaviour, fraud and illegal immigration

#### Gambling Commission

An independent body created by the Department for Culture, Media to regulate commercial gambling in Great Britain in partnership with licensing authorities.

#### Department for Business Innovation and Skills

Headed up by Vince Cable, it promotes economic growth by investing in skills and education to build trade, boost innovation and help people to start and grow businesses. Also tries to reduce the impact of regulation.

#### Leicestershire County Council Trading Standards

The County Hall-based unit ensures a fair and safe trading environment and promotes the wellbeing of citizens, while encouraging businesses to prosper. It provides advice and assistance to help local businesses comply with consumer law and create a level playing field for all businesses.

#### Leicester City Council Regulatory Services

The unit ensures a fair and safe trading environment and promotes the wellbeing of citizens, while encouraging businesses to prosper. It provides advice and assistance to help local businesses comply with consumer law and create a level playing field for all businesses.

#### Better Regulation Delivery Office

The national BBfA umbrella body which ensures the voice of business is heard in regulation policy. Part of the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills.

# Better Business for All Charter

## FACTS

- 86 per cent of employees in Leicester and Leicestershire work for small or medium sized enterprises (SMEs).
- There are 38,000 SMEs in Leicester and Leicestershire: 10,320 in Leicester and 27,946 in Leicestershire.
- 99 per cent employ less than 250 staff.
- 67 per cent employ less than four staff.
- Forum of Private Business states that "SMEs spend 25 per cent of their time on complying with regulatory matters costing £12 billion".

## KEY ISSUES

- It is mainly SMEs who will drive growth and are generally civic minded and at the heart of our communities.
- They have three legs of business: operations, finance and marketing.
- The big restraints are time, cost and personnel with 80 per cent using external expertise.
- We need small increments in productivity by all organisations rather than one or two high profile entrepreneurs.



## Better Business for All

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## HOW BETTER BUSINESS FOR ALL WAS DEVELOPED

Regulators undertook a survey which established that the majority of SMEs would really welcome support and help.

They highlighted that they want a fair playing field and most want to provide a quality and safe working environment for their staff and community. They want regulators to deal with rogue businesses. Businesses stated that complying with the law may cost but they are willing to comply on that level playing field.

## WHY A CHARTER?

Partners wanted to show a public commitment of working together. This came in the form of a voluntary agreement between Leicester & Leicestershire Regulatory Services and local businesses.

The charter was aimed at supporting

a new relationship between businesses and regulators built upon trust, understanding and a desire to improve, while continuing to ensure compliance with regulation and achieve business growth.

## WHAT DOES THE CHARTER DO?

This Charter sets out the actions and responsibilities of regulatory services and businesses within Leicester and Leicestershire.

## REGULATORY PARTNERS WILL:

- Support and promote the local economy by supporting local businesses.
- Encourage businesses to seek advice.
- Explain the reason for their visit to businesses.
- Carry out regulatory activity in a fair, helpful, transparent, proportionate and consistent way.
- Be accountable.
- Minimise the cost of compliance for businesses by ensuring that any action taken is proportionate to risk.
- Co-ordinate services to minimise

unnecessary overlaps and duplication.

- Consult with businesses, including through the Business Focus Panel, when developing policies, plans, procedures and service standards.
- Promote Better Business for All with consumers.

## LOCAL BUSINESSES WILL:

- Seek advice from regulatory services on matters of compliance.
- Encourage other businesses to contact regulatory services for advice.
- Work with regulatory services to achieve a satisfactory outcome and put problems right quickly.
- Take part in positive publicity about how they have been helped by engagement with regulatory services.
- Be fair, helpful and transparent in dealing with regulatory services staff.
- Provide feedback to regulatory services on improvements to the local regulatory system.



# New relationship can help firms to grow and flourish

A local scheme aimed at cutting business red tape is about to go nationwide. Leicester Mercury Business Editor *Ian Griffin* finds out why it has proved such a success

**B**osses say they need as few obstacles as possible to enable the growth of their businesses. Meanwhile, small enterprises have long complained they are being disproportionately hit by red tape.

Now a new scheme being piloted in the area aims to ensure companies are able to deal with the various Government agencies as easily as possible.

The Better Business For All programme is being tested in the county with a plan to roll it out to at least 20 other parts of the country.

The initiative has seen business leaders and regulators work more closely to smooth out the relationship between the two sides while still ensuring firms comply with legislation.

The programme is being run by the Leicester and Leicestershire Enterprise Partnership (LLEP), the public-private sector organisation charged with driving economic growth.

More than 60 county businesses have received direct help from the scheme in the past 12 months, while more than 300 others have received assistance via its website.

The Government is aiming for 20 local enterprise partnerships (LEPs) to adopt the project, which is also being piloted in the Greater Birmingham area.

A conference in Birmingham last year was attended by representatives of 27 LEPs from across the country to look at how the programme had helped companies.

Dennis Kent, the LLEP board member heading the Better Business For All scheme in the county, said: "When I was asked to head up this steering group, we had the regulators on one side of the table



**GRATEFUL:** Pub landlord David Landless received help from the Better Business For All scheme. Below, James Bowie, of the Belmont Hotel



and us on the other side. Now we can talk to one another much more openly."

Mr Kent, a former Leicester manufacturing business owner, and now a Sibley-based consultant, spent six weeks working with Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service, trading standards officials and environment health inspectors to get a better feel for what they did.

"To me, these people were like God and had a lot of power and there was a perception among businesses that if you ring them

up and ask for some advice they will be around the next day with a prohibition order," he said.

"These regulators have now discovered the other side of business. And from the business side, we can now understand how these regulations have to work."

David Landless, licensee of the Coach and Horses, in Markfield, said the scheme was useful when he needed to find out about regulations which affected his business.

"It was very, very helpful," he said. "In this industry you can make 20 phone calls and you still haven't got the right person.

"You deal with one person and tell them your problem or dilemma. I've wanted to know the latest on health and safety rules and food regulation. When you ring you are instantly given the right person to speak to."

James Bowie, managing director of the Belmont Hotel, in Leicester, and president of Leicestershire Chamber of Commerce, said: "To achieve anything means someone has to get on with the messy and time-consuming business of going through all of those details and regulations, reviewing and discussing existing proposals and new ones. Better Business For All is attempting to do just that."

To see how Better Business For All can help you, call 0871 384 3185, or visit: [www.llep.org.uk/betterbusinessforall](http://www.llep.org.uk/betterbusinessforall)



# Improving the planning experience for business

BBfA has now set its sights on tackling the often complex area of developmental control

**N**avigating the way through the planning process is often cited by business as complex, confusing and bureaucratic.

Therefore, a task and finish group led by John Merison of the North West Leicestershire Chamber has looked at how planning services – often called development control within individual councils – could become part of the wider BBfA programme.

Initially businesses and their representatives were asked what they wanted from their local council planning service.

Though BBfA can't change the planning 'rules' it seeks to improve the 'customer experience' of the service.

Understanding how best to prepare an application, what the timescales are and why and also being given an explanation as to why a particular decision has been



reached are really important to business customers of the services.

Therefore the way in which planning services are delivered can make a huge difference to local businesses.

LLEP board member Dennis Kent, who leads the BBfA programme, said: "We have already seen a difference in the way regulators are interacting with businesses in Leicester and Leicestershire as a result of Better Business for All.

"It is right we now extend the programme to include planning services and I am positive there will be benefits for both businesses and the services themselves."

Leicestershire Chamber of Commerce chief executive Martin Traynor said: "Businesses often tell us they have had a bad experience when trying to get plan-

ning permission and that council officers don't understand the impact of time delays on a business. The BBfA programme gives us an opportunity to change that."

Maxine Aldred, development manager for the Federation of Small Businesses in Leicestershire, said: "Businesses now have a real opportunity to shape the way in which planning services are delivered.

"We can't change planning policy but local planning services are very keen to hear how they can improve.

"I am really pleased that BBfA is being extended in this way and would encourage businesses to engage with the programme."

Jim Worley, head of regulatory services at Melton Borough Council, is leading the programme.

He said: "We really want to hear what local businesses want from the planning process. What can we do better? We want to support business growth."

Planning departments from the district councils, county council and city are all involved with this programme.

To keep up to date with the latest developments and find out more, visit the BBfA website.

## What's Next for Better Business for All?

**Dennis Kent, chair of the Better Business for All Programme, says...**

Eighteen months in and our journey to simplify regulation for business is making significant progress. But we can't stand still if we plan to make a real difference to businesses in Leicester and Leicestershire.

We have worked hard to build a relationship where regulators and businesses start talking to each other, but that's not enough.

The next phase is very much about the regulators and businesses working together to find solutions to regulatory issues that affect businesses, especially small and medium-sized enterprises.

So this year, we have started to update our website so that information and advice is more business user friendly.

We are seeing more businesses use our single number 0871 384 3185 and we are really pleased we have been able to help these businesses but we understand there is a growing need for wider, more comprehensive business support information. With that in mind, we are working as part of the Local Enterprise Partnership with the Department of Business Innovation and Skills to see what improvements can be made – while retaining a common sense approach.

Businesses want a level playing field and want regulators to target those businesses that are not playing by the rules. In Leicester and Leicestershire, we are undertaking a national pilot to develop a mechanism where regulators can share information and work more effectively together to target businesses that need help and support or need to be dealt with

differently, perhaps through enforcement action.

We are developing and trialling new training to help regulators work with businesses more effectively, so businesses get it right first time and save money.

As I said, this is a journey. If you have any suggestions on what we could do to simplify regulation to help your business, e-mail:

**heena.prajapati@llep.org.uk**  
**bbfa@llep.org.uk**

BBfA has produced a handy brochure highlighting all the key regulatory information for anyone starting a new business.

The brochure is available by ringing the BBfA number or can be downloaded from the website:

**[www.llep.org.uk/betterbusinessforall](http://www.llep.org.uk/betterbusinessforall)**







## Better Business for All

*A local partnership between Businesses and Regulatory Services to promote growth*

Starting or expanding  
your business?

Get advice on  
meeting regulations that  
effect your business

Getting it right first time  
saves money!

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**0871 384 3185**

or email: [bbfa@llep.org.uk](mailto:bbfa@llep.org.uk)

**Better Business for All** provides a FREE single contact point linking you to regulatory services, providing you with advice on what you need to know as a business within Leicester and Leicestershire.

This service will help with queries on:

- Food Safety
- Health & Safety
- Environmental Protection
- Waste
- Licensing
- Fire Safety
- Trading Standards
- Taxation
- Employment law
- Business Continuity
- Planning

[www.llep.org.uk/betterbusinessforall](http://www.llep.org.uk/betterbusinessforall)