

Business Builder

Business: Bishy Barney Boats

Owner: Mark Appel



Supporting business expansion with Business Builder support

The Challenge

Bishy Barney Boats offers retro style, mostly electric day hire boats from Thorpe River Green in Norwich. Mark wanted to expand his fleet to meet growing demand, create job opportunities and strengthen the long term sustainability of the business.

However, pushing the business to this next stage alone was difficult. The investment required for additional boats was significant, and Mark needed support to move from being a sole operator to building a wider team and transitioning to a limited company.

The Solution

The Development Grant from Broadland District Council provided exactly the boost Mark needed.

“The grant allowed me to add a hire boat to my fleet, with another scheduled for next year. The extra income this year has enabled me to give job opportunities to several keen local young people and arrange occasional staff cover for myself.”

Once Mark contacted the Business Development team, the process became smooth and supportive.

“They are super friendly and helpful people.”

The Impact

Business Builder support has helped Bishy Barney Boats:

- Add a new hire boat to the fleet, boosting income
- Create job opportunities for local young people
- Secure occasional staff cover, improving work-life balance
- Set the business on track to transition to a limited company
- Plan for further expansion, including taking on an additional part time staff member once the second new boat arrives

“The grant was the tipping point that made this level of growth possible.”

About Bishy Barney Boats

Bishy Barney Boats, owned by Mark Appel, operates from Thorpe River Green in Norwich.

The business offers stylish, retro inspired mostly electric day hire boats, providing a relaxed and environmentally friendly way for customers to enjoy the Broads.

The Business Builder programme has supported 472 businesses, providing advice and training, and has paid out £2.3 million in grants across Broadland and South Norfolk between late 2022 and February 2026.