

Chair Statement – Jane Box

Firstly, we would like to thank all of our members for their continued support and involvement, especially over the last few years when we have been through some unprecedented times. It is only with your support that we can continue to build a much stronger business community.

Whilst lockdown was a challenge for everyone, it did enable us to invest our resources to provide a much better level of support for you. We now have a significantly improved web-site and events/members platform. We doubled down on our commitment to increase our brand awareness through our social media channels, to create greater visibility of the fantastic businesses and projects that are right here on our doorstep.

We have recognised that we need to prioritise business and our local economy in order to build a future that will support our young people. We have a unique opportunity to build a strong business community that works to collaborate with stakeholders and public sector organisations to achieve our Vision:

‘To empower a community of private and public sector organisations to work together to achieve greater economic growth’.

This has included:

- Developing more business events to reach a wider business audience
- Restructuring our Board to enable us to focus on key economic and growth areas
- Developing stronger relationships with key private and public organisations.

Over the last 12 months our business events have been attended by over 1,300 business connections, 200 of which we have never met before.

The launch of our Women in Business has been a huge success and we have connected with 40 new businesses that had never considered attending our Business Breakfast.

Our newest Pie and a Pint evening has been running for just 5 months. We have connected with 13 new businesses that can't get to our Business Breakfast due to early morning commitments.

Whilst you may not think these numbers are huge, interest in our organisation is growing every day. Our social media posts have seen organic reach grow to 20,000 unique views at some points throughout the year, with our page followers increasing from around 350 on both Facebook and LinkedIn to well over 1000 since January last year.

Engagement with our channels increases every day. This indicates that there is still lots of room for us to grow and that we are spreading the news about the fantastic opportunities for business here in the Ashfield and Mansfield areas.

Our new Board Structure will enable us to tackle far more of the important growth areas to support our business communities.

For too long our area has not received the central government support it both needs and deserves. For this reason, our seven key Board responsibilities have a direct link to the forthcoming Devolution plans, enabling us to keep ahead of the curve and get our voice of business heard to further support and grow our economic growth. Our key areas of responsibility will be:

- Business Support
- Education, Employment and Skills
- Environment and Net Zero
- Inward Investment
- Local Authority Representation
- Membership, Growth & Visibility
- Transport and Infrastructure

We are also very keen to work with those of you who have a keen interest and passion for any of the above areas to join us as Member Champions. Please do get in touch with us if this would be of interest.

Since its inception over 30 years ago, we have always had very strong relationships with key private and public organisations which we continue to grow and develop.

At the end of 2022, we were pleased to partner with two new Patrons; Mansfield Building Society and Nottingham Trent University (NTU). Both organisations have a strong presence in our area and wish to see economic growth both now and well into the future. They have a wealth of skills and expertise to support and grow our future economic development.

Mansfield Building Society have community at the heart of everything they do and invest very heavily in local community projects. NTU now have their new campus on the site with West Notts College and are very keen to play an integral part in supporting businesses and students to excel at everything they do.

2020 are also heavily involved in various stakeholder meetings across both districts such as the Mansfield Place Board and Discover Ashfield Board. We have additionally organised 2020 specific events for Manufacturing and Logistics as well as the Devolution event back in November. We will continue to attend and develop these key events to support our business community.

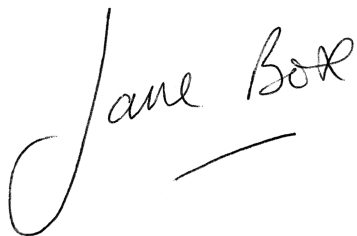
Many of you will be well aware of our incredibly successful annual Business Awards. The standard of businesses we have across Ashfield and Mansfield is nothing more than amazing. Year on year it becomes ever more difficult for our judges to choose the winners

and this year was no exception. One of the toughest categories is always our Apprentice of the Year award. It is so rewarding to see the talent we have coming through to work in our organisations. This year was so tough to judge we actually awarded two local apprentices to receive our Apprentice of the Year award!

As we move forward into 2023, the economic shocks of last September, the war in Ukraine and the energy crisis will no doubt continue to test our businesses and communities. We know how resilient we are but working together to provide support and help within our local business community is the best way to ensure our businesses not only survive but thrive. When you next attend one of our meetings, or are looking through our website for connections, take a moment to recognise that everything we need is right here, either directly or through our connections. We pride ourselves on the strong business community we already have and look forward to inviting more new businesses to join us.

I look forward to continuing to work with all of you throughout 2023 and wish you all a very successful and prosperous future.

Together we mean business

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jane Box". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal line underneath the name.