

More funding is being made available for local businesses who have suffered – and continue to do so – due to the pandemic and its effects.

Throughout Covid, our Council and the City Region have done everything possible to support employers, whether through helping them adapt to new rules and licensing opportunities such as outdoor dining/takeaway, or through significant grant funding. Here in Merseyside we made £40m available for local businesses to help them through the worst of the crisis.

Now we're offering a further £8.1m across the City Region – with more than £900,000 available for businesses here in St Helens.

The 'Trading On Scheme' has been designed by the City Region and our Council and is open to local businesses and charities. Applications are now open until 5.00pm on Friday 12th November. To find out more, including all the criteria and how to apply, visit www.sthelens.gov.uk/tradingonscheme.

This funding is just the latest example of the possibilities created by having a Labour council working hand in hand with a Labour City Region.

In just a few short years we've already benefited significantly with huge funding won for projects including Windle Island and Pewfall Junction improvements, millions to decontaminate brownfield sites including Moss Nook, rebuilding Newton-le-Willows train station, major Lea Green station improvements, improvements to pedestrian and cycling routes across the borough, funding for the Ways to Work scheme helping local people get into employment, the massive investment in digital connectivity taking place in the next two years, town centre funding and the Link Road and Freeport scheme at Parkside.

There was more great news for the region last week as HyNet was approved for the next stages of development, moving towards large-scale decarbonisation of our local economy from 2025. St Helens and the City Region are fully supporting this project, which puts us at the heart of the fight to tackle the climate emergency and reach net zero carbon through technological and industrial innovation, and could create thousands of jobs in the process.

Just like we saw locally during the pandemic - when our residents, businesses, charities, groups and Council came together to support one another - so we also achieve more when we work together with partners at a regional and national level, and we'll always make sure St Helens plays its full part.

Best wishes to all Star readers.