

Case study:
Enterprise Renewal
Business Grant

Region
Denbighshire

Sector
Tourism

Project value
£5,264

ANTUR RUTHIN

An adventure company had to move rapidly to install the very first waterside inflation station for stand up paddleboards.

Not every small business has the chance to score a world first in a highly competitive industry. So when you see a big opportunity, you need to act fast.

An Enterprise Renewal grant enabled Arwel Phillips of outdoor adventure company Antur Ruthin to do just that. His plan was to take advantage of the massive growth in stand up paddleboarding fuelled by the Covid-19 pandemic.

He'd seen the canals, rivers and lakes of North Wales become thronged with people launching their own paddleboards (SUPs) – most of them inflatables. But many were just not being pumped to the right pressure.

"Most boards come with a single or double chamber pump and can take more than 10 minutes to blow up to the right psi," explains Arwel. "You'll see so many people lakeside pumping away, getting to half the recommended pressure and running out of puff. They head out onto the lake and it's like paddling a banana."

"There are also electric pumps that plug into cars but they struggle to pump up several boards back to back, they're extremely noisy and not massively reliable. There had to be a better way."

Acting on behalf of the outdoor education centre where he works, Arwel asked an air technology company to supply a garage forecourt-style compressor. They told him no such product existed – but with his expert guidance they were happy to make one. The result is a completely unique device: a pay-at-pump SUP inflation station that's guaranteed to blow up your board to exactly the right pressure, every time.

It's already won the endorsement of one of world's biggest paddleboard manufacturers, who have acquired 50 of the ground-breaking units. But Arwel got there first through his Antur Ruthin microbusiness.

His Enterprise Renewal grant helped him to buy a pump, along with a laptop to manage the online transactions, and install it at highly popular Alderford Lake near Whitchurch. Now he has another 10 carefully chosen waterside locations in his sights in the first year.

"Time was of the essence," says Arwel. "My unique position and relationship with the manufacturer gave me a head start to secure placements and vending contracts. The grant was a massive godsend – an opportunity to get something out there that was completely different. It's been brilliant."

