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START UP LOANS DELIVERS 50,000TH LOAN TO MICROBUSINESSES

The Start Up Loans Company (SULCo) has issued its 50,000th loan to UK start-ups to help drive the growth of the country's small businesses.

The Government-backed scheme has now provided over £345million to start-ups and early-stage businesses across the UK since its inception in 2012.

The Start Up Loans Company, which merged with the British Business Bank (BBB) earlier this year, provides low-interest finance up to £25,000 at a 6% fixed rate per annum, as well as support and free mentoring to new businesses and those trading for less than two years.

One of the scheme's first recipients was High Six Media, a video production company based in London launched by twin brothers Nick and Luke Ogden. The duo received a £5,000 Start Up Loan which supported the purchase of camera equipment, and now five years on, they produce films for international brands including Mulberry, Red Bull, Nike and Diesel.

Nick Ogden, founder of High Six Media, said: "Having an idea you're committed to is one thing, but transforming it into a profitable business is a different matter entirely. My brother and I always had a passion for all things film-related, but without the helping hand of a Start Up Loan I know we'd have struggled to turn that passion into a viable business and making films could have remained a side-line of ours."

"After we'd received the funding and were guided through the process by The Start Up Loans Company, we were assigned a dedicated mentor who coached us through the early stages of setting up a business which was invaluable. We've come so far since our launch and we're proud to now be on the books of some of the world's most high profile brands, and doing what we love. It's a big achievement for us."

The scheme forms part of The British Business Bank's UK-wide drive to encourage entrepreneurship, increase the rate of business creation and improve the survival prospects of early-stage businesses.

Since launch, the Government-backed scheme has contributed to the creation of more than 60,000 jobs, 46% of loan recipients were formerly NEET (not in employment, education or training) and 42% were formerly unemployed or economically inactive.

Small Business Minister, Margot James, said: "Small businesses are the beating heart of the British economy, and supporting them to succeed and grow is central to the Government's Industrial Strategy."

"The Start Up Loans Company is a great example of how we are supporting the UK's vibrant start-up culture, by removing barriers to finance. I want to congratulate them on supporting 50,000 promising businesses, helping Britain remain the best place in the world to start and grow a business."

One of the thriving businesses the Start Up Loans Company has supported in the past twelve months is Complete Unity Yoga, which launched after receiving financial backing from the Start Up Loans Company. The business, based in Stirling, Scotland, sells yoga equipment across the UK, as well as providing yoga workshops and international retreats for its customers.

Will Fisher, 26, and Malene Vedel, 26, started their venture after spending time at a wellness retreat during a year abroad in India. They quickly noticed the benefits of regular stretching and meditation and after returning to the UK they were inspired to leave their former jobs in retail and charity and take up something they loved.

They approached the Start Up Loans Company and successfully secured £7,500 of funding, which was used to develop their website, assist with cash-flow and purchase stock equipment.

The duo has already opened retreats in India and Spain, and plan to increase their international footprint with new sites in Denmark and Sweden. The business currently donates 5% of profits to charity as part of its ongoing CSR activity.

Will Fisher, co-founder of Complete Unity Yoga, said: “After practicing yoga during a stint in India, Malene and I returned to the UK feeling inspired by a new hobby that has so many mental and physical benefits. We didn’t want to simply ‘live for the weekend’ and realised we could share our passion for the sport by setting up our own yoga business.

“Once the idea was born, we just needed access to capital to make our dreams a reality. That’s where the Start Up Loans Company came in – the funding and mentoring support we received provided us with the right guidance to start our journey and create our very own retreat, which is now international.”

Joanna Hill, Interim CEO of Start Up Loans Company, said: “Hitting our 50,000th loan is a proud moment for the Start Up Loans Company. We’re committed to supporting those people who have a brilliant idea they want to bring to fruition, but need the funding and expertise in order to do so. Seeing businesses like High Six Media and Complete Unity Yoga start-up and scale up is a perfect example of why the scheme is here.”

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Notes to editors

About SULCo:

The Start Up Loans Company (SULCo) was formed in June 2012. SULCo provides personal loans for business purposes of up to £25,000 at a 6% fixed interest rate per annum, and offers free dedicated mentoring and support to each business.

The primary aim of the Start Up Loans scheme is to ensure that viable start-ups and early-stage businesses have access to the finance and support they need in order to thrive. A network of Delivery Partner organisations support applicants in all regions and industries throughout the UK. The Start Up Loans scheme is not designed to generate a commercial profit. Capital payments together with the interest are recycled to help meet our customers’ increasing demand for finance.

Free guides on a range subjects related to starting a business are available on the SULCo website: <https://www.startuploans.co.uk/free-start-up-guides/> You can find recent media coverage and press releases in the Start Up Loans Media Centre here: <https://www.startuploans.co.uk/media-centre/>

The funding for SULCo is provided by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS). SULCo is a subsidiary of the British Business Bank. The British Business Bank makes finance markets for smaller businesses work better, enabling the sector to prosper, grow and build economic activity. Their Business Finance Guide explores finance options and the journey from start-up to growth. Access the Business Finance Guide here: <http://www.thebusinessfinanceguide.co.uk/bbb>

Key statistics

* Since 2012, SULCo has delivered over 50,000 loans, providing more than £345m of funding, helping to back 27 businesses a day, and contributing to the creation of more than 60,000 jobs. *NB. that is jobs created or supported by a Start Up Loan including the individual recipient.*

* In the financial year 2016/17, the scheme provided 9,431 loans with a total value exceeding £91.2m - helping to support around 27 businesses every day of the year.

* 46% of loan recipients were formerly NEET (not in employment, education or training) and 42% were formerly unemployed or economically inactive.

* Approximately one in five loans go to residents in the UK's most deprived communities.

* The overall return on investment of the scheme is at least £3 per £1 invested.

* Loan recipients report estimated average turnover of £44,000 in the first year.

* For more information about Start Up Loans, please visit: <https://www.startuploans.co.uk/>

*All of these statistics are gross estimates, with the exception of the return on investment numbers, and are based upon Start Up Loans CRM and externally commissioned research undertaken by Qa Research.