

YOUR CHAMBER YOUR VOICE



Shropshire
Chamber of
Commerce



Winter 2023

Building For The Future



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AND BISCUITS
INCLUDED**

**MEETING
ROOMS**

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DESCRIPTION

Our brand-new facilities provide the perfect venue for corporate events, training sessions, private bookings, industry seminars, product launches, hot desking and small- and large-scale meetings.

It boasts several versatile spaces, from our largest meeting room - the Swan Room which can hold up to 50 guests theatre style, to our intimate meeting room for just 4 people. Lunch can be provided from £7.95 pp - please ask for details of our food menu.

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- Flip chart
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For further information on our facilities please contact the Academy:
Tel: 01952 290905
Email: training@thelia.org.uk



The European Market Leader in
Home Life Safety

COMMUNITY AWARDS 2024



THURSDAY 18th APRIL 2024 | INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION CENTRE BIRMINGHAM

The Community Awards by **Aico|HomeLINK** recognise the achievements of inspirational individuals and organisations working within the local community and social housing. Hosted by **Carl Jones**, this spectacular awards ceremony will welcome over 400 guests and finalists for an evening of celebration and entertainment, as well as a special guest.

RECOGNISING EXCELLENCE WITHIN SOCIAL HOUSING AND THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

CATEGORIES

Corporate Social Responsibility Initiative
Neighbourhood Transformation
Resident Engagement
Lifetime Achievement Award
Women in Fire Safety Award
National Apprentice of the Year

College Initiative of the Year
Rising Star Award
Electrical Contractor of the Year
Inspirational Colleague of the Year
Sustainability Project of the Year
Best Distributor of the Year
Collaborative Partnership of the Year

To enter the Community Awards 2024, please email: marketing@aico.co.uk



Visit the website to find out
more about the Community
Awards.

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Cover photography courtesy of McPhillips

The deadline for receiving editorial content for the Spring edition of Your Chamber, Your Voice magazine is Friday, 9th February, with a publishing date of Friday, 22nd March.



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magazine@shropshire-chamber.co.uk



Impact of Chamber in the last 12 months

At this time of year, we tend to look back and reflect on the past 12 months – and it's been an incredibly busy and productive time for Shropshire Chamber of Commerce.

We have achieved a great deal in 2023, delivering a range of new initiatives after listening to our members. Highlights have included:

- Starting work on a recruitment toolkit to help encourage over 50s and others back into the workplace and plug skills gaps.
- Launching a new series of 'Active Leadership' training programmes, funded by the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, with a focus on our market towns.
- Delivering another incredibly successful business awards event – the largest event on the Shropshire economic calendar.
- Creating 'Our Future In Focus', a new networking group for young Shropshire business people.

- Holding cyber security sessions, meet the neighbours get-togethers, plus thriving expos and network club meetings.

- Publishing the first stage of our Local Skills Improvement Plan to gain a better understanding of skills and training requirements across the region.

- Supporting a host of local business events, including the huge IWLEX warehouse and logistics expo at Telford International Centre.

Lobbying the Government on behalf of our local business community is another key part of our role, and I was a signatory on a letter to the Chancellor ahead of his Autumn budget statement.

For local communities to thrive, they need investment, but I feel this has been too low for too long. The letter called for action to tackle fundamental issues inhibiting growth in the UK, such as overhauling the planning system, upgrading the electricity grid, and boosting business investment.

I also attended the historic meeting, in Hay-on-Wye, where the Marches Forward Partnership agreement was signed – an economic deal bringing together four local authorities from either side of the England-Wales border.

With a combined population of more than 750,000, it should give these rural counties a more powerful voice on the national stage as they jointly bid for investment in areas such as transport, tourism, skills and the environment.

As we always say here at Shropshire Chamber of Commerce – together, we are stronger...

Finally, a big thanks to everyone who took part in our latest quarterly economic survey – it remains a vital tool in feeding the views of the Shropshire business community directly through to those on the corridors of power, and helps us to keep our finger on the pulse of the issues that matter to you.

Wishing you all a happy and healthy festive period. We look forward to working with you in 2024, helping you to build useful connections and giving you valuable access to new ideas, opportunities and innovations.



Ruth Ross, Chief Executive Officer

Ruth Ross, Chief Executive Officer,
Shropshire Chamber of Commerce



New members to engage with



Severn Mortgage and Protect
Suite B3 Mercury House, Shrewsbury Business Park
Emstrey SHREWSBURY SY2 6LG
01743 583500

Elite Hampers
The Hangar
Hadley Park
East Telford
Telford TF1 6QJ
07887 744663

Shuker Building & Development
12A Grove Lane
SHREWSBURY SY3 0HJ
07360 680504

ARH Group
Delta House
264 Monkmoor Road
SHREWSBURY SY2 5ST
01743 365365

Granville Credit Control Services
Office 1.23
St James House
Hollinswood Road
TELFORD TF2 9TZ
01952 936866

Shropshire Trading Ltd
No 2 Foresters Hall
1 Wyle Cop
SHREWSBURY SY1 1UT
01691 668800

Masterplank Limited
Unit 4
Harlescott Business Park
SHREWSBURY SY1 3FG
07800 517660

Community Resource
4 The Creative Quarter
Shrewsbury Business Park
SHREWSBURY SY2 6LG
01743 360641

Handelsbanken PLC
11 Grosvenor Road
WREXHAM LL11 1BS
01978 340659

Dairy Solutions Ltd
Englesea House
Barthomley Road
CREWE CW1 5UF
01270 655049

Grinshill Holdings Ltd
Suite2
BishtonCourt
TELFORD TF3 4JE
07486 358902

Round Cyber Ltd
Business & Technology Centre
TELFORD TF2 9NT
07800 781930

FlexAssist
9 Bugle Close
SHREWSBURY SY3 8FG
07596 125721

Hye Solutions Europe Ltd
Nedge Hill
Telford Technology Park
Nedge Hill
TELFORD TF3 3AH
01952 696656

Radar Communication
101 Longden Road
SHREWSBURY SY3 9PS
01743 290001

Quantum Compliance
72 High Street
HASLEMERE GU27 2LA
07368 257493

Hospital Direct (Marketing) Ltd
Units 3 & 4
The Green
Clun CRAVEN ARMS SY7 0BB
01588 640144

Wade Solicitors
34 Rural Enterprise Centre
Stafford Drive
Battlefield Enterprise Centre
SHREWSBURY SY1 3FE
07871 390994

Fleet Trak 365 Ltd
58a Wallace Way
Tern Valley Business Park
MARKET DRAYTON TF9 3AG
07495 964842

ORJ Law Hall Court
Blount House
Hall Park Way
TELFORD TF3 4NQ
01952 355000

BCHN Architects LLP
1 Wilderhope House
Pountney Gardens
Belle Vue
SHREWSBURY SY3 7LG
01743 361261

Komplex Care Group
Floor 3 St James House
Central Park
Hollinswood Road
TELFORD TF2 9TZ
07872 463982

Elur Staffing Ltd
56 Span Meadow
TELFORD TF5 0NE
07891 315615

Aston University
Aston Triangle
Aston BIRMINGHAM B4 7ET
0121 204 4321

Ryder Partnership Limited Unit H7
Halefield19
TELFORD TF7 4QT
07977 511191

Clear View Security
22 Horton Court
Hortonwood 50
TELFORD TF1 7GY
0800 1670422

The Point Consult LTD
Clive Barn
Wem Road
SHREWSBURY SY4 3JH
07415 737002

Empowering Tech Ltd
Business & Technology Centre
SB219 University of Wolverhampton
TELFORD TF2 9NT
02079 764915

Welch and Phillips
Building Contractors Ltd
Mercian House
10 Darwin Court
Oxon Business Park
SHREWSBURY SY3 5AL
01743 216222



Awards showcase the county's finest

We will be officially launching our 2024 Business Awards in January, with new-look categories and criteria to reflect the ever-changing local economy.

A launch event will be held at the Mercure Albrighton Hall Hotel near Shrewsbury on the evening of January 25, when businesses will get chance to meet and hear from past winners, plus judges, sponsors and event organisers.

This will be the 24th year of the awards, which have grown into one of the largest of their kind in the UK. More than 13,000 people have attended the black-tie presentation evenings since the first event was staged in 2001.

Kelly Riedel, events and training manager at Shropshire Chamber, said: "The awards are now firmly established as the largest annual business celebration in the county, and winning a trophy is a real badge of honour.

"We know that the business climate continues to be challenging for many local employers, so it's more important than ever to celebrate and recognise our success stories.

"We will be explaining the entry, shortlisting and judging processes at the launch event, to ensure that businesses get a real understanding of how our teams of independent judges reach their decisions.

"We've made a few tweaks to build on the success of last year's event, following feedback and suggestions which we invited from our members and stakeholders – and we can't wait to reveal what's in store."

The launch event will be a chance for businesses to find out about categories and criteria for 2024, which will include a new award for the retail, leisure and hospitality industries, and the introduction of a growth award to recognise top-performers.

Popular categories such as company of the year, best new business and best small business will be returning alongside categories recognising innovation, customer service, and businesses giving back to their local communities.

Entries for the awards will open on the day of the launch event, with details to be found at www.shropshirechamberbusinessawards.com. The 2024 award winners will be revealed at Telford's International Centre on Friday June 21.

Previous winners of the coveted company of the year title include Aico of Oswestry, Grainger & Worrall from Bridgnorth, Grocontinental of Whitchurch, McConnel of Ludlow, Salop Leisure from Shrewsbury, and Telford businesses Lyreco, Dodd Group, Smartwater and Reconomy.

View the picture gallery from this year's awards night at <https://shropshirechamberbusinessawards.com/gallery-2023/>



Post-awards party time at this summer's event

Training calendar

It has never been a more important time to train staff as this can lead to increased productivity, performance and staff retention. Training improves employee confidence, boosts skills and can improve employee retention. Continuous improvement of employees through training can also have a positive impact on the overall running and performance of the business.

The Shropshire Chamber team works to create a training calendar that boost your knowledge and improve your staff wellbeing.

For full details of all upcoming courses please do take a look at our website <https://www.shropshire-chamber.co.uk/business-training> Our upcoming courses over the next quarter are highlighted below:

January:

- Emotional Intelligence – 16 January
- Preference Rules of Origin – 17 January
- LinkedIn For Business – 23 January
- IOSH Managing Safely in the Workplace – 24 January
- Prevention of Burnout in the Workplace – 30 January 2024

February:

- Optimising Your Social Media Profiles to Attract Clients – 8 February 2024
- Understanding Commodity Codes – 15 February 2024
- Customer Service Excellence – 20 February 2024
- Marketing to Attract Local Clients 22 February 2024
- Time Management, Decision Making and Prioritisation – 27 February 2024
- COSHH - 28 February 2024
- Running a Successful Recruitment Campaign Training – 28 February 2024
- Fire Marshall & Fire Awareness – 29 February 2024

March:

- Dyslexia Awareness Training – 6 March 2024
- Understanding Health & Safety Duties – 7 March 2024
- Insta for Business – 12 March 2024
- Become a Powerful and persuasive Speaker – 13 March 2024
- Google Ads (Beginners) – 19 March 2024
- Emergency First Aid at Work – 20 March 2024
- Digital PR & Social Media Training – 27 March 2024
- Methods of Payment and Letters of Credit – 28 March 2024

For further information please call the team on 01952 208200 or email training@shropshire-chamber.co.uk



You spoke – change happened

463 businesses spoke to Chamber earlier this year on how skills shortages were impacting their businesses, that collective voice has already brought change.

This vital information allowed the Marches Local Skills Improvement Plan (MLSIP) Stage 1 Report to be written by Chamber and approved by the Secretary of State.

On the strength of that, there is now additional money from Central Government for the Marches, to allow increased training to fill some of the worst highlighted skills gaps.

That was just step one, in an ongoing project.

Without your collective voices we could not have achieved this, but it does not stop here!

There are still many skills gaps to fill and understand. We need to understand the why, where and when around skills and training needs.

The greater the evidence, the stronger the requests for national support.

Local training providers, careers officers and others like the Local Authorities also need to have these facts to ensure what is shaped locally is working to solve problems, strengthen the local economy, retain workers, and provide a bright employment future for the next generation.

Nationally, this England-wide project is driving collective change.

Your voice can influence not only the Marches local agenda, but the national picture too.

How can you help?

Be you a vast employer or a one-man band, the experiences you have faced trying to recruit, train or upskill are important in making change happen.

What we need to do is to keep gathering the Employer's Voice, to ensure the right choices are made, emerging patterns understood and forward plans are fit for purpose.

Open to member and non-member businesses from across the Marches (Herefordshire, Shropshire, and Telford & Wrekin) regardless of size.

Every business will have a story to tell. Share it with us today, keeping businesses at the forefront of the skills agenda.

Support our business economy by getting involved, from completing a simple on-line questionnaire to helping training providers understand your sector better. Contact us today to help make further change happen. lsip@shropshire-chamber.co.uk or see the QR code and additional contact details in the graphic below.



Funded by
UK Government

Marches LSIPs
Local Skills Improvement Plan



Shropshire
Chamber of
Commerce

YOU'VE DRIVEN CHANGE

NOW WE WANT TO HEAR YOUR VIEWS

Are you prepared to fill in a Questionnaire or take part in a brief Interview?

Scan the QR code to take part in our survey, or contact Alex Brown for further information.

E: lsip@shropshire-chamber.co.uk

T: 01952 208225 w: shropshire-chamber.co.uk



Scan here to tell us your views

SHROPSHIRE | TELFORD & WREKIN | HEREFORDSHIRE



Protect, care and invest to create a better borough



First-of-its-kind celebration of all things women

Shropshire Chamber of Commerce is planning a networking event with a difference for International Women's Day.

Workshops, talks and a selection of hands-on practical sessions are being lined up on Friday March 8 at The Astbury Golf & Lodge Resort near Bridgnorth.

It is described by the Chamber

as 'a day dedicated to helping the women in our business community pause, connect, and be truly inspired'.

Kelly Riedel, Shropshire Chamber's events and training manager, said the half-day session, from 10.45am to 2.15pm, would be 'a first-of-its-kind celebration of all things women'.

"The dynamic programme of

£373k investment for market towns

Shropshire Chamber of Commerce will be offering more business training opportunities in the county's market towns after securing a **£373,000** investment.

The UK Shared Prosperity Fund is supporting the Chamber's 'Business Growth Through Upskilling' programme, which will see new initiatives launched in various locations including Shrewsbury, Oswestry, Market Drayton, Bridgnorth, and Ludlow.

The aim of the project is to 'level up' the availability of upskilling and reskilling opportunities, making them convenient and accessible to businesses in all corners of the county.

Fully-funded leadership up to the value of £4,500 will be offered, alongside coaching and mentoring, with delegates entitled to three hours of one-to-one coaching. Shorter, separate upskilling courses will also be on offer as part of the programme.

A total of 100 places are being made available on a first come, first served basis – with a maximum of two per company.

Ruth Ross, Shropshire Chamber chief executive, said: "This funding from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund will help us expand the support we are able to offer to local businesses in Shropshire.

"It is a bold initiative which will take training opportunities to the wonderful market towns located across the county – we're really excited about it.

"The Chamber is actively working with partners and stakeholders to ensure that businesses can access as many opportunities as possible, and will be publishing more details of the programmes very soon."

She added: "These initiatives demonstrate our commitment to supporting economic growth and prosperity in Shropshire, and we not only look forward to commencing our project but also supporting businesses to engage with other programmes."

Shropshire Council secured a £12.4 million share of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund earlier this year – a Government-allocated fund to be managed by local authorities in partnership with local stakeholders and aimed at reducing inequalities between communities.

Ruth said: "Our programme will play a key role in upskilling and reskilling existing managers and employees across Shropshire, providing the knowledge and skills to improve productivity and create employment opportunities.

"Working alongside other programme delivery partners, the Chamber will play a key role in helping businesses to navigate the funding and programmes on offer through the UKSPF fund."

The UK Shared Prosperity Fund is a central pillar of the UK government's Levelling Up agenda and provides £2.6 billion of funding for local investment by March 2025.

The Fund aims to improve pride in place and increase life chances across the UK investing in communities and place, supporting local business, and people and skills.

- For more information about the Chamber's Business Growth through Upskilling Programme contact projects@shropshire-chamber.co.uk or call the Chamber's business support team on 01952 208200.

- For more information about the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, visit <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-shared-prosperity-fund-prospectus>



Funded by
UK Government



To find out more contact:
projects@shropshire-chamber.co.uk

Programmes delivered by Shropshire Chamber of Commerce along with other providers. Places and Grant availability are subject to eligibility and availability as defined by each Programme deliverer. © 2023 Shropshire Chamber of Commerce.



workshops, talks, and sessions has been purpose-designed to give you genuinely practical and tangible take-aways that you can implement right away.

“Covering movement, meditation, positive psychology and much more, this is a day dedicated to helping the women in our business community to pause, to connect, and to be truly

inspired.” Tickets cost £25 and are allocated on a first come, first served basis. The event is restricted to just 100 people, who will all receive a goodie bag, and lunch.

International Women’s Day is a global event celebrating the social, economic, cultural, and political achievements of women.

“If you are looking to ditch the

guilt and stop the juggle, and if the idea of being able to step deliberately into your own power anytime you choose appeals, then this is the event for you,” Kelly added.

To reserve your place, see <https://www.shropshire-chamber.co.uk/events/events-calendar/international-women-s-day-a-celebration-of-women>



Kelly Riedel

UKSPF BUSINESS SUPPORT PROJECTS

Start-up Programmes

Aston University
BIRMINGHAM

ASTON PROGRAMME FOR SMALL BUSINESS GROWTH

This Programme for Small Business Growth provides a comprehensive growth programme to a cohort of SMEs from the Shropshire area.

The project will assist 30 small business owners in increasing their turnover and creating additional job(s) within 12 months of completing the programme.

30 places.
25 Innovation vouchers of up to £2,500 (50% match funded) for programme attendees.

Birmingham City Council

WEST MIDLANDS GROWTH PROGRAMME

This programme provides grant funding of £2,500 to £100,000 (match funded) to support businesses to increase productivity by improving business confidence, stimulating business activity, attracting investment, safeguarding existing and creating new jobs within Shropshire.

27 Grants available.

Funding

GOOD2GREAT
Realising the dreams of business owners

SHROPSHIRE STARTUP

This programme supports individuals and new enterprises (trading for less than 12 months) through a Masterclass programme of business support, advice and knowledge.

Businesses who engage with the programme can go onto access individual mentoring and start-up grants of £1,000 to £5,000 (50% match funded).

Support for 40 businesses.
85 Grants.
Support for 75 potential entrepreneurs to be enterprise ready.

MARCHE'S GROWTH HUB

SILVERPRENEURS®

This programme works to inspire and empower the over 50's, who are looking to start or develop their business as part of an experienced and supportive business community.

This programme is a fully funded 8 week programme which will be delivered through a combination of virtual and in-person 1-2-1 and group sessions, where you can learn, grow and share your journey and experience with the group.

Support for 58 businesses.
Support for 25 potential entrepreneurs to be enterprise ready.

Grants

Harper Adams University

SUSTAINING SHROPSHIRE

This programme supports businesses in the agri-food sector and works to address the barriers to growth such as rural connectivity, ageing workforces, food security, access to investment and skills.

Delivered through Innovation support service focused on Agri-tech, food manufacturing and logistics in Shropshire.

Support for over 100 businesses.

The Clean Tech Business Group Ltd

DECARBONISING SHROPSHIRE BUSINESS SUPPLY CHAINS

This programme supports companies in becoming more competitive in the sustainable economy through measuring and reducing their supply chain emissions.

Delivered through advice, support and mentoring to allow business to understand their supply chain emissions and develop net zero initiatives.

Support for 25 businesses.

worcestershire county council

CLEAN GROWTH MARCHE'S & WORCESTERSHIRE

This programme offers free advice and grants for SMEs to improve energy efficiency and invest in renewable energy measures.

Available to SMEs from all sectors (including B2C) and community buildings across Shropshire.

Support available for up to 50 businesses.
30 Grants available.

Prototyping

Aston University
BIRMINGHAM

SHROPSHIRE APF

The Advanced Prototyping Facility (APF) project is provided by Aston University to assist businesses improve awareness of the opportunities available through additive manufacture (3D Printing) to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of existing designs and to develop new products all the way through to producing prototypes.

Support available for 80+ businesses.

Sustainability



Engage with a digital offer

Otis Powell from the Shropshire Chamber of Commerce says: Embracing the Member-to-Member Offer Page and Members News Page is a powerful way for businesses to belong to a thriving community, amplifying their impact within the Chamber membership. The Chambers platforms not only facilitate a sense of camaraderie but also offer an array of advantages that can boost business growth. Here's 5 reasons why businesses should actively promote and engage with the Chambers website:

1. Fostering Community Unity

Our Member-to-Member Offer Page is more than just a promotional space; they create a vibrant community where businesses can collaborate and support each other. By participating in these exclusive offers, businesses contribute to a sense of unity, making the community stronger and more tightly-knit.

2. Amplifying Your Visibility

Showcasing special offers on a dedicated page ensures businesses garner heightened visibility within the community. Members are naturally drawn to explore



and engage with these offers, providing businesses the opportunity to reach a wider audience and potentially attract new customers.

3. Stimulating Active Engagement

Our ever-changing Members News Page acts as a dynamic communication channel, allowing businesses to share updates, achievements, and pertinent information. This constant stream of fresh content not only stimulates engagement but also positions the business as an integral and active member of the community.

4. Personalised Connection:

Our Member-to-Member Offers offer a personalised approach to marketing. Businesses can tailor their promotions to align with the community's needs, increasing the likelihood of resonating with other businesses. This personalised touch not only captures attention but also builds

a stronger connection between businesses and their audience.

5. Facilitating Networking:

Our pages serve as virtual networking hubs, providing businesses with opportunities to connect and collaborate. By exploring what other Chamber members have to offer, businesses open the door to potential partnerships and collaborative ventures, enriching the Shropshire business community.

In essence, actively leveraging the potential of the Chambers Member-to-Member Offer Page and Members News Page is not just about reaping immediate benefits; it's about contributing to the local business community. Explore our Member-to-Member Offers and Members News Page on The Chamber's website today to unlock exclusive deals and stay updated on the latest business news!

The struggle is real

New figures reveal that wage growth has caught up with rising prices for the first time in nearly two years.

While this is good news for workers, it is providing significant challenges to many Shropshire employers as they wrestle to stay on top of spiralling running costs.

Ruth Ross, chief executive of Shropshire Chamber of Commerce, said: "These latest statistics reveal that regular pay, excluding bonuses, rose by 7.8% in the period from May to July compared with the previous year.

"This matched the pace of inflation over the same period – which means people's 'real pay' is no longer falling.

"While that is clearly good news for workers, it offers little comfort to businesses which are having to soak up rising operational costs, while struggling to contain wage inflation arising from candidate expectations and workforce pay settlements.

"Recruitment issues remain a top concern for business, and companies in worst-hit sectors such as hospitality, retail and manufacturing are still finding it tough to attract appropriately skilled staff at sensible wage levels."

However, the latest economic figures also revealed a fall in job vacancies - reflecting a weakening economic outlook, according to the British Chambers of Commerce which predicts further growth in unemployment during the next three years.

"Underneath these headline figures the skills crisis continues and the labour market picture will remain challenging. Our message to policymakers is clear, invest in skills now for a more prosperous economy," it says.

The latest quarterly economic survey from Shropshire Chamber revealed that cashflow and profitability were mounting concerns for many local businesses.



Ruth Ross, Chief Executive Officer

Improve your employees' numeracy skills for greater business performance



Funded by
UK Government



Improving the numeracy skills of your employees can help support the growth of your workforce, encourage better productivity and motivate your employees to pursue different forms of training in the workplace.

Using ICT solutions, we can help upskill and empower your employees with fully funded numeracy training programmes.

No exams, no strict timetabling, just tailored training to suit your business operation.



01743 342602



employer@scg.ac.uk

Dedication to supporting young people with SEND

Derwen College has been crowned Further Education Provider of the Year at nasen's seventh annual Awards. The College was recognised for their outstanding work in supporting children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and learning differences to reach their full potential.

The inspiring ceremony, held at the Grand Hotel Birmingham, was hosted by nasen – the National Association for Special Educational Needs and Disabilities – and supported by official media sponsors, tes.

nasen is a charitable membership organisation that exists to support and champion those working with, and for, children and young people with SEND and learning differences.

Derwen was recognised for its outstanding work to enable all students with SEND to reach their aspirations, regardless of their ability, gender, race or sexual orientation.

The college provides an extensive range of opportunities for students to learn key life skills, not only through many wellbeing activities and weekly external work placements, but also at the college's unique Marketplace, where student-led shops, eateries and a small hotel are all open to the public.

Derwen's theatre group raises awareness around topics including bullying and kindness, as well as the college's dynamic Duke of Edinburgh Awards programme – which includes an adapted Bronze award opportunity for students with profound and multiple learning disabilities.

The College also has a commitment to Student Voice, and a dedicated personal, social and health education (PSHE) team delivers topics which include, 'my place in the world' and a 'moving on' module preparing students for that all-important leap to life after College.

15 other schools, individuals and organisations were recognised alongside Derwen College, judged by a panel of leading professionals with a wealth of experience in education and SEND – as well as individuals with lived experience.

Speaking of their win, Helen Owen,



Sherann Hillman from Seashell (FE Provision award sponsor), Derwen College Personal Development and Wellbeing Manager Helen Owen, Derwen College Independent, Health and Wellbeing Coordinator Tab Crinson and Samantha Baines (nasen awards presenter)

Personal Development and Wellbeing Manager at Derwen College said: "We are so proud and absolutely delighted to have won FE Provider of the Year, in this competitive category.

"This award recognises a cross-college team effort, where staff from across care, education, wellbeing and therapies all collaborate to make a real difference to the lives of our students and the wider community.

"We have a shared commitment to break down barriers and challenge preconceptions around SEND, supporting students to thrive as they move from full time education into the next stage of their lives."

Chief Executive of nasen, Annamarie Hassall MBE said: "Derwen College should

be extremely proud of what they have achieved.

"We received the greatest number of nominations this year, full of inspiring and deserving schools, colleges, settings and individuals that are working together to make a difference for children and young people.

"All our winners, and those nominated, are true role models for the sector, shaping practice in their setting, whilst leading and inspiring others. They exemplify what is making a difference for learners with SEND and most of all, for inclusion."

For more information on the nasen Awards, and to find out more about the winners, visit: www.nasen.org.uk/awards or follow #nasenAwards2023



Arts charity welcomes a talented new patron

British playwright Hattie Naylor becomes the second Patron to The Hive, an Arts and Wellbeing Charity in Shrewsbury Town Centre. In addition to the international comic artist Charlie Adlard, Hattie Naylor has joined The Hive's family and help spread news about The Shrewsbury arts charity and their essential Wellbeing projects.

Hattie Naylor is a multi-award-winning British playwright, her work has been performed and published nationally and internationally and she is clearly excited to represent The Hive in this way. "They do such important and essential work, especially at a time when the current education system provides less and less opportunity for children and young people to explore their creative interests. Culture is so important and having heard about all the fantastic and often free projects that The Hive offer to support the wellbeing and creativity in their community, I knew that I had to get involved with them somehow."

CEO Katie Jennings welcomes Hattie's support: "Hattie has joined our The Hive family at a crucial time. The Arts are facing a really challenging time now and being associated with someone of Hattie's obvious talent and calibre as well as Charlie, only helps us to reach new audiences and spread our message." She added "We recently launched a fundraising campaign, High Five The Hive as a way to raise funds and awareness of all that The Hive offers. It is very exciting for us to have Hattie on board."

The Hive was established at 5 Belmont in 2008. Its mission was to support the wellbeing of children and young people in Shropshire. As an arts charity The Hive relies on funding to continue to deliver these essential wellbeing projects to a growing young community. Impressively, The Hive managed to continue delivering projects and activities throughout the pandemic providing a lifeline to participants who had come to rely on these sessions. The Hive is also well known for delivering a number of street festivals through the years, which alongside other events have been free for the public to attend.

Fellow Hive Patron Charlie Adlard, who joined in 2018, reflects on The Hive's presence in the town: "The Hive is a charity that has always been about serving its community. Free events like their Open Days and Street Festivals mean that everyone is welcome, and the team are constantly thinking about new and exciting ways in which to engage with their community and specifically those most in need, but now the charity also needs their community, so they can keep doing the amazing work they do". He added "If you've ever been to a Hive workshop, gig, or street festival, or simply popped in to see what exhibition is in their gallery, or the charity's aim to transform the lives through creativity really resonates with you, please consider sending The Hive a 'High Five' today and donating £5."

If you wish to donate to The Hive there are several ways you can do this! Come to the venue and deposit your donation in one of their charity boxes, add a donation at the point of booking for an event via The Hive's website www.hiveonline.org.uk or press the donate button on their homepage to donate via Just Giving.

If you would like to fundraise for The Hive, please contact Marketing and Communications Manager, Vicki Duckett-Snape: vicki@hiveonline.org.uk, for further information and support.



Artist Charlie Adlard – and new patron Hattie Naylor – pictured at The Hive in Shrewsbury



Jane Poole (Aviva CFO GI), Mark Freeman (Henshalls), Catherine Downes (Harry Johnson Trust) and compere and rugby World Cup winner Will Greenwood

Grant success for local charity

Trustees at a Shropshire charity are celebrating after a local insurance broker helped them to secure a generous £10,000 grant.

Henshalls Group – which has its headquarters in Newport – was one of 40 winning brokers to win a share of this year's £300,000 Aviva Broker Community Fund prize pot.

And thanks to their efforts, The Harry Johnson Trust will receive the donation to help their work supporting children and teenagers who are receiving care from the oncology team at The Princess Royal Hospital in Telford.

Mark Freeman, for Henshalls, said: "We are absolutely delighted with the wonderful news that our application on behalf of The Harry Johnson Trust has been successful.

"We've been a passionate supporter of the Trust since it was created, and it's great that they will be able to put the money to good use and make such a positive difference in the local community."

The Trust is in memory of Sally and Stephen's son Harry, who died at the age of seven after a nine-month fight with Double Hit Non-Hodgkins Lymphoma.

Sally said: "As a Trust, we are fortunate to own a static caravan in mid Wales which families can use for much-needed time together.

"Harry's House is available for families who can also use the park's luxury facilities free of charge, knowing that they are not far from the hospital if they need it.

"The caravan is also used by bereaved families and the wonderful staff who give so much to the children, and who sometimes

need time away too. The local children's oncology and haematology community are all welcome to book time there.

"We are extremely grateful to Henshalls and to Aviva for the generous donation and it is an extremely welcome boost as our Trust is completely run by volunteers and all the money raised goes towards our projects."

The Aviva Broker Community Fund helps local causes build stronger communities across the UK. It also gives causes access to volunteering and professional coaching opportunities, as well as tools and resources to help build their capabilities and achieve long term sustainable success.

"The local children's oncology and haematology community are all welcome to book time there. We are extremely grateful to Henshalls and to Aviva for the generous donation and it is an extremely welcome boost as our Trust is completely run by volunteers and all the money raised goes towards our projects."



It's the changing face of corporate wellbeing days

As the festive season draws yet another year to a close it invokes a natural period of reflection, with many organisations giving considerable thought to their Employee Wellbeing Strategy for 2024.

Wellbeing is no longer a buzz word or a tick box exercise. Looking after team wellbeing is more than simply a 'nice thing to do' - it's an essential part of any business strategy. And it's here to stay.

Corporate wellbeing days may feature in strategic planning, but these are largely just an opportunity for organisations to 'treat' their staff to a day out of the office, polish and buff their company image, and give themselves a congratulatory pat on the back. Right?

Actually, wrong. If done properly of course.

Yes, there are still plenty of businesses out there who claim to be looking after their teams by inviting them along to teambuilding activities that quite frankly bring no benefits at all (and in fact are pretty cringe-worthy). Those companies that like to 'talk the talk', except when it actually comes to talking to their employees to find out what really matters.

Laura Butler, esteemed Health and Wellness Coach and Founder of WellBe, strongly believes that corporate wellbeing days of the past are indeed unfit for purpose. But, she's passionate about the real value they can bring to organisations if planned and executed well, and if they have the interests of employees truly at their heart.

Laura says: "In this ever-competitive corporate world where recruitment and staff retention are vital, employers are under increased pressure to ensure the continued

health and holistic wellbeing of their staff. Carefully tailored Wellbeing Days are a great way to support that. Employees are provided with the right balance between team building opportunities, informative guidance and practical application - ensuring they leave with a sense of achievement and real encouragement, and the tools to take their own wellbeing journey forward in the right way.

"I believe the true benefit for a business lies in the creation - and curation - of activities specifically aligned to the challenges or opportunities a business faces. And implemented in the right way - a way which will add true value to their employee offering - a proactive wellbeing strategy will help attract (and retain) enthused and loyal individuals who are both motivated and productive, which will inevitably increase the bottom line."

Fellow Chamber member Zen Communications recently experienced the benefits of a strategically planned corporate wellbeing day with Laura, and Founder Felicity Wingrove said:

"Laura shared some powerful insights into developing - and maintaining - optimum physical, mental and emotional health, and made sure that the takeaways were quick and easy to implement. I loved seeing how each member of the team took what they most needed from the session."

Corporate wellbeing days aren't about ticking CSR boxes, but encouraging and implementing a true shift in workplace culture - a real transformation for an organisation and its team that will change the way they do business for good. Do they feature in your 2024 strategy?



Laura Butler, esteemed Health and Wellness Coach and founder of WellBe

Corporate wellbeing days aren't about ticking CSR boxes, but encouraging and implementing a true shift in workplace culture - a real transformation for an organisation and its team that will change the way they do business for good. Do they feature in your 2024 strategy?

Adult education improves prospect of employment

It's never too late to learn fresh skills – that's the message from Telford College, which is launching an exciting new series of adult education programmes in January.

The past year has been a challenging time for employers when it comes to recruiting and retaining top talent... so there's never been a better time to invest in your existing workforce to help them thrive and progress.

Telford College's adult curriculum is designed to fit around everyone's circumstances, with a mixture of daytime and evening programmes. There are full-time, part-time and distance learning options.

The adult curriculum is perfect for anyone needing to upskill, re-skill, or take a complete change of career direction. It covers a broad range of subject areas, including:

- Accounting
- Business
- Education
- English
- Engineering
- Hairdressing
- Health and Social Care
- Human Resources
- IT
- Management
- Maths
- Sport and Fitness

If you're running your own business but need to brush up on some of the essential skills needed to drive it forward, the part-time business course could be just what you need.

Bite-sized modules cover a broad range of skills including marketing, human resources, law, accounts and economics.

It's previously helped a wide range of professionals, from semi-retired professionals looking to get back on the career ladder to senior managers in need of a professional qualification to climb the career ladder, and new managers seeking a rounded skill-set for their CV.

The next HNC level four and HND level five business courses also kick off in January, allowing you to continue working alongside your studies, learning theory in the classroom and being able to map this across to the working world.



Our adult education programme is built around practical assignments based on real-life workplace situations



The adult curriculum is perfect for anyone needing to upskill, re-skill, or for a change of career direction

Worried about returning to education? It need not be daunting. Telford College's community is made up of people from a broad range of ages and backgrounds - everyone's career journey, and requirements, are different.

The team has invested heavily in upgrading facilities for adult learners too, including the creation of a new business and accounting suite at the Haybridge campus in Wellington with a conference and meeting area.

Telford College principal and chief executive Graham Guest says: "We work very closely with employers, who are reporting an increasing demand for high-quality, professional and technically-skilled

staff – and it's never too late to learn a new skill or boost your qualifications to move up the career ladder. Our adult education programme is built around practical assignments based on real-life workplace situations – with maths and English as a firm foundation.

"English is the language of science, aviation, computers, diplomacy, sport, leisure and tourism. It's in every walk of life; get to grips with English, and you'll find the doors opening to a host of exciting careers. The same applies with maths."

He adds: "We want everyone to have access to qualifications that will improve their job prospects and career progression. Our distance learning gives you the flexibility to study when and where you want, with no requirement to attend college."

Telford College is proud of the inclusive community atmosphere at the university-style campus, where facilities include an on-site training restaurant, hair and beauty salons, a well-equipped gym, and a Starbucks concession with prices guaranteed to be 20% cheaper than high street outlets.

● *Want to know more? Talk to Lisa Allen or Sam Bailey in the Telford College business and digital team. Call 01952 642200 or email info@telfordcollege.ac.uk*



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Madeline Harper, 18, from Stafford and Alice Sereda, 19, from Newport, started their apprenticeships at the award-winning Ascendancy, in Newport

Two new apprentices join agency

Shropshire-based digital marketing agency Ascendancy has taken on two new apprentices - the latest additions in the company's long-term commitment to train, support and develop young talent.

Madeline Harper, 18, from Stafford and Alice Sereda, 19, from Newport, started at the award-winning company in Newport at the beginning of the month (OCT) and both are hoping to remain part of the Ascendancy team deep into the future.

Ascendancy has a proven track record in delivering successful apprenticeships and also partners Aston University in offering Digital Marketing Degree Apprenticeships - something both new recruits are keen to take advantage of after completing their initial apprenticeship with the firm.

Madeline said: "I am very excited about joining Ascendancy. I think it is a great company and I am really pleased to have been given this opportunity. I've been

interested in digital marketing for a while, did some work experience with a different company last year, and Ascendancy seemed to match perfectly with the pathway I wanted to take career-wise.

"I saw the ad for the vacancy online, applied and was really thrilled to be taken on. I am excited to learn new things and develop my experience in digital marketing. We started by doing one-to-ones, getting to know the team before taking on more tasks. Everyone has been really helpful and my early impressions are that Ascendancy is an amazing place to work.

"After completing my apprenticeship, I am hoping to do my degree apprenticeship here and stay with the company. I have a particular interest in content writing but for now I am focused on learning as much as I can about digital marketing."

Alice has previously done some work in hospitality and this is her first involvement in the world of digital marketing, although she did study marketing at university. She says this is a career opportunity she is relishing.

She said: "I am really happy to join Ascendancy. I saw the ad on a Government website, applied and here I am - I'm so glad they chose me and am really looking forward to the year ahead.

"The team has been so supportive and welcoming to both of us. The thing that particularly attracted me to Ascendancy was that it is such a successful company and I liked the idea that the firm works with different businesses, creating different experiences and products.

"This variation appealed to me more than working solely for one specific company.

"I am looking forward to gaining as much experience as possible with Ascendancy, completing my apprenticeship and then potentially doing my degree apprenticeship here as well. I really like the creative side of things, I did art for my A-Level so I always wanted to do something art related - but in a different format I am really looking forward to the next 12 months."

Helen Culshaw, Ascendancy Director, said she was really pleased to expand her team and to build on the successes of apprenticeships in the past.

"We were only looking for one apprentice to join the team but Madeline and Alice were both just what we were looking for," she adds. "We are so pleased to welcome them both to the team."

For more information about Ascendancy, call 01952 462845, email info@ascendancy.agency or visit <https://ascendancy.agency/>



Former England footballer shares his career highlights

PSM Kitchens of Oswestry is celebrating their 10th year providing high quality, tailored kitchens from their studio in Oswestry.

With over 20 years experience within the kitchen design and build industry, PSM Kitchens offers a friendly, personal service with a single point of contact from your initial enquiry right through to the completion of your new kitchen.

Business owner Paul Mansell said "I set up PSM kitchens in 2013 after spending many years working in the industry but I wanted to provide really good customer service both before, during and after the sale. I can hardly believe it has been 10yrs since we started but we've gone from strength to strength and have enjoyed working with a really wide range of projects to help our customers achieve the best kitchen possible with the least hassle possible".

He added "As well as domestic clients we are now a trusted provider of kitchens for local developers and builders but regardless of the size of the project we pride ourselves on delivering the same level of service to make sure the kitchen looks great and works efficiently."

Like so many business PSM was impacted by the pandemic but the market seems to have settled and enquiries continue to come in. There has been a slight shift towards supply only orders but they



Stuart Pearce with Dyke Yaxley's Leonie Coulson, Andrew Thomas and Hayley Price

continue to have a team of trusted fitters who continue to deliver for supply and fit orders.

For more details visit www.psmkitchens.co.uk or to make an initial enquiry please mail paul@psmkitchens.co.uk or call 01691 664252.

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Fifth anniversary joy for cheese producer

A Telford company supplying cheese and dairy products to the food manufacturing, wholesale and food service sectors has marked its first five years in business with a week of events and gifts for the staff who have helped make the company such a success.

Bridge Cheese opened the doors to its factory in Stafford Park in 2018 with just 15 members of staff and a handful of clients. Five years later, the company has grown into a £30m turnover business with a bigger site, an 80-strong team of full-time employees and a burgeoning order book, selling enough cheese to top 1,500 pizzas a week.

Managing director Michael Harte couldn't be prouder of the way the executive team's vision for the company has come to fruition.

Michael said: "We started out with a vision to do things differently and disrupt a very traditional market with a customer-centric and flexible approach to the supply of cheese and dairy products.

"We quickly won fans with our fresh new approach and most of the customers we won in our early years are still with us today. That's testament to how much people value our service commitment and the consistent, high-quality products we deliver day in, day out."

Bridge Cheese's first five years weren't all smooth sailing and the company faced big challenges, particularly Covid and the many issues which arose from leaving the European Union including import and export red tape and difficulties recruiting staff. Michael believes the unwavering passion and dedication of his team helped to overcome these challenges.

"We came through those difficult times together and grew in ways we could not have imagined. That's why our five-year anniversary celebrations have been dedicated to thanking our amazing staff for what they've helped us achieve," said Michael.

During the first week of October, Bridge Cheese gave away daily gifts to staff including reusable water bottles and lunch bags, branded holdalls and pizza cutters.



Operations director Martin Bowden and managing director Michael Harte celebrate the fifth birthday



"Our five-year anniversary celebrations have been dedicated to thanking our amazing staff for what they've helped us achieve," said Michael Harte, managing director Bridge Cheese

On the last day, a celebration lunch was held at the site with a food truck, branded cupcakes, sweet cones and music.

Looking ahead to the next five years, Michael believes there's much more to come from Bridge Cheese.

He added: "We will continue to grow our business as we have done over the last five years by creating long-term relationships with our customers. We are continually investing in our factory to make it more efficient and more sustainable and we are expanding our research and

development department to help us develop more innovative and bespoke cheese and dairy products. There's a lot in the pipeline for us.

"If we can maintain the unique culture of Bridge Cheese that we established on day one, and our commitment to doing things differently that's got us to where we are today, I can't wait to see where we are after 10 years in business."

For more information, visit Bridge Cheese's new website at www.bridgecheese.com



Supporting small businesses in Wales through £130m investment

Loan provider BCRS Business Loans is to support small businesses in Wales after being appointed as a fund manager for the new £130 million Investment Fund for Wales launched by British Business Bank.

Having worked with SMEs unable to access finance from traditional sources in the West Midlands since 2002, BCRS Business Loans has expanded into Wales to help smaller businesses there prosper and thrive under the fund, which was officially launched in Cardiff on Thursday (23 November).

The Investment Fund for Wales will drive sustainable economic growth by supporting new and growing businesses through investment strategies that best meet the needs of these firms. Operating across the whole of Wales, the fund includes a range of finance options with loans from £25,000 to £2 million and equity investments up to £5 million to help small and medium-sized businesses start up, scale up or stay ahead.

Three fund managers have been appointed, with BCRS Business Loans managing the smaller loans part of the fund (£25,000 to £100,000). FW Capital will be responsible for larger loans (£100,000 to £2 million) and Foresight will manage equity deals (up to £5 million).

BCRS Business Loans CEO Stephen Deakin said: "We are delighted to be named as a fund manager for the British Business Bank's new £130 million Investment Fund for Wales to support business growth and employment opportunities.

"Moving into Wales will allow our experienced team and proven model to safeguard jobs and foster growth. As a non-profit we are not driven by shareholder return or corporate gain but to help SMEs and the communities they serve based on a core belief that no viable business should go unsupported. We believe there are many businesses in Wales who could benefit from this approach.

"BCRS are a relationship-based lender and central to this is our commitment to meet all our customers face to face before writing a loan. We have hired three new Welsh Business Development Managers who are based in Wales full time and whose sole focus will be helping SMEs in the region.

"We have worked with the British Business Bank in successfully delivering Midlands Engine Investment Fund (MEIF) and we look forward to working with our Investment Fund for Wales partners to deliver further success."

Since BCRS was founded as a community



BCRS CEO Stephen Deakin, back row far right, joins the IFW launch

development financial institution in 2002, it has provided loans worth more than £85 million to businesses across the West Midlands. A social impact report for the last financial year showed BCRS lent £6.5m to 72 businesses, safeguarding 999 jobs and creating 473 roles, adding £33.7m in value to the economy of the West Midlands and surrounding region.

The report showed 50 per cent of funding went to the UK's top 35 per cent most disadvantaged areas with 16 per cent going to female-led businesses and 14 per cent to ethnic minority-led firms.

Last month BCRS was named as Innovation Thought Leader of the Year – Business at the Innovation Awards, staged in Birmingham to "recognise, celebrate and reward the businesses, organisations and individuals who are dedicated to innovation".

The Investment Fund for Wales is the first solely UK government-backed investment fund for smaller businesses in Wales, helping to increase the supply and diversity of early-stage finance by providing options to firms that might otherwise not receive investment. Funding is designed to help businesses with activities including expansion, product or service innovation, new processes, skills development, and capital equipment.

Louis Taylor, Chief Executive of the British Business Bank, said: "This fund, which has been designed specifically for Welsh businesses, is intended to further address the challenges of access to finance and to provide opportunities for business talent in Wales to grow, to develop and to thrive.

"Over the past nine years we have supported thousands of Welsh businesses across urban and rural Wales and with the

launch of the Investment Fund for Wales we will be able to go further and deeper, to support hundreds more as they continue to contribute to the ongoing sustainable success of the wider Welsh economy."

Welsh Secretary David TC Davies said: "I'm delighted to see the UK Government backing this £130m Investment Fund for Wales. We are a nation of entrepreneurs and this fund will provide much needed finance for start-ups to turn their great ideas into a business. The fund will also support smaller businesses who need support to expand and grow.

"This new source of financing will help the UK Government deliver on our priority of creating jobs and driving prosperity in Wales."

The Investment Fund for Wales is the fourth of six new Nations and Regions Investment Funds being launched by the British Business Bank and follows the launch of The Investment Fund for Northern Ireland earlier this month, The Investment Fund for Scotland in October and the South West Investment Fund in July. A total of £1.6 billion has been committed to the new funds to drive sustainable economic growth and break down barriers in access to finance.

Following Thursday's launch, the British Business Bank will hold a series of information roadshows aimed at people working in the small business finance ecosystem including enterprise agencies, advisers, accountants and more. The first will be held in Llandudno on 20 February with additional sessions held in Aberystwyth, Swansea and Newport later that week.

To find out more and apply for funding, visit: www.investmentfundwales.co.uk



Tony's 21st book is sure to be a hit with business owners

Business Protection and Corporate Financial Planning covers the major business protection and wealth creation strategies for business owners at all levels.

This comprehensive practical guide is aimed at financial planners and business owners and their financial and tax advisers.

It fills a major gap in the corporate financial planning sector on how to build successful protection and wealth creation for and through the business, dealing with business valuations, employee benefits, taxation, insurance and improving the efficiency of the business.

Business future scenario planning considers ESG and net zero objectives, ensuring business owners stay ahead of environmental compliance.

The book is recommended reading for the CISI's Advanced Financial Planning Certificate.

This new book is aimed at Business Owners, financial planners, Accountants, Solicitors.

Tony Granger is the UK's leading author in financial planning and finance and Business Protection and Corporate Financial Planning is his 21st book.

Over 5.5 million SMEs can benefit from strategies on cost reduction, business protection and wealth creation.

Only some 5% of businesses have sufficient cover in place to defend against catastrophic loss and many have inefficient structures, and this book shows the business owner how to avoid those traps.

His other financial planning books cover every aspect of financial planning, from pensions, tax efficient investments, long term care planning, school and university fee planning, inheritance tax, business protection and succession planning, and a guide on steps to take with bereavement.

"This book meets the business protection and wealth creation needs of the business owner, and is ideal for the financial planner who works in the corporate marketplace to gain new clients and service existing ones," says Tony.

"Less than 5% of all businesses protect their key people – the guide shows the adviser how to value the keyperson and the shares in the business."



Business Protection and Corporate Financial Planning is Tony Granger's 21st book

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Three of the directors – Shai Patel, Kim Kelly and Paul Naylor



The offices of Granville Credit Control Services are based at St James House, Telford

Credit control can be easy as 1.23 with GCCs

Granville Credit Control Services (GCCS) has moved into St James House on Hollinswood Road in Telford.

Three of the company directors – Kim Kelly, Shai Patel and Paul Naylor – are based at the first floor of the serviced offices.

It's a happy coincidence that the office number is 1.23, as GCCS has three core services that aim to make the credit control function of all businesses, regardless of size, as easy as 1, 2, 3.

"The three services we offer cover cashflow improvement, consultancy and training, plus the outsourcing of your credit control function," says Shai Patel, business development director.

The company formed in August when sales director Kim Kelly – who has a successful Bookkeeping business – spotted a recurring theme during her daily work.

"Cashflow is the lifeblood of any business, from one-man bands to SMEs and beyond," says Kim.

"I was seeing more and more sales in business records that had been invoiced, but not paid.

"It is so important that businesses of all sizes stay on top of this. That's where we come in."

Kim and Shai are both long-term members of Shropshire Chamber of Commerce – Kim with her bookkeeping service and Shai with his consultancy.

Fellow chamber veteran Paul Naylor from design and marketing agency Media & You met Shai and Kim through networking, many years ago. He is marketing director for GCCS.

They are joined by Nottingham-based Sherry Barnard (operations director) and Ami Patel (finance director), all supported admirably by operations manager, Ruth Goss.

As the team came together, it was time to choose a base.

St James House was suggested by a business connection, so the team went Walong for a viewing.

"We were impressed with the décor and the

flexibility, with its 24 hour a day, 7 days a week accessibility," said Kim, who previously worked at the site for Capgemini around 15 years ago.

The team said the site was perfect for the credit control business to meet with prospective clients in and around Shropshire.

It has plenty of breakout spaces for private meetings, as well as larger rooms for group gatherings.

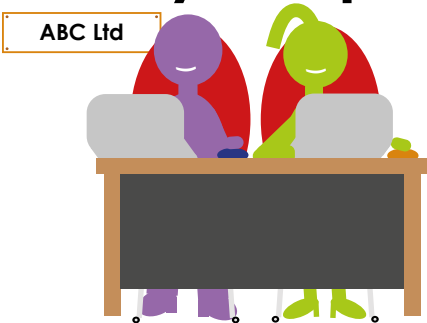
"It offers an opportunity for future expansion and networking with other businesses," said Shai.

Paul added: "It's an aspirational setting that matches perfectly with the GCCS ethos of helping businesses throughout the UK to get to grips with their credit control requirements.

"We genuinely believe we can make credit control as easy as 1, 2, 3 – or 1.23 if you visit our office."

● Contact Granville Credit Control Services for a FREE 30-minute consultancy and see how you can benefit from working with the team, improving your cashflow.

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Bespoke hampers make the perfect gift

It has been a really busy year for Elite Hampers – from becoming an award winning business it has gone strength to strength and recently launched its latest hampers!

Elite hampers, a Shropshire based corporate gifting business, was created by a local optometrist who wanted to 'add value to business relationships by showing appreciation through gifting'.

Director, Jeevan Punj, who was also a finalist in the Women Who Solopreneur Awards 2023 said: "We cater for dietary requirements and personalise hampers so that the recipient receives a gift they can actually enjoy."

She goes on to say: "Quality is very important to us and we work with some amazing businesses to create our luxurious hampers. We provide our customers with an excellent service right from when they place their order, to the delivery of their gifts."

Over the festive period, Christmas hampers were trending and Elite Hampers provided Shropshire businesses with quality gifts for their employees and clients.

What better way to treat someone at the end of the year! Their new range included some top brands such as 'Popcorn Kitchen' and 'Lottie Shaw's' and some delicious award winning products, including locally sourced products!

With numerous 5 star Google reviews, Elite Hampers has been entrusted by many businesses to add value to their business relationships.

There really is something for everyone in the new Elite range! Contact them today to see how they can help you.



A selection of products contained in the hampers

Distillery urges you to buy local

Emma Glynn, one of the UK's few female distillers and director of The Shropshire Distillery, urged people to buy locally this Christmas.

She said: "It's been a really bumpy few years for small businesses with Covid-19, energy hikes, soaring interest rates, and inflation. Most recently spirit producers like us have been hit with alcohol duty hikes."

"So Christmas, it was important to support local Shropshire businesses like ours to keep them thriving."

The Shropshire Distillery has an online shop and introduced a click-and-collect option in time for Christmas gift buying.

"We brought back our two limited edition Christmas gins – Cranberry and Clementine, and Frankincense and Myrrh – which were available to buy online along with our award-winning gins, liqueurs,

and new vodka. You can also purchase gift vouchers for our distillery experiences – the gin tasting, tour and talk package, the gin school experience, and our new cocktail masterclass."

Ellesmere's small batch distillery has received a lot of recognition this year, having been named as a finalist for Brewery/Distillery of the Year at the Midlands Food Drink & Hospitality Awards 2023, scooping the award for 'Best Small Business' at the Shropshire Chamber

Business Awards in June, and receiving a Tripadvisor Travelers' Choice Award this year.

The Shropshire Distillery has recently been announced as one of three finalists for 'Experience of the Year' at the West Midlands Tourism Awards 2024.

The winner will be announced early next year.

To purchase their products, gift vouchers or experiences visit the website www.theshropshiredistillery.co.uk

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Protect, care and invest
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Steel company's effort to give power to the people

A forward-thinking Telford business is lending a helping hand to the local community by making its electric vehicle charging points available to the public.

Fabweld Steel Products, which manufactures access covers for the water, energy and security sectors, has installed a double fast charger at its site on the Court 2000 business park in Madeley, as part of a wider project to improve the environmental sustainability of the business.

The company is now encouraging people in the local community to take advantage of the discounted tariffs at the charging point, which was installed with help from Telford & Wrekin Council's Climate Change Fund.

FSP managing director Wayne Carter said: "Reducing our dependence on fossil fuels is a no brainer, but it is no secret that the infrastructure for electric vehicles hasn't yet caught up with the demand.

"Hopefully the people of Madeley and the local area will make good use of the discounted rate of 40p per KWH offered at our charger, particularly at weekends.

"The charger is just one of the changes we have made at our factory to make sure we reduce our environmental impact while cutting our energy bills. We have invested £500,000 in a huge solar project across the whole of the factory roof which has halved our energy costs even though the business has grown by 20 per cent.

"The Court Works site has always been at the forefront of innovation, right from the early days of the Industrial Revolution, and I'm delighted that we can improve our own business, reduce our environmental impact and help our neighbours with these sustainable measures."

As well as the charging points and solar panels, FSP has committed to generating its own nitrogen on site, again using solar power, which will reduce costs and cut emissions from the numerous lorry journeys currently needed to deliver nitrogen to the factory.

The company is also replacing fleet vehicles and forklift trucks with electric alternatives and is supporting staff to switch to electric vehicles and bikes.

The location of FSP's high speed



Councillor Carolyn Healy joins FSP's managing director Wayne Carter (left) and chairman, Richard Hilton for the official unveiling of the new EV charging points available for the local community

chargers will be added to a 'zap map' to signpost them to EV users. Drivers will be able to recharge their vehicles to 80% in just 60-90 minutes (based on a 40kW battery), with preferential tariffs for local drivers.

Councillor Carolyn Healy, Telford & Wrekin Council's cabinet member for climate action, green spaces, heritage and leisure, said: "With spiralling energy costs crippling many businesses, I'm delighted to see such a forward-thinking company taking positive action to cut costs and reduce the firm's impact on the environment.

"Finding sustainable solutions is something all businesses will need to do eventually and it's great that FSP has really grabbed the opportunity to make a difference.

"We provided £8,000 from the Climate Change Fund to help both FSP and people in the local area make the switch to electric vehicles, and I really hope drivers take up the offer to use the two chargers."

Fabweld Steel Products Ltd is an established and dynamic company with over 25 years of experience in design and manufacture of fabricated steel access covers and associated products. Its mission is to provide quality products and solutions to the construction market with a rapid lead time and unparalleled customer service. FSP is accredited with ISO9001,14001,18001 and BS EN1090 and are members of FACTA and the Achilles UVDB community.

For more information about Fabweld Steel Products, visit www.fsp.co.uk/

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In with the IT crowd

Tech & Digital Recruitment company **Greenfield IT Recruitment** have strengthened their team by hiring **two new Talent Executive's.**

Imogen Weeks and Joseph Griffiths have joined the team based in Shrewsbury. They will be specialising in IT & Digital recruitment which will include building talent pools, discussing opportunities with candidates and selecting candidates for shortlist and interview for a range of businesses in Shropshire, West Midlands, Mid Wales, North Wales, Cheshire and Staffordshire.

Both Imogen and Joe have had prior recruitment experience and will be part of Greenfield IT Recruitment's continued growth with the business recently celebrating its 14th Birthday.

Imogen has recently relocated back into the area from London where she was specialising in internal recruitment. Joe is locally based, having recruitment and digital marketing experience.

Greenfield have plans for additional headcount into 2024 with strategic growth plans recruiting into specialisms for Data, Infrastructure & IT Support, Software, Project Management & Business Analysis, cyber security, digital marketing and IT management / leadership.

Greenfield IT MD, Vicky Heard said – "Joe and Imogen joined the business a month ago, we are really excited to see their careers develop and grow within Greenfield IT Recruitment".

Visit www.greenfield-it.co.uk

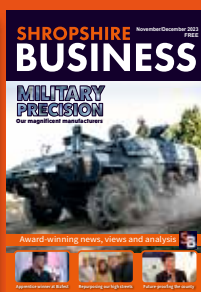


Imogen Weeks



Joseph Griffiths

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Jewellery at risk

Jewellery owners across Shropshire have been warned they should double check the insurance cover they have in place as the cost of living crisis continues.

Elsa Mackay, from Henshalls Insurance Group in Newport, said research had shown that worryingly, 56% of jewellery owners could be underinsured.

“These results are particularly concerning in the current economic climate with the cost of living crisis continuing, as the risk of wealthy jewellery owners being targeted for theft is a growing issue.

“So it’s vital that anyone who owns valuable jewellery or watches should be vigilant and ensure their valuables are protected as well as they can be.”

Elsa said natural diamond reserves across the world were now depleting and lab-grown diamonds were becoming more readily available.

“They’re so good now too that it’s almost



Elsa Mackay from Henshalls Insurance Group

impossible to tell the difference, so that makes proving the value of the diamond you own even more important.

“A one-carat lab-grown diamond might be worth around £6,750 – but a one-carat natural diamond could be worth around £26,000. It’s a huge difference.

“So it’s not difficult to see why over

50% of jewellery and watches could be underinsured. And as a result, insurers may require documented proof of your diamond’s provenance and worth before they will add it to a policy or accept a claim.”

Elsa said it would be advisable for jewellery owners to seek out an authorised certificate from an approved valuations company that will give a clear description of the diamond, the materials and stones used, the cut, the clarity and the carat value.

“You should make sure your jewellery and watches are stored in a sturdy safe too that has been installed by an approved and recognised safe installer.

“And any jewellery or watches that you have that have diamonds on them – no matter whether they’re natural or lab-grown – should be regularly valued and the insurance adjusted accordingly.”

Henshalls Insurance Group employs more than 40 staff across Shropshire and Staffordshire, and specialises in insurance cover for a wide range of industries including food and drink, manufacturing, construction, charities, sports, and hospitality.



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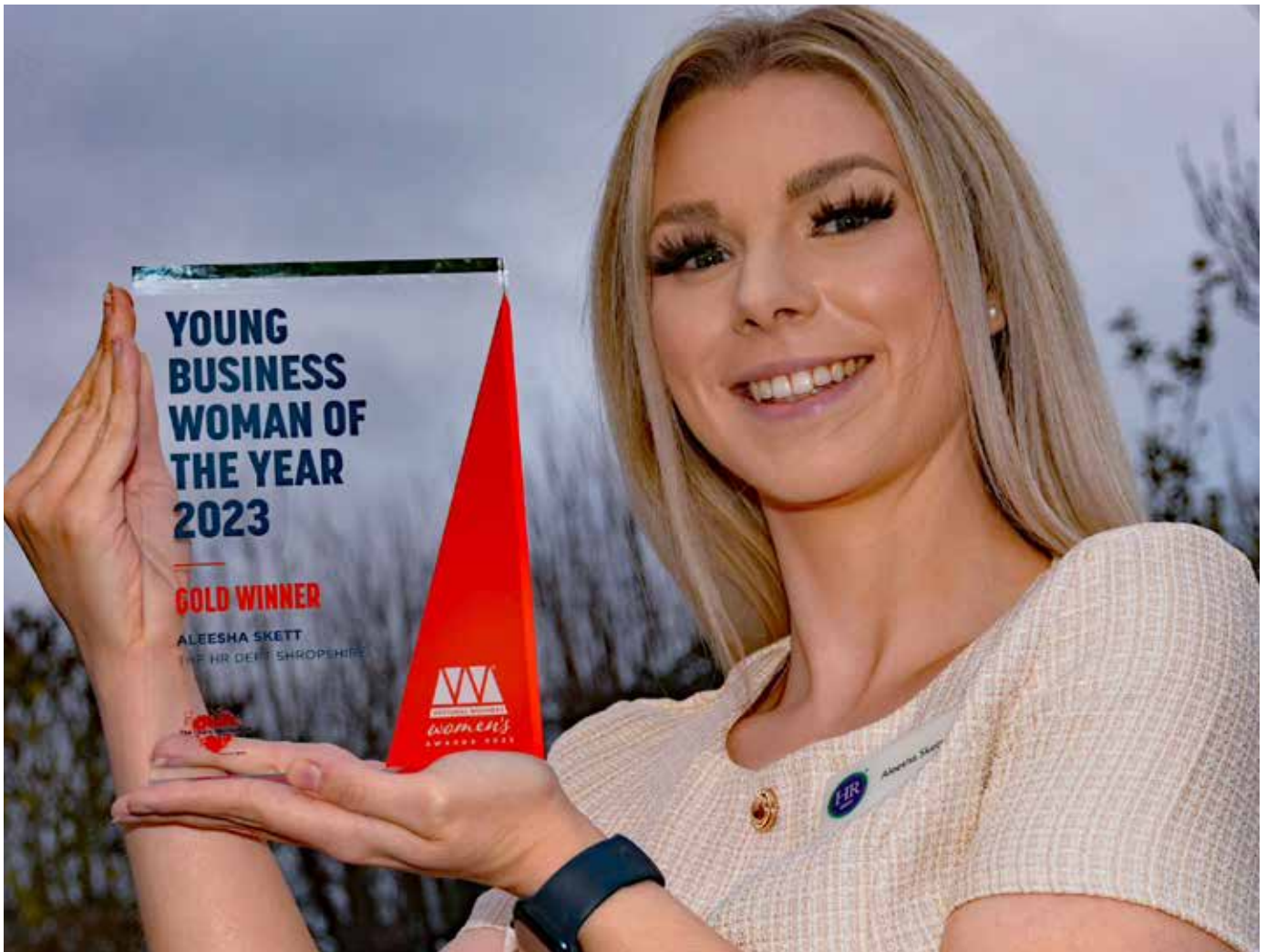
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Aleesha Skett was named Young Business Woman of the Year at The National Business Women's Awards 2023

A former apprentice who became a Senior Human Resource Consultant in just three years, has scooped a national Young Business Woman of the Year award at a ceremony in London.

Aleesha Skett (28) from Donnington in Telford successfully completed a two-year apprenticeship with The HR Dept Shropshire before being promoted to a leading role as a Senior HR Consultant in 2023, working with local SMEs across Shropshire.

The National Business Women's Awards 2023 announced the category winner at their annual star-studded award ceremony held in the Hilton Hotel, Wembley, north London. Now in their seventh year, the Awards continually strives to offer so many incredible business women a platform of their own to celebrate their incredible achievements and rewards; and promotes stars of today and of tomorrow across many diverse sectors.

Speaking about her award, Aleesha

Aleesha scoops national award

said: "I am absolutely thrilled and totally surprised with this national recognition."

"A great deal of work has gone into developing The HR Dept business across Shropshire in recent years.

I've been very fortunate to have played a part in that success both as an Apprentice

and now a qualified Senior Consultant."

Aleesha is also a Trustee for the Shropshire Youth Association.

Last year the National Business Women's Awards 2023 recognised company director Niamh Kelly as the 'Business Woman of the Year.'

The National Business Women's Awards 2023 announced the category winner at their annual star-studded award ceremony held in the Hilton Hotel, Wembley, north London. Now in their seventh year, the Awards continually strives to offer so many incredible business women a platform of their own to celebrate their incredible achievements.



Team GB ice hockey player is supported



Ice hockey professional Grace Garbett pictured with Alasdair Hobbs from Human Results, employment law and HR advisors, based in Telford

A Shropshire business is throwing its support behind a Telford-based ice hockey player who is hoping to secure a place in the Team GB squad.

Grace Garbett, 19, currently plays for Solihull Vixens women's team and Altrincham Aces in the National Ice Hockey League – one of only a handful of women competing in the professional men's game.

Human Results, employment law and

HR advisors in Telford, are sponsoring Grace to help with ongoing costs as she develops her career as a professional athlete.

Alasdair Hobbs, managing director of Human Results, said Grace was an inspiring young woman who had already achieved great things in such a competitive sport.

"We are delighted to be supporting Grace as she grows her career," Alasdair said.

"She has already been selected for Team GB and is hoping to continue her upward trajectory next season.

"Human Results is celebrating its

20th anniversary this year so it seems a fitting time to give something back to an inspiring local woman like Grace – we look forward to watching her sporting career flourish over the coming years."

Grace said the support of businesses like Human Results was vital to enable her to continue with her hockey career.

She said: "My sport is entirely self-funded, which means I need to cover training and travel costs of more than £400 a month.

"I am extremely grateful to Alasdair and the team at Human Results for their support, which will be a great help towards meeting those ongoing costs."



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Career initiative wins ‘phenomenal support’



Pam Robinson, careers and inspiration officer, and Liam Frances, strategic lead teacher for careers at Marches School



Andy Goff has decades of experience in education and training

Students in Shropshire have been given a greater chance to explore a wide variety of careers and be supported by employers after “phenomenal support” from businesses across the county.

The first Career Card stations have been handed over to The Marches Academy Trust in Oswestry where pupils can get a direct link to people in their desired industry. The initiative has already won the backing of more than 80 employers.

The stations have cards for students to pick up with details of a role, local employers and a scannable QR code to take the pupil to a video on the Career Cards' website, recorded by that employer, to find out more.

They have been put in communal areas at Grove School in Market Drayton, Marches School in Oswestry, Shrewsbury Academy, Sir John Talbot's School in Whitchurch and Idsall School in Shifnal.

They have been developed by Shrewsbury-based Andy Goff, who boasts decades of worldwide experience in teaching, technology in education and media training in schools.

He said: “We are so pleased to see Career Cards in situ at these schools where secondary school pupils can just pick them up and get a direct link to a role in their desired industry straight away.

“It is brilliant that more than 80

employers across Shropshire have already filmed videos to give these teenagers more of an insight into what to expect in the world of work - with many more on the horizon too.

“Career Cards have been a phenomenal success already but now they are much more easily accessible for students thinking about their next steps. We are delighted to see what the next step for us is too.

“I would like to say a huge thank you to business people across Shropshire for their support. We are telling the amazing stories of the businesses and their employee's success to inspire the next generation.”

Career Cards' stations have already been sponsored by Furrows, Start Tech and J&PR, which is also the media partner for the project.

Businesses that have already signed up include some in the communications, automotive, construction, creative, manufacturing, healthcare and agricultural industries.

The videos student's can watch include more information about what that person

does, what they like about their job and the different pathways to it, including university, apprenticeships and other avenues.

They were launched as a way for businesses facing the national recruitment crisis to tap into exceptional young talent across Shropshire.

Andy added: “We want to keep the talent here in Shropshire and we will only achieve that by ensuring students understand the opportunities right here on their doorstep in the very early stages of their future career planning.

“It is wonderful to see students picking up Career Cards and taking them home to discuss with their parents.

“Careers Cards is a nationwide project which was born here in Shropshire - every card station will be individual to the particular region it is placed in.”

If you would like to connect and promote your business with the younger generations in schools and their families visit <https://www.career.cards/> or email Andy Goff on andrew.goff@io.uk.com to find out more.

The first Career Card stations have been handed over to The Marches Academy Trust in Oswestry where pupils can get a direct link to people in their desired industry. The initiative has already won the backing of more than 80 employers.



Lack of Soft Skills is holding business back...



“
RECRUITING ISSUES
...still common

“
INFLATION PRESSURES
...still loom large

“
WAGE INFLATION
...squeezing budgets

“
COMPETITION WORRIES
...are on the rise

Cost vs Sales...

Sales slowing, while costs continue to rise.

Some businesses are starting to look at layoffs or short time working due to a decline in sales in the last few months.

Inflation, fuel costs and the heavy pressure from ever increasing wage demands have started to take their toll. Stock piles remaining from Covid and supply chain issues easing are making buyers slower to place orders, or only placing smaller orders.

“Cash flow will be king at this point...”

Brexit is still making European trade difficult at a time when expanding your customer base may be a partial solution to sluggish sales and layoffs.



We want to hear your views...

Each quarter Shropshire Chamber takes part in the British Chambers of Commerce national economic survey. In this report, you will see the results for Shropshire, trending from as far back as 2009. If you and your company would like to take part in these surveys, please contact policy@shropshire-chamber.co.uk giving your name, company name and the email to which invitations should be sent.

Please note this is only open to businesses in **Shropshire** and **Telford & Wrekin**, and Chamber Membership is not required to take part. Those in neighbouring counties should approach the British Chambers of Commerce to locate their nearest BCC Accredited Chamber.

This survey is open to businesses from all sectors including public sector and the third sector. The survey is open to any size of business from micro's, who employ no staff, to the very largest businesses. The data is used both locally and nationally to lobby those in power on the main topics of concern. The national survey is highly respected and is used by Central Government and the Bank of England to understand the economic situation and pressures facing businesses in the UK.

The greater our business voice, the more valuable the information becomes, so we want to encourage every business, Chamber member or not, to add their voice to this vital survey.

DOMESTIC (UK) SALES INCREASES

UK Sales Past:

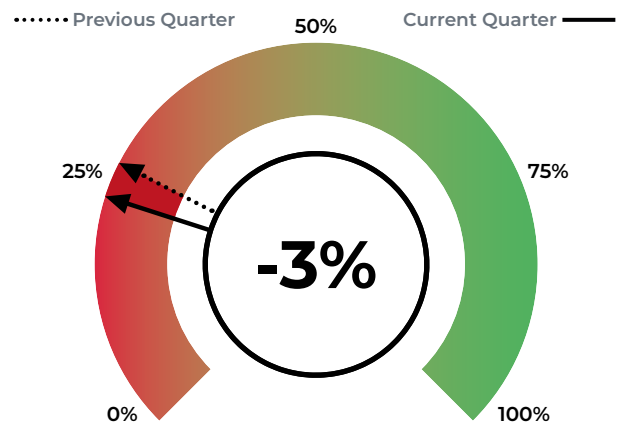
"Since the government withdrew HS2 [north of Birmingham] and the decline in construction trade due to excessive houses being built but not selling, there has been a knock on effect on our business, which is plastic recycling. Prices worldwide plummeted as soon as the government made the decision."

Manufacturing Sector

"Germany has more customers for our products than all of the combined rest of the world and so Brexit is causing us many lost sales!"

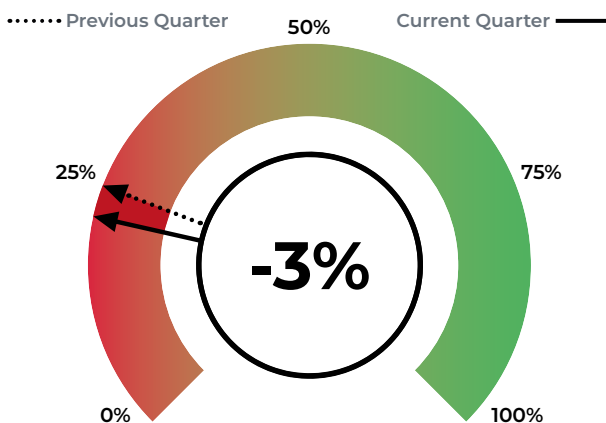
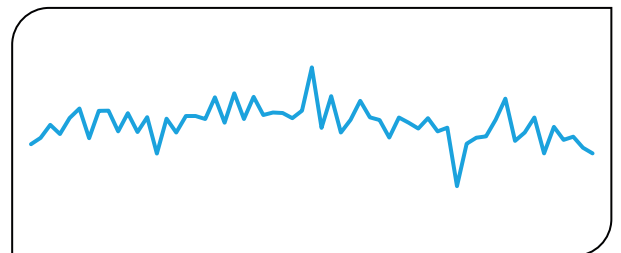
Manufacturing Sector

Those seeing sales declining remained the same as last quarter at 31%.



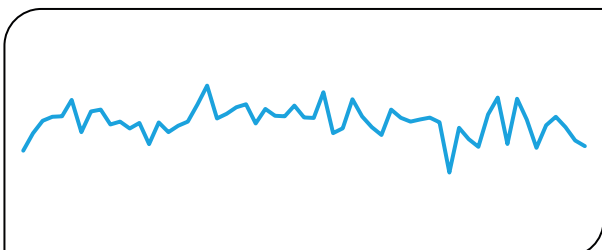
% of respondents reporting a rise or fall in increased **UK SALES** on the previous quarter

2009 UK Sales Past 2023



% of respondents reporting a rise or fall in increased **UK ORDERS** on the previous quarter

2009 UK Sales Future 2023



UK Sales Future:

"Confidence is stabilising as interest rates hold and turn down."

Public Sector

"Domestic demand for business support is at the highest levels I've seen in 5 years. Owners are willing to pay for the support after years of battling through external forces like Covid, Brexit, Ukraine and inflation/interest rate rises."

Professional Services Sector

56% of respondents saw no increase in forward orders, a higher number than in Qtr.3 when it was 47%.

EXPORT SALES

INCREASES

Export Sales Past:

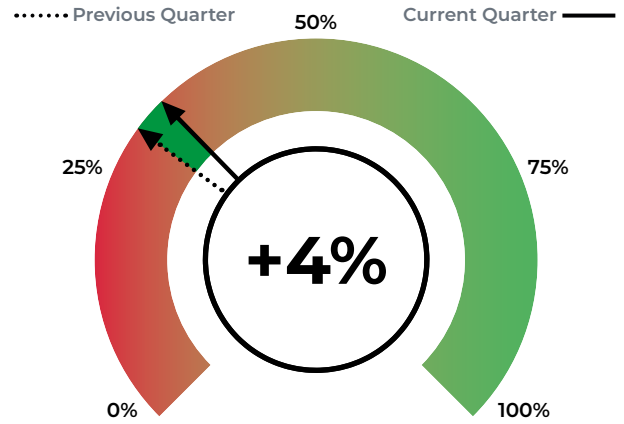
"All sales have continued to decrease month on month for the last 6 months."

Retail/Wholesale Sector

"Brexit is still causing issues."

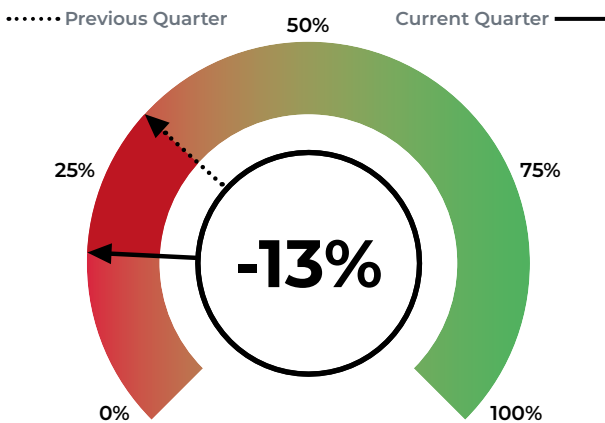
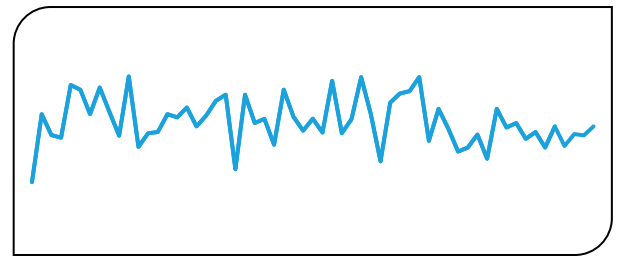
Professional Services Sector

This quarter 41% of exporting respondents stated a drop in sales, which is unchanged from Qtr.3.



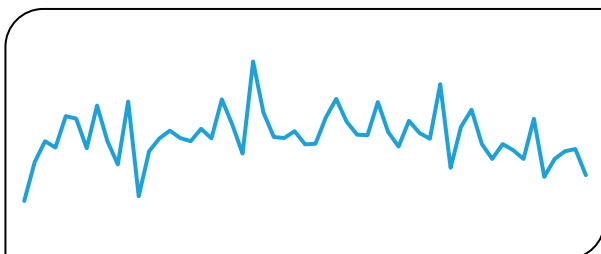
% of respondents reporting a rise or fall in increased **EXPORT SALES** on the previous quarter

2009 Export Sales Past 2023



% of respondents reporting a rise or fall in increased **EXPORT ORDERS** on the previous quarter

2009 Export Sales Future 2023



Export Sales Future:

"There is no way of exporting/importing [to Europe] many of our products and services. What bit we still do, costs us lots of labour and fees!"

Manufacturing Sector

"The problem is that with lower overheads, competitors overseas are at a very distinct advantage. With the pound weak, our raw materials are also expensive so we get burned at both ends."

Manufacturing Sector

In Qtr.3 31% of exporters stated a decline in future export orders, whereas in Qtr.4 37% of respondents reported a decline.

WORKFORCE PAST & FUTURE

INCREASES

Workforce Past:

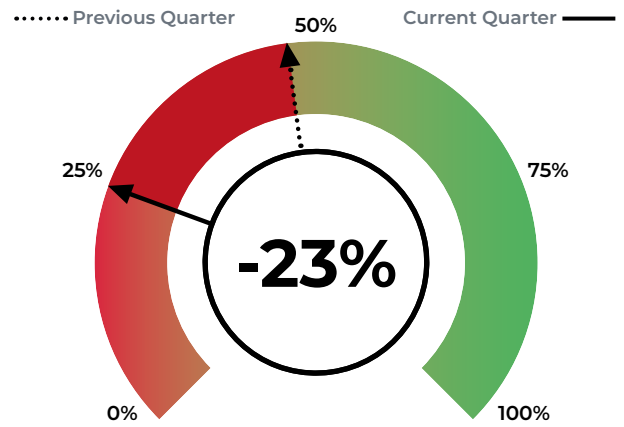
"We are having to reduce staff overheads due to lack of sales."

Retail/Wholesale Sector

"Our IT manager left so we are looking to outsource."

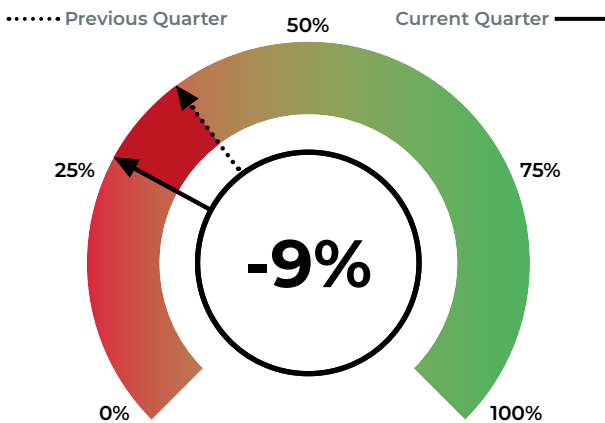
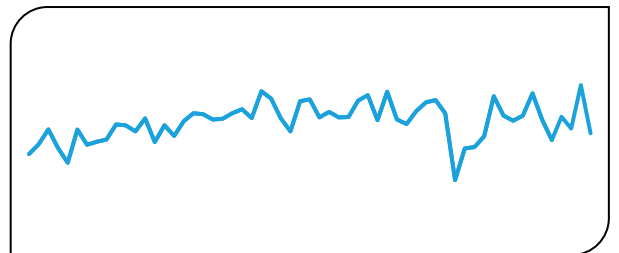
Services Sector

There has been a 10% rise this quarter in the number saying they had reduced workforce numbers compared to the previous quarter.



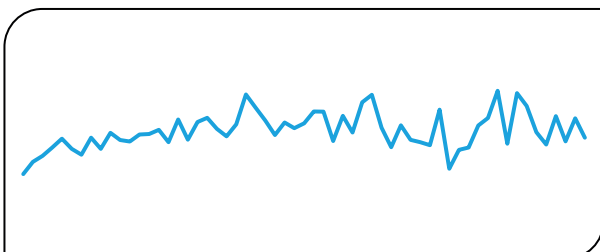
% of respondents reporting a rise or fall in **WORKFORCE** numbers on the previous quarter

2009 Workforce Past 2023



% of respondents expecting a rise or fall in **WORKFORCE** numbers on the previous quarter

2009 Workforce Future 2023



Workforce Future:

"We are shortly going to be making redundancies due to a 50% decline in our commercial training offer and a 25% decline in our apprenticeship training."

Professional Services Sector

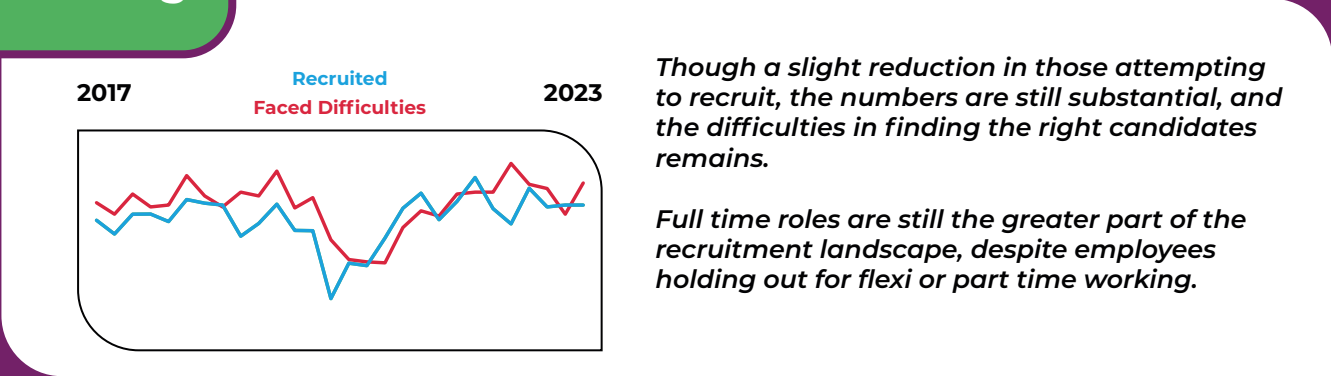
"We are recruiting for engineers and engineering managers."

Construction & Engineering Sector

16% rise in the number of respondents saying they expect to reduce their workforce in the next 3 months, however the % remains low at 19%.

SKILLS & RECRUITMENT

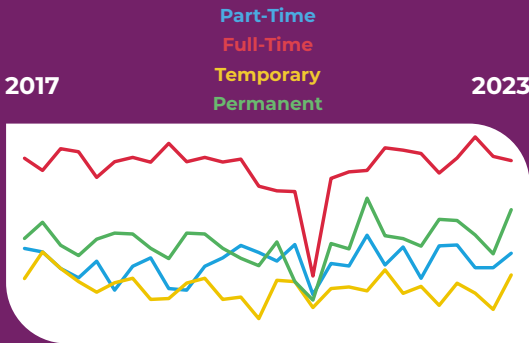
Companies Recruiting:



“ 38% stated that they are still having to continue to raise wage rates to attract staff, just 1% lower than last quarter.”



Staff Types:



“Qualified Solicitors in short supply.”
Professional Services Sector

“Struggled to find Estimators for the construction industry or Bricklayers with suitable experience.”
Construction & Engineering Sector

Post Types:



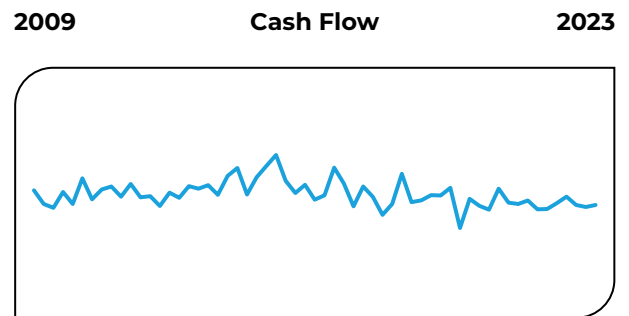
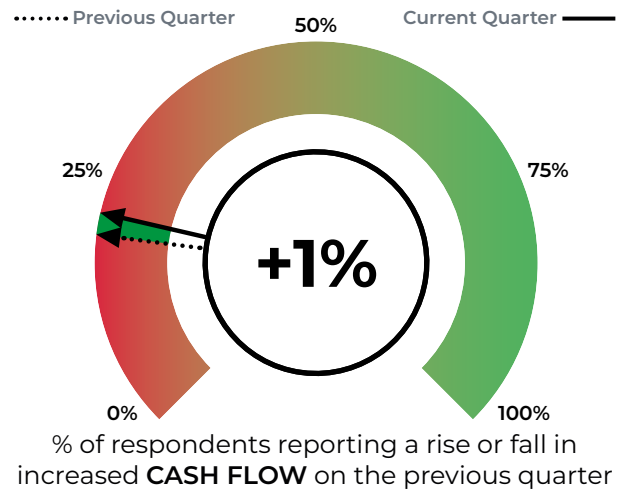
CASH FLOW INCREASES

Cash Flow:

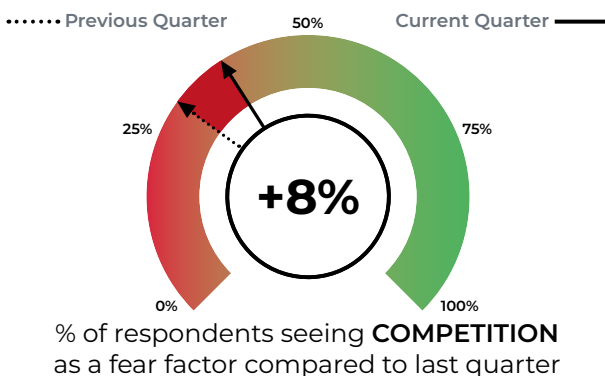
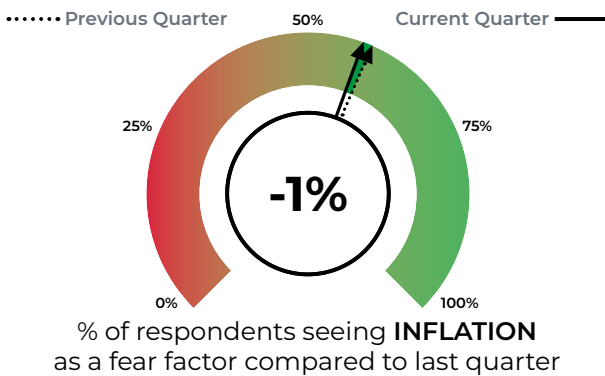
"There is now no money to invest, its more about survival at this time."
Manufacturing Sector

"We are noticing a general trend of customers taking longer to pay their invoices, and having to be chased."
Marketing & Media Sector

56% stated in Qtr.4 that there had been no change in cash flow, where as that figure was 59% in Qtr.3.



FEAR FACTORS



Fear Factors:

"Rates. Green measures; Plastic Tax + Enhanced Producer Responsibility Costs - increased regulation. Corporation Tax increasing is another increase that will affect us in the future."
Retail/Wholesale Sector

"We are still carrying large amounts of debt from the lockdown periods. e.g. backdated taxes, higher finance costs etc."
Hospitality Sector

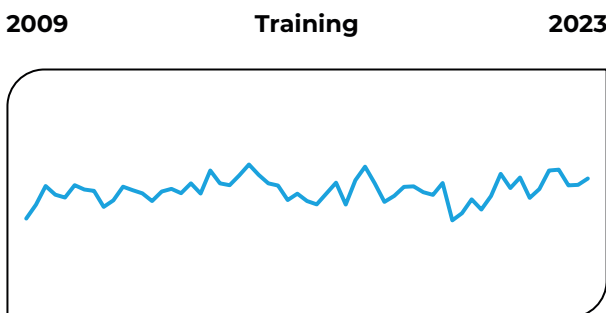
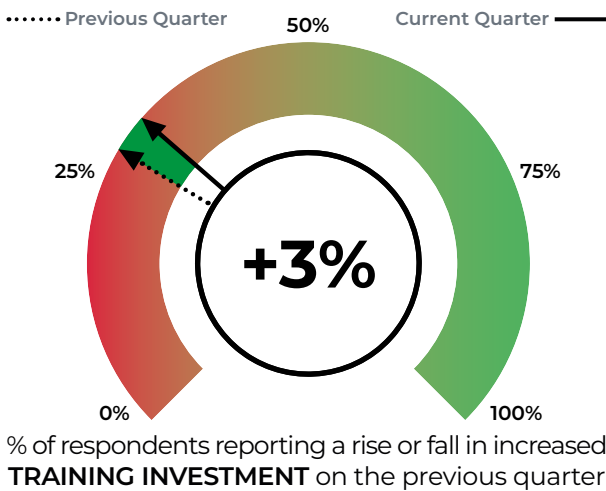
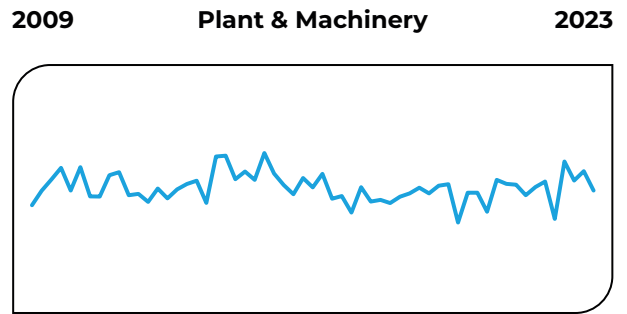
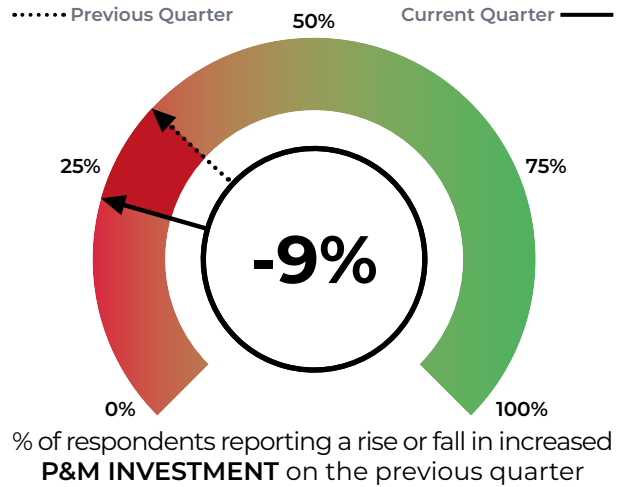
Labour costs are still seen as the greatest worry, with 72% stating this as a fear.

INVESTMENT INCREASES

Plant & Machinery:

“Capital expenditure, repairs and renewals will cost more than budget.”
Services Sector

“Fuel and energy prices have irrationally increased due to the companies capitalising from a crisis with very little intervention from government. This has had significant impact on staffing as well as running the business overall, having to cut back on things like investing in new technologies, IT systems and reducing advertising spend.”
Professional Services Sector



Training:

“We cannot invest in training due to low sales and cash flow is at its worst I have ever seen it.”
Retail/Wholesale Sector

“80% of our revenue comes from apprenticeships. The funding for these is capped by the government and has been since 2017. This means we have a real terms reduction of 25% of the revenues.”
Professional Services Sector

CONFIDENCE INCREASES

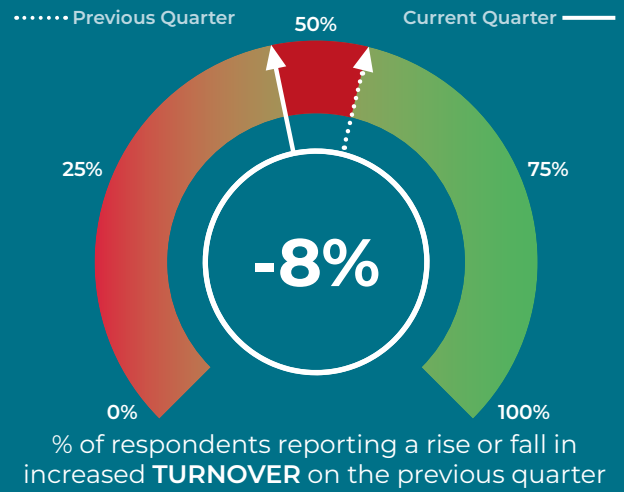
Turnover Confidence:

"The stopping of HS2 had an immediate impact on our trade because customers had stock to use on the project and that is now excess to requirements which means prices have slumped. The machinery is worth less than half of normal prices which demonstrates that we are not the only industry in recession."

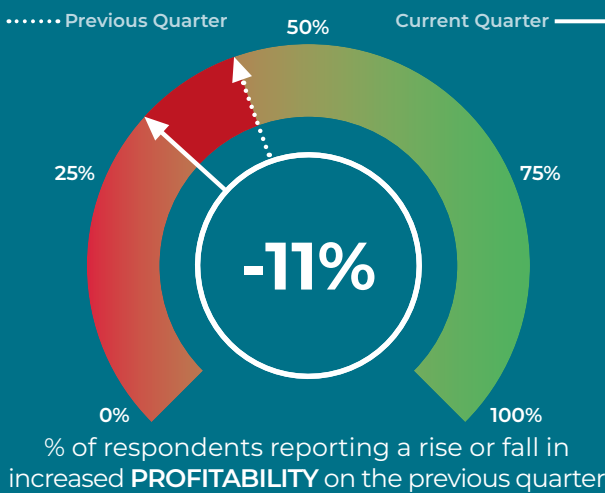
Manufacturing Sector

"We ultimately have to pass on at least some price increases."

Manufacturing Sector



2009 Turnover 2023



2009 Profitability 2023



Profitability Confidence:

"The National Living Wage increases are impacting on our business."

Manufacturing Sector

"Cannot afford to pass on the price increases to our customers so having to absorb this in terms of having lower profits."

Professional Services Sector

CAPACITY | PRICE vs COST

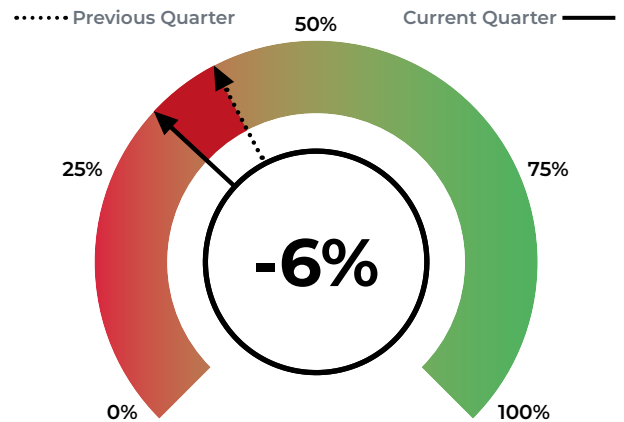
Capacity:

"As a business centre providing office space, we anticipate that as offices become vacant naturally the re-let cycle will increase from 1-3 months to 3-6 months."

Professional Services Sector

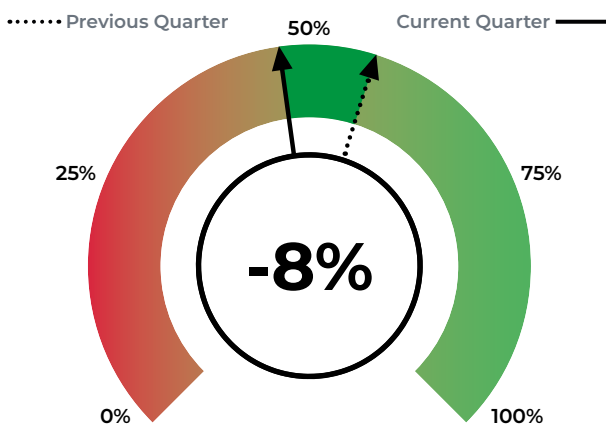
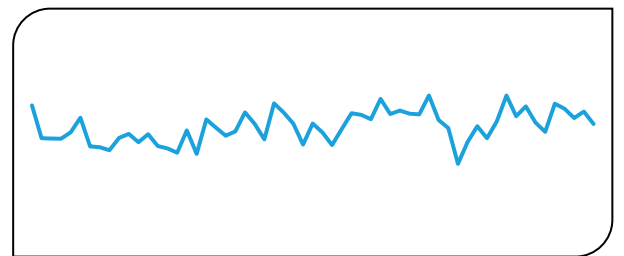
"Our customers and suppliers seem to feel generally unsure of what lies ahead for us in 2024."

Marketing & Media Sector



% of respondents reporting a rise or fall in **FULL CAPACITY WORKING** on the previous quarter

2009 Full Capacity 2023



% of respondents expecting to **INCREASE PRICES** compared to the previous quarter

Price vs Cost:

"Annual price increase will have to take place."

Manufacturing Sector

"Our prices are already set to rise for the 3rd time this year."

Retail/Wholesale Sector

Though some costs such as container shipping have decreased, many have not, such as wages and fuel, keeping the need to increase prices at the forefront.



ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS

Business Pressures:

1

Are you having to offer higher wages to attract new staff?

2

As a result of higher cost do you anticipate having to lay off any staff?

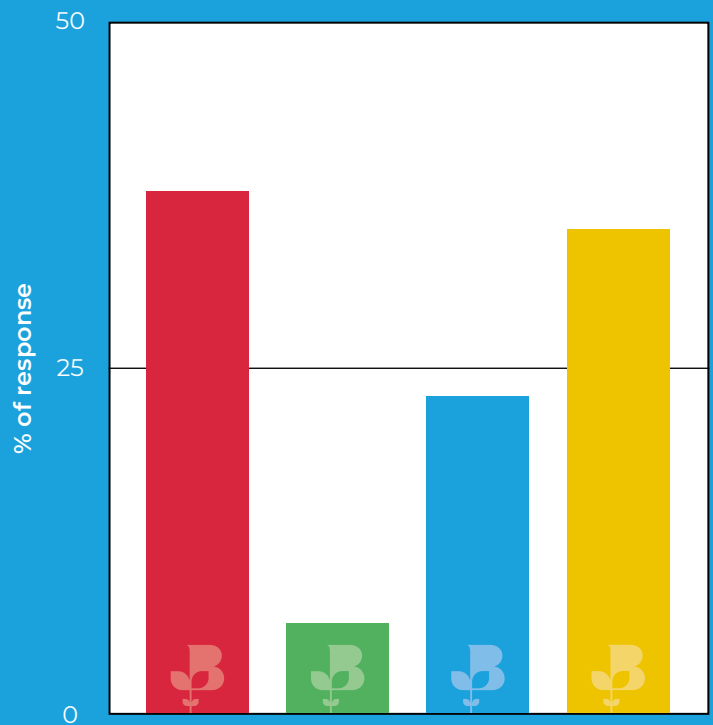
3

Are your credit terms getting worse?

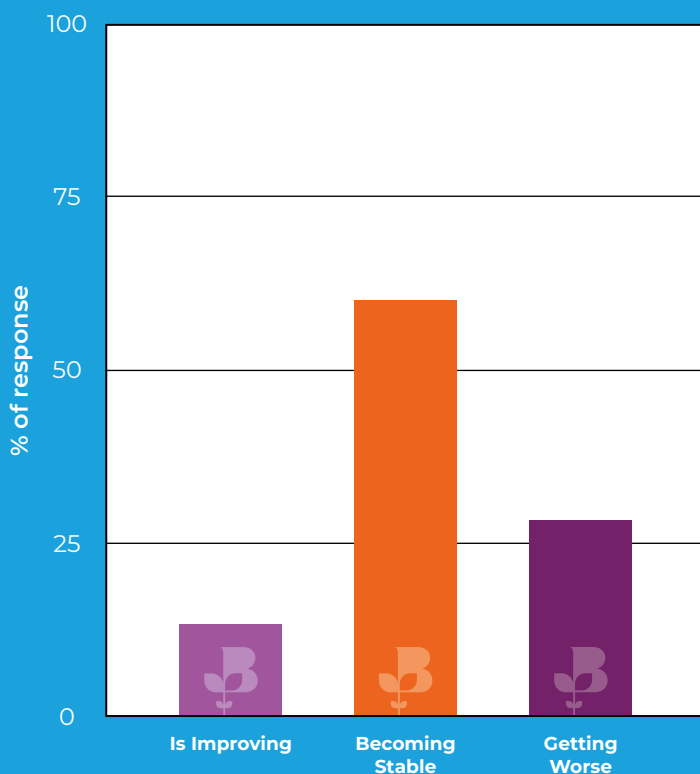
4

Are bad debts increasing?

Graph shows the % of those who said YES to each question



Graph shows the % of responses regarding the current Supply Chain situation



Supply Chain:

"Brexit has improved supply chain in the UK with new suppliers manufacturing some of our key products here now, shortening our lead times."

Service Sector

"The global wars are affecting import of goods and prices."

Retail/Wholesale Sector

your voice MATTERS!

The greater the voice, the greater the influence we can have to support you

- ✓ Confidential
- ✓ Highly Respected
- ✓ Informs Government

Contact us
TODAY!

Contact policy@shropshire-chamber.co.uk today to have your name added to the Chamber survey invite list

About the QES

The **Quarterly Economic Survey (QES)** is the flagship economic survey from the **British Chambers of Commerce**. **Shropshire Chamber** is responsible for the collection of data, for the survey, in both Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin. The data gives Shropshire Chamber vital economic indicators, facts which are used to lobby, inform Chamber strategy, as well as to support the local business community.

The national collated data, the largest and most highly respected survey of its type, is used to inform and lobby Government departments, assist the Bank of England, and inform a wide variety of other relevant bodies and economists. The survey happens four times per year.

Every Single Business Voice Matters!

The greater the voice, the greater the influence we can have to support you and your business. **All businesses from Shropshire / Telford & Wrekin are welcome**, Chamber member or not, sole trader to multinational. It is anonymous to ensure you can speak freely.

If you would like to discuss partnering with us for the next **Quarterly Economic Survey**, please contact **Ruth Ross** on:
r.ross@shropshire-chamber.co.uk



Paint partnership for latest office-to-flats conversion

Fairfax House, located in the Arena Quarter of inner-city Leeds is the latest building to undergo a complete renovation, converting a no-longer needed office space into residential accommodation. The 1960's, seven storey office block, will be transformed into 154 studio and one-bedroomed apartments, with an additional two-storey extension.

Recent fire safety and building regulations insist that relevant buildings above 11m require that only non combustible materials are used on their exterior.

It's no surprise therefore that KEIM Mineral Paints, which conform to these most stringent standards, were specified by Colbre Projects to be used as the exterior paint on Fairfax House.

Paul Milligan, Business Development Manager at KEIM UK helps to explain, 'We have been involved with various housing associations and councils as awareness of our fire resistant paint becomes more prominent.'

Our KEIM Soldalit exterior paint meets the A2-s1,d0 fire resistance standard, and this is just one of the properties which make our products ideal for residential buildings and wholly unique.

Not only are all of our products made from natural mineral ingredients, they are also breathable, non-toxic, low VOC, and most relevant for Fairfax House, fire resistant.'

It made sense for KEIM to work with a specialist architectural spray-painting company, ORS Limited, that had the knowledge and capabilities needed for such a tall and prestigious project.

Jo Thornicroft, Sales Director at ORS Limited explains: 'We have completed over 400 site rollouts for customers including Habitat, BMW, and Next providing retail shop fronts, cladding and curtain walling.'

'The Fairfax House project utilises our vast architectural spray-painting experience.'

'This application technique ensures



Fairfax House in Leeds has been undergoing a complete renovation



KEIM Soldalit exterior paint applied to the walls of Fairfax House

that the KEIM Soldalit is applied evenly, and effectively. Imagine painting a seven-storey building!

This method is far more time efficient, and therefore better for the building, and the client, to reduce application time and minimise disturbance."

The project which started in April 2023, is due for completion at the end of this

year and uses the combined skills of Leeds based buy to let property company YPP, and Brewster Bye Architects.

KEIM Mineral Paints Limited – <https://www.keim.com/en-gb/>

Soldalit product information - <https://www.keim.com/en-gb/products/exterior-paints/soldalit/>

ORS Limited - <https://orservices.co.uk/>





John Merry from Lanyon Bowdler says: "Some staff events with high levels of drunkenness that I am aware of have had a cash bar – which encouraged many employees to drink more before their arrival."

Please party with care over the festive period

Employees wielding axes, topping Christmas trees and fist-fights – office party season is well and truly under way.

Experts at Shropshire law firm Lanyon Bowdler say employers and their staff should be aware of the legal ramifications of trouble at the office Christmas party.

John Merry, head of employment law at Lanyon Bowdler, said he had dealt with the aftermath of a range of serious and bizarre incidents at festive social events.

He said: "Over the years we have dealt with cases involving punch ups, the scaling and bringing down of a large Christmas

tree, the trashing of hotel rooms and even an axe-wielding employee – so there is plenty of reason for employers to beware!

"It stands to reason that the more alcohol is consumed, the more chance there will be that standards of behaviour will slip.

"For this reason, employers might be wary of offering a free bar – but not doing so when one has been provided before can be damaging to staff relations, and the alternatives can have their own dangers.

"Some staff events with high levels of drunkenness that I am aware of have had a cash bar – which encouraged many employees to drink more before their arrival.

"Similarly, a free bar for a limited time

can encourage binge drinking. In contrast, a free bar, excluding shots for example, can actually result in more measured consumption.

"We would advise employers to remind staff in advance of a Christmas party that they want everybody to have a good time – and as part of that, alcohol consumption will not be accepted as an excuse for misconduct.

"The key point is that a staff party, although usually outside working hours and away from the employer's premises, will still be part of the 'work environment', which means the employer will be at risk of liability for employees' actions."

For more advice, contact John by calling 01952 21010 or visit www.lblaw.co.uk

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McPILLIPS

From an apprentice to assistant site manager

A Shropshire-based former construction apprentice has been awarded a full-time position as Assistant Site Manager with leading property developer, Morris Property.

Nathan Jones, 22, was delighted to accept the permanent role with the Morris Property team after completing his three-year Level 4 Construction Site Supervisor apprenticeship with the company and Shrewsbury Colleges Group.

When asked about the promotion, Nathan said “I was fortunate to have been given plenty of opportunity to demonstrate new skills and take responsibility as my apprenticeship progressed, so that by the end of the course, I feel ready to take on this full-time role.

“A particular highlight for me was being able to work with the team on the new Midlands Air Ambulance base in Cosford. It was a lot more responsibility than I expected, and a truly unique opportunity for which I am grateful to have been given.”

Throughout his apprenticeship, Nathan worked with a number of the Morris Property team to gather a well-rounded experience. “The whole team were fantastic in supporting me through my apprenticeship and were a great help and were always there to help me if I had a question or an issue.”

Steve Flavell, Construction Manager at Morris Property said “We have been impressed with Nathan’s progress over the past three years and were delighted to offer him a full-time role when his course completed. He has worked really hard and the promotion is both well-deserved and marks a welcome addition to the team.”

David Perry, HNC Construction Lecturer from Shrewsbury Colleges Group said “Nathan’s engagement throughout his apprenticeship shone through, which was reflected in his successful End Point Assessment. We are really proud to see him progress into a full-time role with Morris Property.”

Nathan is currently working at Shrewsbury School on renovations to the boys’ boarding residences Ingram’s Hall and Churchill’s Hall.



Throughout his apprenticeship, Nathan worked with a number of the Morris Property team to gather a well-rounded experience. It certainly worked, as the 22-year-old has risen to assistant site manager.

Bookings increase for events venue

Telford International Centre has revealed an impressive increase in the number of corporate bookings it has received since April 2023.

When comparing this financial year with the previous period, the Midlands-based venue's corporate event list has grown by 21%.

Telford International Centre is attributing this growth to the increased importance corporate clients place on in-person events to achieve business objectives, and the venue's commitment to creating an immersive experience for visitors.

The 21% increase in corporate bookings is the latest indicator that Telford International Centre is continuing to be a national event venue of choice.

Last month, the venue was shortlisted in the Business Events Venue of the Year category at the 2024 West Midlands Tourism Awards, following a record year of new events and historically high revenues.

Thanks to the flexible nature of its blank-canvas spaces and in-house event production services, corporate clients at Telford International Centre are discovering new ways to motivate and energise attendees. With capacity to host up to 4,000 visitors and having on-site overnight accommodation readily available, the venue allows organisations to bring teams together from across the country to a central location.

Rosalind Godfrey, Head of Sales at Telford International Centre, said, "There are four main reasons to run live events: education, motivation, to reward and to network. Bringing your workforce together for one or all of these reasons generates a significant return on investment, creating a more engaged and inspired team,



Telford International Centre's corporate event list has grown by 21%

with an increase in productivity. Our contemporary and modern venue in the centre of the UK is a perfect backdrop for many leading brands who return to us year on year, and these latest figures demonstrate we are attracting many more. It is a genuine privilege to work alongside our clients and help them achieve their goals."



Shropshire Chamber of Commerce

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From Shropshire's own **Elite Hampers**



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Scan the QR Code to Enter the competition

Prize draw closes on 05 January 2024.

The draw will be made on 12 January 2024.

* Terms and Conditions and eligibility apply.



Shropshire Chamber of Commerce and Enterprise Limited. CRN: 2542085. Registered in England and Wales . Trevithick House, Stafford Park, Telford, TF3 3BA. Terms and Conditions and eligibility apply. Prize will be delivered within 30 days after the prize draw end date. Contact enquiries@shropshire-chamber.co.uk for more details. www.shropshire-chamber.co.uk



Protect, care and invest to create a better borough



Perfect partners for our future plumbers

Shrewsbury based Pipekit is partnering with Shrewsbury Colleges Group, as the independent pipe systems and drainage distributor sets out to support the next generation of local plumbers.

Pipekit will be sponsoring the plumbing and gas department at Shrewsbury College on an ongoing basis and will be providing tools, materials and technical presentations.

The partnership commenced this September and Pipekit has provided the college with various products and resources from the leading manufacturers Pipekit represents, including Albion, Flamco, Geberit, George Fischer, McAlpine and various others.

One of the key components to the partnership will be monthly technical presentations, conducted alongside industry manufacturers, to offer 'real life' knowledge and experience to the course.

The first session took place this week and was run by McAlpine Plumbing Products. The training event showcased the McAlpine products to the students, highlighting the features and benefits, as well as demonstrating installation techniques and procedures.

This will be followed by a session on valve technology from Albion and then a gas and water applications focus by Geberit Mapress.

Commenting on the sponsorship, Martyn Rowlands, owner and MD of Pipekit said: "We are delighted to be actively involved in the future of our industry and being able to give something back to our community.

"We were keen to play a part in helping to ensure local students and apprentices are aware of the latest products and technology that is being used within the industry, and significantly deliver that message through leading manufacturers".

He continued: "It's also hugely rewarding to support a college that both myself and our Sales Director, Jamie McQueen, attended in our younger days".

The partnership between Pipekit and Shrewsbury Colleges Group also



Pipekit has provided Shrewsbury College with products and resources from the leading manufacturers Pipekit represents, including Albion, Flamco, Geberit, George Fischer, McAlpine and various others

has plans to introduce a Sponsored Student Award which will look to help drive standards and achievements for the enrolled students.

Stuart Raine, Curriculum Director for Construction Trades at Shrewsbury College added:

"This is a fantastic partnership that has already contributed to some outstanding development of practical skills and knowledge through the generosity of Pipekit.

"It is brilliant to combine the skills and knowledge of staff here, with up-to-date

industry tools, equipment, materials, and processes provided by Pipekit.

"Truly an outstanding local company who are collaborating with us here at SCG to support plumbing and heating engineers of the future".

Pipekit is a family owned, independent pipework and drainage distributor based in Shrewsbury. Founded by Martyn Rowlands, Pipekit offers leading brand pipe systems and drainage products to various sectors internationally, nationally, and locally. For further information visit: www.pipekit.co.uk

What a year of growth for construction firm

The year 2023 has proven to be a transformative and exciting one for R1 Construction. They have employed local talent, secured multiple Shropshire-based projects, and have also relocated the R1 head office to accommodate their growing team.

Growth:

R1 Construction has expanded significantly during this past year, marking vital milestones in the company's growth. The key areas have not only been in staff but also in the sectors in which they are operating.

At the start of 2023, R1 had 22 employees. As we speak, their numbers have more than doubled to 47! Interviews are being held every week to cope with the demand and they expect to hit the 50-employee mark by the end of the year. Commitment to local recruitment will help to accommodate rapid expansion and operational abilities moving forward.

Local Work:

Dean Suter, Business Development Manager at R1 Construction said "Our strategy for 2023 has very much focused on securing projects within the local area.

Since this pledge we have become a significant sponsor at Shrewsbury Town Football Club and joined the Shropshire Chamber of Commerce. We understand the significance of these institutions to the area and felt a commitment to both would cement our presence in the region."

Having worked mainly nationwide prior to 2023, R1 Construction currently have 5 significant, local contracts with more in the pipeline. Their flexibility is evident in the broad spectrum of sectors they are currently operating in: -

- Education (Woore Primary School)
- Care (River Meadows Care Home, Shawbury)
- NHS (HALO Leisure Centre, Highley)
- MOD (RAF Shawbury)
- Community (SYA All About Youth, Shrewsbury)

Social Value and a commitment to giving back to the community is at the forefront of their vision and this has been evident in their partnership with Age UK Shropshire Telford & Wrekin.

They have launched a Christmas Parcel



Shrewsbury Town shirt sponsorship – Dan Sherratt, Alex Swancott, Andrew Evans and Dean Suter



Demolition starts at SYA – Alex Swancott (R1), Hannah Cole (SYA), Ben Tomkinson (R1)

Appeal, providing gifts to local older people. These Christmas Parcels will go directly to older residents in the local area who, without Age UK would have no other support or social interaction in their lives.

Working in partnership with local schools, R1 have arranged for their pupils to design and decorate an individual Christmas Card to go into the parcel. Donations welcome! Search R1/Age UK for details.

Relocation:

This summer, R1 Construction made the decision to move into a larger office space in order to accommodate new staff and their

continual growth into next year. They had only moved into their previous office in 2022, however it became evident that the space wouldn't be able to accommodate their growth.

The move has been a great success and allows them to maintain their strategic growth plans for local projects, employment, and social re-investment.

You can find R1 Constructions' new office based in Harlescott Business Park, SY1 3FG. If you have a project that you would like to discuss with R1 please give one of their team members a call on 01743 252 700.





Dave Arthur and Ross Clarke at the TCS&D Awards with the trophy

Award gives warm feeling

A Telford-based thermal insulation specialist has won a national award for one of its trailblazing temperature control products.

Seymour Manufacturing International (SMI) was honoured at the UK's cold chain industry awards, held in Manchester.

SMI, based at Stafford Park, picked up the Materials Handling Equipment Provider of the Year trophy at the event, which is organised by industry publication TCS&D magazine.

The category was open to any manufacturer supplying the temperature-controlled storage and distribution industry.

Judges said they were looking for a range of products, or single product which 'demonstrates customers' needs and enhances the work environment of a site'.

And SMI's Tempro pallet covers, which are used by Co-op to protect bananas in transit between distribution centres and retailers, wowed the panel enough for them to give out the prestigious award.

Ross Clarke, who collected the award on SMI's behalf with

colleague Dave Arthur, said: "Thanks to everyone at TCS&D for this award, and for such a fantastic night of celebration with hundreds of peers and colleagues from the sector."

SMI is the inventor of Tempro, which has been cited as the most thermally efficient material of its kind.

The UK-manufactured liners reduce wastage of bananas by preventing them from ripening too quickly during Co-op deliveries.

SMI managing director Jill Seymour said: "Our Tempro thermal roll cage covers and liners offer enormous savings and benefits when transporting frozen, chilled or ambient products.

"Products such as the Co-op liners are tailor-made to specific customer requirements, and we have been working hard on refining our designs and trial tests for this project over many months.

"We are delighted to be working with the Co-op organisation on this exciting project, which we are sure will make life considerably easier for their delivery teams and provide outstanding thermal protection."

The SMI liners have been supplied to Co-op depots in Andover, Avonmouth, Birtley, Cardinal, Carrickfergus in Northern Ireland, Castlewood, Dalcross, Lea Green, Newhouse, Plymouth, Thurrock, and Wellingborough.



The award-winning SMI pallet covers, produced for the Co-op

Help available for the menopausal

Information about the menopause seems to be everywhere at the moment, but why is this important?.

Shirley Lane from Balancing Butterflies said "It's important to me as I recently celebrated the third anniversary of my business Balancing Butterflies. I help women who are struggling with menopausal symptoms particularly with some of psychological or mental health issues which crop up around this time. The symptoms I help with are things such as anxiety, stress, overwhelm and confidence, to name just a few. It was opportune that I set my business up in an October, as this is a month more recently recognised in the media as Menopause Awareness month."

However, Shirley never intended to be a coach! During the first lock down she wanted to come out of the time with something useful, so started to train as an NLP Practitioner and then a hypnotherapist. Then quickly realised:

1. She was going through the menopause
2. She knew nothing about the menopause
3. It had thrown up a lot of unresolved issues
4. That NLP and hypnotherapy quickly and easily helped with many of these issues

Whilst there is some support out there to help women with the physical symptoms of the menopause, there seemed to be very little support out there for helping with the psychological ones, and Shirley wanted to help other women so that they didn't have to struggle the way she did.

Businesses need to be aware about the menopause as women of a menopausal age are the fastest growing demographic in the workplace. As employers now often struggle to recruit good staff, it makes sense to look after the experienced staff that they have. With up to 85% of women experiencing some kind of menopausal symptoms and an estimated 10% of women leaving the workplace at this time, it is prudent for employers to see how they can assist their female employees. Whilst it's not necessary by law to have a menopause policy, it's increasingly recognised as good practice to have one.



Shirley Lane from Balancing Butterflies

More recently, and following on from conversations had with a number of women, Shirley also set up Manopause, which helps men going through a similar phase called the Andropause (or male menopause). Interestingly men can experience many similar symptoms to women.

Shirley said "In addition to coaching I also go into businesses and do presentations to raise menopause awareness, and help them implement menopause policies. This year I have presented to a range of diverse groups

including a men's prison and a law society. I also organise menopause retreat days, sometimes in collaboration with other coaches."

If you would like to find out more about how Balancing Butterflies can help your business, your employees, or maybe you as an individual then get in touch for a free call via:

<https://balancingbutterflies.com/get-in-touch/>

- **Balancing Butterflies is offering all services at a 15% discount to Shropshire Chamber members.**

"This year I have presented to a range of diverse groups including a men's prison and a law society. I also organise menopause retreat days, sometimes in collaboration with other coaches."



New apprentice settling in at Telford HR company



Chelsea Owen has joined Human Results as an apprentice. She is pictured here with managing director Alasdair Hobbs.

An HR and employment law specialist in Shropshire is continuing its commitment to training the next generation by appointing a new apprentice.

Chelsea Owen, 18, has joined Human Results, based in Telford, after completing her A-Levels at Shrewsbury Colleges Group and says she is enjoying her experience so far.

"I am really pleased to have joined Human Results and everyone has made me feel so welcome," she said.

"I have been learning the basics of HR and employment law, sending out letters to clients, studying old case files and just immersing myself in everything and anything within the office.

"I find it a really interesting subject and I am looking forward to continuing my apprenticeship and building up my experience in the field of employment law."

Alasdair Hobbs, managing director of Human Results, said Chelsea had settled into the team very well.

"We have a long history of taking on apprentices, and

indeed our office manager Danielle is a former apprentice, so we are fully committed to giving our apprentices a clear career path.

"I have always advised business owners that an apprentice is a long-term commitment and the employer needs to offer support and guidance to help them flourish.

"Chelsea is already proving to be a great addition to the team and we hope she will continue to enjoy her time at Human Results which will be the start of a long and successful career."

"Chelsea is already proving to be a great addition to the team and we hope she will continue to enjoy her time at Human Results which will be the start of a long and successful career."



Protect, care and invest
to create a better borough



Exclusive hire venue has joined leading independent group

Venues of Excellence (VOE), the UK's leading consortium for independent venues has just welcomed its first exclusive hire venue; Weston Park into membership.

The consortium which has 48 independent venues in its portfolio prides itself on the diversity of its membership, representing many of the leading UK venues for conferences, meetings, and events. With a commitment to quality and excellence, the consortium has grown from strength to strength over the past few months as independent venues look to become part of a sales and marketing consortium to align their brand with.

Built in 1671, the beauty and tranquillity of the House and Park at Weston is the result of centuries of creativity, collecting and patronage of artists and craftsman, by generations of one family, the Bridgemans, Earls of Bradford.

These superb collections of fine art and antiques make the House and ideal place for any business or private event. Set in 1,000 acres of Capability Brown parkland delegates can take the opportunity to embrace the outdoors and the venue regularly plays host to activity days, team building, product launches, festivals and events celebrating success.

Gifted to the nation in 1986, Weston Park is owned and maintained by the Weston Park Foundation an independent charity which is responsible for the on-going preservation of the estate.

Mandy Jennings, CEO of Venues of Excellence, welcomed Weston Park to the VOE family saying: "From my first moment at Weston Park, I was struck not only by its luxury and stunning surroundings but by the pride all of the team had showing me their venue. As a private hire venue, they offer the perfect combination of tranquillity and privacy whether you are looking for a company retreat, confidential meeting, high level board meeting, product launch or entertaining clients. Their service is truly 5-star and means clients will have the total dedication of the team to welcome their



Weston Park, situated on the border between Shropshire and Staffordshire

guests, fine tune their requirements and ensure their Head Chef and catering team provide highest quality food and beverages. Whilst set in acres of beautiful countryside the location of the venue is really central and is very close to major motorways and rail network plus Birmingham International airport is less than an hour from the venue. We are delighted to welcome CEO, Colin Sweeney and his team to our VOE family and know our valued customers and agency partners will love this amazing venue."

Silvia Parnaby, Head of Sales on joining the consortium commented: "We are delighted to be part of the Venues of Excellence family. Venues of Excellence delivers high levels of service and expertise when sourcing the best venues for business

events. Being part of this dynamic venue finding service firmly positions Weston Park as a unique and independent venue with an established reputation for delivering exceptional experiences. I am very much looking forward to working with Mandy and her team."

The VOE consortium has seen a significant growth in membership over the past year, combined with record levels of enquiries through their free venue finding service, positioning it strongly to independent venues. As conference and event planners continue to gain momentum in hosting live events, the venues in the consortium provide a great choice of diverse, unique and excellent spaces with an unparalleled commitment to customer service.

Built in 1671, the beauty and tranquillity of the House and Park at Weston is the result of centuries of creativity, collecting and patronage of artists and craftsman, by generations of one family, the Bridgemans, Earls of Bradford. These superb collections of fine art and antiques make the House and ideal place for any business or private event.





From left BCRS colleagues Caroline Dunn, James Russell, Tony Wood, Karen Morgen and Neil Johnston

Embarking on the journey to net zero

Black Country-based business lender BCRS Business Loans has embarked on a new carbon reduction project that will see it offset all its business carbon emissions.

BCRS has been working with the University of Wolverhampton to assess and improve its environmental footprint.

Across all areas, including travel, commuting and energy usage, the assessment found that BCRS was emitting 29.6 tonnes of carbon dioxide per year.

In response, BCRS has begun a carbon reduction project and engaged with environmental organisation Ecologi to offset 36 tonnes of carbon dioxide per year through carbon avoidance. This amounts to the lender's annual emissions plus extra to account for margins of error in the calculations.

BCRS Business Loans chief executive Stephen Deakin said: "We know that for many of our customers the road to net zero is important, both because of potential regulatory pressures but also because it is the right thing to do to look after our planet.

"We agree, and it's our goal to help our customers on this journey as much as possible. However, we recognise that we can't begin to help customers until we get a handle on our own emissions.

"The road to net zero is something that we are passionate about at BCRS, and I am pleased to report that we have made some fantastic progress in this area."

So far this year, via Ecologi, BCRS has funded the planting of 90 trees and four climate projects around the world that have avoided six tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent. These include a wind power project in Mexico, a project turning methane gas into electricity in Brazil, a project distributing cleaner cookstoves in Kenya and a project generating wind power in the United States.

In the next 12 months, BCRS will be exploring the ways in which it can support its customers with their own journey to net zero. The lender has recently added questions to its application form to measure any activity that customers are already undertaking to reduce their carbon emissions, to provide an insight into how the organisation could focus its support in the future.

The team worked with the University of Wolverhampton after enlisting the help of the Environmental Technologies

and Resource Efficiency Support Scheme (EnTRESS), a project which had been supported by the European Regional Development Fund.

Dr Paul Hampton, Head of the School of Architecture and Built Environment at the university, said: "Part of our role in the region's economy is to support small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) on the adoption of environmental technologies and resource efficiency processes. Working with BCRS has enabled us to help them identify their impact and implement practical ways of reducing their impact upon the planet."

Regional alternative lender BCRS Business Loans specialises in funding for businesses that are struggling to access finance from traditional lenders.

As a community development financial institution (CDFI), BCRS offers loans between £10,000 and £150,000 to businesses making a positive contribution to the social, environmental or economic wellbeing of the West Midlands to support their growth and recovery plans.

BCRS's progress with tree planting and climate projects can be followed at ecologi.com/bcrsbusinessloans.

Visit www.bcrs.org.uk to discover more about their work



Winning garden handed over to school children by property team

A green fingered team from Morris Property has helped a Bridgnorth Primary School turn their winning garden competition entry from design to reality.

It comes after pupils from the Eco Club at St Mary's Bluecoat C of E Primary showed off their garden design skills by winning first place in the public vote in Shrewsbury Food Festival's annual school garden competition, which was sponsored by Morris Property.

More than 20 schools from across Shropshire entered the competition with their creative designs for a new school garden. The three shortlisted entries were showcased at Shrewsbury Food Festival in the Quarry and online. Over the weekend, 6,595 votes were received, with St Mary's being the clear winner with 3,064 votes.

The winning design featured a blue path to represent a river leading to a pond, peaceful seating areas, recycled tyres filled with wildflowers and lavender to attract insects and new storage sheds for sports equipment.

In addition to supplying two new sheds, fencing, plants and artwork to add year-round colour to the scheme, the team from Morris Property spent time cutting back hedges, carving out lost pathways, building sheds and installing the features designed by the school's Eco Club.

Morris Property Contracts Manager, Ian Carswell said: "The entry from St Mary's was very well thought through and we were delighted to hand over the finished garden over to the Eco Club this week. We were surprised that so many schools took part in the competition and demonstrated so much commitment to their green spaces."

Beth Heath from Shropshire Festivals said: "Thank you to Morris Property for launching the school garden competition in association with Shrewsbury Food Festival. Providing engaging and educational activities for kids at our festival is really important to our ethos, so the garden competition was a wonderful addition. It's fantastic that a school in our community will get to enjoy and learn from their new garden for years to come."

Morris Property is a leading construction and development company with a 100-year heritage of creating new-build, residential and commercial developments and sensitively converting, restoring and refurbishing landmark buildings.



Morris Property has helped St Mary's Bluecoat C of E Primary turn their winning garden competition entry from design to reality

Uniform exchange aims to help families

A Shrewsbury insurance broker has launched a school uniform exchange to support families with rising costs - especially with Christmas around the corner.

The team at Howden Insurance in High Street is inviting parents and children to the branch to collect the school uniform supplies they need, as well as donate any items they no longer have use for, for free.

Some of the high-quality items available to exchange include school jumpers, shirts, skirts, and trousers, as well as PE kits in a wide range of sizes.

Chris Beane, Branch Manager at Howden Shrewsbury, said: "With the cost-of-living crisis continuing to bite, affecting energy bills, housing costs and food prices, many families are facing tougher financial pressures - especially at Christmas.

"School uniforms are a significant expense each year, but prices have risen considerably. And, when you couple this with kids' growth spurts, moving into a new year or a new school, and the potential for lost property, the cost can quickly add up.

"We're always looking for ways to support our local community, and the school uniform exchange made perfect sense in the current circumstances. It's an initiative that's free to use, hopefully reducing costs for families, as well as clothing waste.

"We hope it alleviates some anxiety for parents and provides a useful resource for everyone in Shrewsbury."

Research shows that in 2023, the



Anyone in Shropshire can participate in the scheme

estimated cost of a full school uniform can set parents back a staggering £230 – up 21% from just five years ago. What's more, two out of five parents are buying a full uniform each school year.

In some cases, emblazoned uniforms are a requirement, but many parents also say they feel a social pressure to opt for these versions, even though they're pricier.

Anyone in Shropshire is welcome to participate in Howden Insurance's school uniform exchange, whether to donate or pick-up items whenever they are needed.

To take part in the school uniform exchange at Howden Insurance, which was formerly known as A-Plan, visit the branch between 8.30am and 5pm on weekdays, or between 9am-12pm on Saturday, or contact 01743 455900 to find out more.



Sponsorship provides businesses with the opportunity to have its branding seen by more than 10,000 annual visitors to the West Mid Showground

Organisers of Shropshire County Show - one of the area's biggest annual attractions - have issued an appeal for sponsors to come forward and support next year's event.

Chamber member The Shropshire & West Midlands Agricultural Society has a range of sponsorship options available for the 2024 show next May ranging from £250 to £2,000.

Sponsorship provides businesses with the opportunity to have its branding seen by more than 10,000 annual visitors to the West Mid Showground in Shrewsbury and in excess of 100,000 on the show's social media platforms.

The Shropshire County Show was launched in the late 19th century and today caters for a wider audience than ever before. Planning for next year's event is already well underway and will see the return of the hugely popular Countryside Arena - broadening the show's appeal even more.

Sponsorship packages are available for the main arena, countryside arena and horse and livestock rings, the youth zone, bandstand and dog show.

Sponsors are also needed for the various competitive classes that are held during the course of the day, and there are targeted advertising opportunities on offer in the show programme and livestock schedules.

Benefits for main area sponsors and area sponsors include a complementary exhibition stand and space, several free entry badges, branding on the showground

Calling for sponsors to get behind 2024 county show



There are more than 13,500 followers on social media

and show website and inclusion in a press release and blog.

Ian Bebbington, the society's chief executive, said: "Our sponsorship packages offer a unique opportunity to put your brand in front of visitors on show day, along with receiving a wealth of associated coverage on social media and in the local and regional press.

"Your business will be highlighted to thousands of visitors to the showground and we currently have more than 13,500 followers on social media, with that number growing every day.

"The show was another major success in May and continues to be one of the biggest

and eagerly anticipated events on the local calendar. Main area sponsors will have their banners in the main ring from April to November, showcasing their business to the thousands of campers and event visitors we have on site throughout the year.

"Full details of what each level of sponsorship involves along with the costs and benefits can be obtained by contacting our team at the showground on 01743 289831 or by emailing admin@westmidshowground.com."

The Countryside Arena's return in 2024 will feature the Welsh Axemen, Shropshire Falconry and the Quack Pack Sheepdog and Duck display, while main ring entertainment will include Ben Atkinson and his Action Horses and The Paul Hannam Quad Bike Stunt Show.

Phil Thorneycroft, Shropshire County Show chair for 2024, said: "The 2023 show was a huge success and we want to continue that into 2024 and bring back some of the age-old elements of our historic event as we head towards marking 150 years in 2025.

"The show relies on its amazing supporters and sponsors to be able to put on such a fantastic day out for all our visitors and to meet the needs of the agricultural community on the day. We are so grateful to all of those who return year on year to support us and are hoping to welcome some new sponsors as we head towards May."





Shropshire Food Festival – just one of many great events to look forward to in 2024

Calendar packed with festival fun

Shropshire Festivals' final major event of 2023 was Shropshire Oktoberfest, held on October 6th and 7th under huge marquees stretching across Shrewsbury's Quarry. They welcomed thousands of people to their beer tents, with Saturday's event selling out.

The award-winning events team hosted several corporate parties for local businesses within the festival.

Pave Aways celebrated their 50th birthday in style, Aaron & Partners enjoyed making pizzas and cocktails with invited

guests, and Base Architects were treated to a beer tasting workshop from award-winning beer writer, Laura Hadland, one of the top three drinks' writers in the UK.

This followed a bumper corporate offering at the Shrewsbury Food Festival in June, where over 1,000 corporate guests were entertained at VIP parties within the festival in designated tipis and tents, over just one day.

Creative Director, Beth Heath, said their 2024 calendar of events is already filling up with corporate parties, consultancy projects, award nights, and local festivals.

"If you have any big business milestones coming up or if you're looking for a way to entertain your clients and staff, then why not consider a corporate event from Shropshire Festivals?"

"We can provide a VIP party within one of our festivals – Shrewsbury Food Festival, Shropshire Oktoberfest, or Shropshire Petal Fields, or we can put together a party,

conference, or festival for your business, taking away the stress of party planning. From staff parties to award nights, and hospitality at sporting events to graduation celebrations, we can cover just about any kind of event management project, bringing the Shropshire Festivals magic along for the ride!"

Shropshire Business Festival Back in 2024

Shropshire Festivals' 2024 events include the return of Shropshire Business Festival at Wrekin College on April 11th.

The free event will feature expert speakers, workshops, seminars, networking, and the region's best businesses sharing their expertise.

Register your interest online at www.shropshirebusinessfestival.co.uk



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Paving the way to 50 years of success

A hugely-successful building company is celebrating 50 golden years of success. Award-winning **Pave Aways**, which is based in Knockin in Shropshire and has offices in Newtown and Wrexham, was incorporated on October 1, 1973.

The company started life as a groundworks contractor before moving into building maintenance and construction and becoming one of the region's most successful privately-owned construction firms.

Managing director Steven Owen said: "Fifty years is a fabulous achievement and everyone at Pave Aways is rightly proud of this landmark anniversary.

"Pave Aways has delivered high quality and excellent customer service for five decades and our superb reputation is key to our success. As a company, we make sure we invest in our own people and in the communities in which we work, as well as making a huge contribution to the local economy through our supply lines and contractors.

"I'm looking forward to continuing with the growth we have enjoyed so far and to positioning Pave Aways for another 50 years of success."

For the first 24 years, Pave Aways was based at Park Hall in Oswestry, before the business moved to Knockin in 1997.

From its early beginnings, founded and led by Cliff Evans, the firm started to win building maintenance contracts at military sites and other establishments and building construction became a far bigger part of the business.

In 2011, Steven Owen led a management buyout to build on the work of Peter Jackson and Roy Evans, which provided a renewed vigour for growth.



The team from Pave Aways celebrating the golden anniversary

Victoria Lawson and Jamie Evans – who had both been with Pave Aways for more than ten years – became directors in 2015 and 2016 respectively and were joined by Charlotte Davies in 2022.

Steven added: "The name Pave Aways no longer really reflects what we do – we've come a long way from driveways and access roads! But I'm proud that the Pave Aways name is firmly tied to our reputation as a good building company with an experienced management team, a proven workforce and sound business procedure.

"While today's Pave Aways projects are more likely to be multi-million pound school buildings with the latest eco-friendly and sustainable technologies, our passion for excellence and giving back to the community have never changed."

Pave Aways now has around 80 employees and has won numerous awards, including being named SME of the Year at the Constructing Excellence Midlands awards this year.

Its recent high-profile developments in Shropshire include the conversion of the former keep at Copthorne Barracks into luxury apartments, a new boarding house for girls at Shrewsbury School and new school buildings or extensions at four further schools.

It's WIN win as first year draws to a close

A Shropshire mortgage broker committed to changing the perception of the industry is celebrating a successful first year in business.

David Winchurch launched Newport-based WIN Financial in 2022 following two decades working for some of the country's leading mortgage providers. Over the past 12 months, David and his team have seen significant growth and a wealth of five-star reviews.

"Going from being part of the corporate world for so many years to setting up on my own was a huge step, but one I'm so glad I took. I'd become so disillusioned with the ethos of the big banks which sees customers treated as numbers rather than individuals - and I was determined to flip this on its head," David said.

"As a team, we're passionate about bringing back exceptional customer service and in ensuring that our clients are absolutely at the heart of everything we do. Which is why we're proud to do things differently. We enable our clients to book appointments outside of traditional working hours, we provide them with our personal mobile numbers so they don't have to fight their way through a complicated switchboard, and we focus on developing long-term relationships.

"All of this means that clients feel fully supported with their mortgage needs and that they receive the best possible service at all times. The fact that we've grown from no clients to over 200 in such a short space of time and have received such fantastic feedback is absolutely testament to this."

WIN Financial offers a range of mortgage services including first-time buyer mortgages, re-mortgages, and buy-to-lets as well as both personal and business protection.

David continued: "I'd like to offer my sincerest thank you to Sue Smith, our Operations Manager, as well as to my business partner



Sue Smith, Steve Timmis, David Winchurch, and newest team member Sanjoe Kalluvellil

Steve Timmis, who have been part of this journey from day one and who I couldn't have done this without. I also owe huge gratitude to my wife Jackie who encouraged me to launch the business in the first place, and who has been my biggest supporter ever since. I'm very much looking forward to expanding the WIN Financial team over the next 12 months and beyond, and in continuing to provide the highest quality service to those across the region."

To find out how WIN Financial could help you, give their team a call on 0330 223 4441 for a non-obligatory chat or to book in for your free mortgage review.





Wellmeadow managing director, Dave Parry with creative director, Andy Hodnett

Creative director has joined 'more than a consulting firm'

Wellmeadow Consulting, centrally located in Shrewsbury, is thrilled to announce the appointment of Andy Hodnett as their new Creative Director.

With nearly two decades of experience in the creative industry, Andy's extensive background includes an impressive 18-year tenure at Yarrington. During his career, Andy has successfully contributed to a variety of projects for renowned businesses such as Beaver Bridges, iconsys, Mid Wales Leisure, Oswestry School, and Rybrook Automotive.

Wellmeadow Consulting was founded in 2010 by Dave Parry and Richard Buckle. The company provides support for privately owned companies looking to grow, with its combination of digital marketing support based on HubSpot and board-level strategic support.

In his new role as Creative Director, Andy will collaborate closely with the company's owners to develop strategic marketing campaigns, oversee all creative endeavours, and lead a team of talented content creators.

Commenting on his new position, Andy Hodnett stated, "I am eagerly anticipating the opportunity to work with the exceptional team at Wellmeadow and to embrace this new challenge. Having had the privilege of collaborating with both national and local clients throughout

my career, I am committed to leveraging my extensive experience in the creative industry to drive success in this role.

"Wellmeadow Consulting is more than just a business consulting firm. They provide a data-driven, creative approach that empowers small business owners to distinguish themselves in the market, attract new customers, and generate leads."

Managing Director at Wellmeadow, Dave Parry added: "Andy's arrival comes at an exciting time for the company. Over several years we have been steadily building an excellent creative team. With the creation of the post of Creative Director we are now ready to push forward with the next phase of our growth."

For more information about Wellmeadow and their innovative services, please visit www.wellmeadow.co.uk



Latest awards win for a building firm



Hafan Yr Afon in Newtown was named best public or community building in the LABC Building Excellence Wales awards

L **Leading regional construction company**
Pave Aways is celebrating after scooping a top award for its work.

The Knockin-based company – which also has offices in Newtown and Wrexham – has won the award for best public or community building in the prestigious LABC Building Excellence Wales awards for Hafan Yr Afon at Newtown.

The project had already claimed the Building Project of the Year title at the Constructing Excellence Wales Awards earlier in the year.

Hafan Yr Afon is a two-storey low-energy community venue run by Open Newtown that was built on the site of the former Radio Hafren station.

It includes meeting rooms, a café, tourist information and a base for outdoor activities.

Pave Aways managing director Steven Owen said he was thrilled by the latest success.

“To be named the best public or community building in Wales by the LABC so soon after winning the Constructing Excellence title is a fantastic achievement.

“It is a wonderful reflection on the whole team who worked on the project and their commitment to delivering a truly outstanding building which is proving such a valuable community resource for Newtown and the wider area.”

Pave Aways now goes forward to the national LABC awards being held at the Grosvenor Hotel in London on January 19 2024.

The LABC Awards are the largest business to business awards in the building control sector.

They celebrate buildings and design teams that have overcome the challenges of complex technical and construction issues.

It also puts the spotlight on innovative and creative building work.

Hafan Yr Afon is a two-storey low-energy community venue run by Open Newtown that was built on the site of the former Radio Hafren station. It includes meeting rooms, a café, tourist information and a base for outdoor activities. Pave Aways managing director Steven Owen said he was thrilled by the latest success.



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Wrekin is building 27 energy efficient homes in Prees

Housing group generates nearly £57m in social value

The Wrekin Housing Group generated £56.7m of social value during 2022/23, supporting our customers, communities and the local economy directly during the cost-of-living crisis.

The significant contribution is outlined in the organisation's second Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) report and marks an increase of almost £1m compared to the previous year.

During the 12-month period, Wrekin reinforced its commitment to reducing its carbon footprint and achieving significant energy savings for residents.

Wrekin, who provide affordable homes for over 28,000 people across Telford & Wrekin, Shropshire and Staffordshire, invested over £86m to build new energy

efficient homes and reducing the carbon footprint of existing homes by installing greener energy systems.

Wrekin Revivie, the group's social enterprise that recycles and upcycles furniture and electrical goods, made a huge contribution by diverting over 253 tonnes of waste from landfill.

The group's Money Matters Team successfully secured £4.4m in extra income for tenants – supporting customers with their finances – including debt, energy and benefit advice, budgeting help, access to essential furniture and support via grants.

Other highlights of the report show how the organisation helped 168 people into employment, training and volunteering – delivering a social value return of £6.55 for every £1 spent.

Wrekin also supported local community and voluntary activity via its Partnership and Community Fund, distributing almost £55,000 to 40 groups and projects.

Wrekin tenant Kevin Morgan was also

appointed as a board member – ensuring customers' voices are heard at the highest level of the organisation.

Wayne Gethings, Chief Executive of The Wrekin Housing Group, said:

"This year's report highlights the positive impact we are having in our neighbourhoods and how we continue to ensure that our customers are at the heart of everything we do.

"We want to make a long-lasting impact in the communities we serve, so it's important the work we do contributes positively.

"It's more important than ever that we continue to have a positive impact on our customers and communities in light of the threats posed by climate change and the hardship brought by the cost-of-living crisis. Our ESG Report highlights the actions we're taking to drive change and we'll use it as a benchmark to push further improvements in our mission to make a difference to people's lives."



Awards night celebrates the achievements of star students



Brian Evans, managing partner of Lanyon Bowdler, is delighted to see nine practice areas and 13 individual lawyers recommended in the national guide

A Shropshire law firm has maintained its excellent rankings in a prestigious national guide, with 13 lawyers highlighted as recommended practitioners.

Lanyon Bowdler, which has offices across Shropshire, Herefordshire and North Wales, has nine practice areas recommended in the 2024 Chambers UK legal guide, six of which are ranked in the top two bands.

The Chambers UK guide ranks law firms based on independent research and interviews with clients, and has been helping people find the best lawyers and firms in the country for more than 30 years.

Lanyon Bowdler is celebrating four lawyers ranked in Band 1, four in Band 2, three in Band 3 and two in Band 4, while the firm has three Band 1 practice area rankings, three in Band 2, one in Band 3 and two in Band 4.

Brian Evans, managing partner of

Lanyon Bowdler, said: "Chambers UK is a highly respected guide and law firms are always very keen to be included because it is shaped by comments from clients themselves, along with independent research and interviews with other professionals.

"We are therefore delighted to see nine practice areas and 13 individual lawyers recommended in the guide. It is a great achievement for every lawyer included, but we are particularly pleased to see Will Morse gaining a new Band 4 recommendation in the West Midlands Employment section and Debbie Humphries being included in Band 2 of the guide's Midlands Personal Injury category.

"It is also great to see the firm's new listing at Band 3 in the West Midlands Corporate (mergers and acquisitions) section, along with Clinical Negligence, Personal Injury and Family departments maintaining their Band 1 recommendations.

"Congratulations to all those who have been included - our significant presence in the guide re-enforces our position as one of the leading law firms in the region."

The full list of recommended lawyers is:

Edward Nutting, Agricultural & Rural Affairs (Wales); Beth Heath, Emma Broomfield and Lucy Small, Clinical Negligence (Midlands); Grainne Walters, Corporate M&A (West Midlands); John Merry and Will Morse, Employment (West Midlands); Philippa Pearson, Family/Matrimonial (Hereford & Worcester and Surrounds); Lisa Grimmitt and Sue Hodgson, Family/Matrimonial (Shrewsbury & Surrounds); Andrew Pegg, Litigation (West Midlands); Dawn Humphries and Debbie Humphries, Personal Injury (Midlands).

The firm is recommended in the following practice areas:

Family/Matrimonial (Hereford & Worcester and Surrounds); Family/Matrimonial (Shrewsbury and Surrounds); Agricultural & Rural Affairs, Clinical Negligence and Personal Injury (Midlands); Agricultural & Rural Affairs (Wales); Litigation, Employment and Corporate M&A (West Midlands).



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Dylan Haynes at the Old Mill Antiques Centre in Bridgnorth

Priceless work experience on Dylan's antiques roadshow

Business student Dylan Haynes is immersed in a world of jewellery and precious antiques as part of his Telford College work experience.

The 17-year-old, from Alveley, is in the second year of a business course at the college, which includes a work placement at the Old Mill Antiques Centre in Low Town, Bridgnorth.

"A lot of my family do things with jewellery and antiques and have been working with the Old Mill since it started, so they were happy to take me on for my work experience," he explained.

"My work experience is going very well, and I am really enjoying my second year of business studies at Telford College, getting along well with everyone."

Dylan, a former Oldbury Wells School student, won an 'outstanding achiever' award for the work he completed during his first year of college studies.

He said: "Career wise I plan to continue a path in antiques, jewellery and gemology after college. I want to progress onto gemology course in Birmingham to try to become a gemologist."

Gemology is the science of examining gemstones, using microscopes, computerised tools and other grading instruments, and is a pathway to careers such as appraisers, goldsmiths, jewellers, lapidaries, and scientists.

But Dylan's work experience at the Old Mill has brought him into contact with much more than just jewellery – he has also been working with suits of armour, carvings, teddy bears, and vintage items such as post and phone boxes.

One of the more unusual items he has been helping to promote is a rare 1970s surfboard from Cornwall, which has a price tag of £530.

Telford College business and CIPD lecturer Samantha Bailey said: "Dylan began his educational journey at Telford College last year.

"It is clear to see that he is blossoming and becoming more knowledgeable in the business world. It is great to see his confidence flourishing and ready to take on new challenges."



Dylan, a former Oldbury Wells School student, won an 'outstanding achiever' award for the work he completed during his first year of college studies





Tony Sherratt and Paul Jones, managing director at WPG, check out the new equipment

Digital press investment impresses team at WPG

WPG ramps up production in their digital print with a brand-new Konica Minolta AccurioPress C12000 digital press.

The installation of this cutting-edge digital press promises to take their digital printing to a whole new level and allow WPG to offer a more efficient, high-quality digital print service.

Paul Jones, WPG Joint MD says: "Not only are we amazed by the high quality print the new Konica press delivers, but also that it does so at an extremely fast speed, meaning we can take on more work and offer even quicker turnaround times for our customers."

"Another hugely beneficial feature is the long sheet capability. Landscape brochures are a popular choice for a lot of our customers and previously, we have had to print them on our litho machines, this along with the larger range of media options, will increase the range of jobs we can offer to our customers."

This new press also has an Intelligent Quality Care system which eliminates waste in the process and further improves WPG's ISO 9001 & 14001 accreditations.

This new investment follows recent upgrades to their litho and large format presses, and means they are fully equipped to deliver efficient, top-quality print to meet growing demand.

To find out more or to arrange a visit to WPG's premises, please get in touch – 01938 552260.

<https://wpg-group.com/new-accuriopress-c12000-digital-printer/>



Tony Sherratt at the controls – new investment in digital press at WPG Ltd



Leading the way in cyber security for county firms



The Cyber Awareness Expo was a valuable opportunity for Shropshire businesses to learn about the latest cyber threats and how to protect themselves

Start Tech, Shropshire's leading Managed IT Service Provider, has set a goal to improve cyber security for businesses in the region.

They have started off by hosting a Cyber Awareness Expo, taking place at the Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury. Local business owners and representatives attended the expo, where they learned about cyber risks and how to protect their businesses from attack.

Ian Groves, Managing Director of Start Tech, started the morning off with an interactive session, where the audience could anonymously respond to questions in the presentation on their current cyber security measures. Ian then led the audience through a reconnaissance exercise he had completed prior to the expo, where he demonstrated

how easy it is to get information on a business cyber security posture using tools available for free online.

Following Ian's session, Dave Williams from Henshalls Insurance discussed cyber insurance. He explained what cyber insurance is and how it can help businesses recover from a cyber attack. He also discussed the different types of cyber insurance policies available and how to choose the right policy for your business.

Next, Paul Crumpton from IASME Consortium discussed Cyber Essentials. Cyber Essentials is a government-backed scheme that helps businesses to protect themselves from common cyber threats. Paul explained the five key controls that businesses need to implement to achieve Cyber Essentials certification.

The expo concluded with a presentation by Josh Foye from Pax8. Josh discussed

Microsoft 365 modern workplace and security. He explained how Microsoft 365 can help businesses to improve their security posture and productivity. He also discussed the latest security features available in Microsoft 365.

The Cyber Awareness Expo was a valuable opportunity for Shropshire businesses to learn about the latest cyber threats and how to protect themselves.

The expo was a huge success, and they intend to host an even bigger version early in the new year.

Quote from a local business owner who attended:

"This is exactly what we need, trusted local experts who are willing to help educate us business owners of the risks we face. Thanks, for putting on such an amazing event, I'll definitely be coming to the next one"



Contractor for Bruderer's new Telford factory and showroom

Construction work on a new 48,000 ft manufacturing facility in Telford is due to start shortly after Bruderer UK announced the approved contractor for the project.

The world's leading manufacturer of high-speed presses, which has been based in the UK for 55 years, has appointed local specialist McPhillips to lead on the build of its bespoke factory and showroom.

Creation of a dedicated competence centre – capable of servicing new and pre-owned machines as well as showcasing new models and turnkey solutions - will take eleven months to complete and will provide a 'gateway' building for the new Hortonwood West scheme.

The development is a real Shropshire affair, with Telford-based Cyril Orchard Group project managing and Design & Planning Associates in Oswestry providing the architectural drawings.

"We are really pleased to be working with three local experts in their respective fields, all of whom are all passionate about creating a world class new home for Bruderer in Telford," commented Adrian Haller, Managing Director of Bruderer UK.

"McPhillips is a proven contractor and we're looking forward to seeing groundworks start shortly, with the frame due to be up by early Spring and then fit out set to take place from June."

Bruderer UK has seen demand for its high-speed presses and full turnkey tooling/production solutions rise to record levels and this has driven the plan to relocate from Luton to a purpose-built factory and showroom in Shropshire.

The move will create four new jobs and the launch of a new apprenticeship programme to help futureproof the workforce and industry talent of the future.

Bruderer CEO Reto Bruderer and Board Member Andreas Fischer flew in from Switzerland to join UK MD Adrian Haller for the 'groundbreaking' ceremony. Paul Inions, Managing Director of McPhillips, was also at the event and added his support:

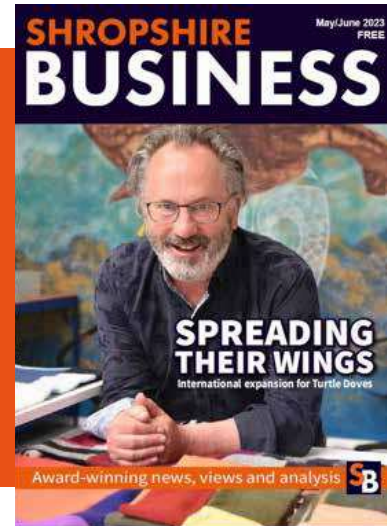
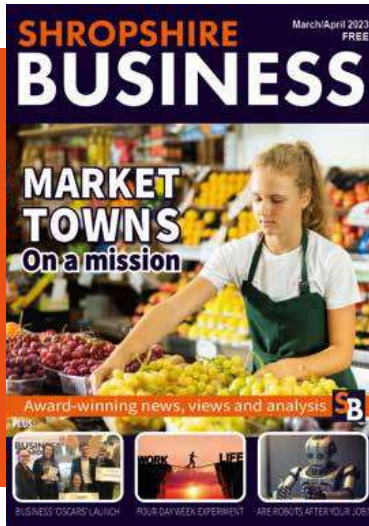
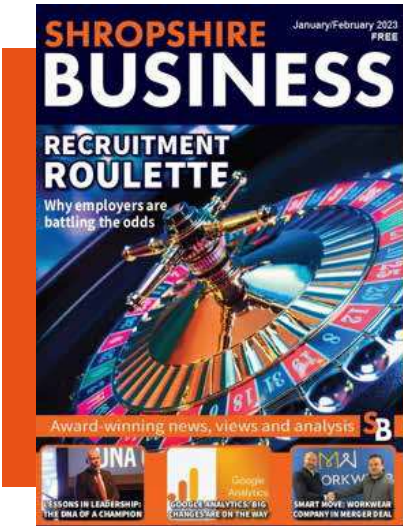
"This is a major win for our business and brings yet another global manufacturer to Telford. Importantly, we are working with a client who wants to make a statement with the building, creating a facility and showroom that is pleasing on the eye, energy efficient and a fantastic place to work for its staff. We're going to make that dream come true."



The Family Fundraising Festival raised more than £10,000 for two local charities



How will your story play out this year?



What does 2024 have in store for the Shropshire business community, and are we feeling more optimistic than we were this time last year?

Those are some of the questions being tackled by Shropshire Business magazine in its next edition.

The team have been canvassing the views of a range of employers to gauge confidence levels for the coming year.

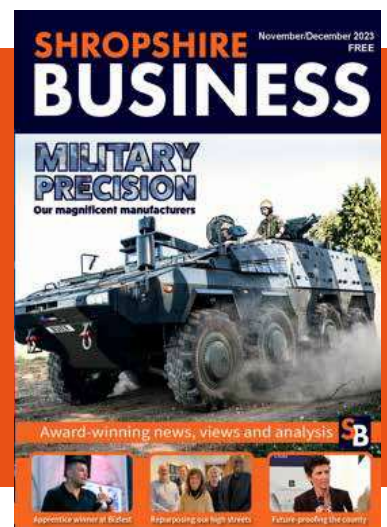
The award-winning magazine continues to be the county's largest circulating and most-read local business-to-business publication, and has enjoyed another successful year.

The free printed copy of the magazine is read by more than 10,000 people – while the number of people downloading the free e-copy from the shropshirebiz.com website has risen by around 15%.

The economic survey will analyse the views of the Shropshire business community on a range of issues, including overall confidence levels, recruitment and skills challenges, cashflow, and inflationary

pressures. Magazine editor Carl Jones said: "As the battle for control of 10 Downing Street ramps up to a fever pitch of rhetoric, rumour, mud-throwing and madness, 2024 is certainly not going to be short of economic headlines."

- **Do you want to promote your business through Shropshire Business magazine and website in 2024? Discounted advertising offers are currently available – an entire year's worth of coverage can be secured from as little as £750. Email editor@shropshirebiz.com for details.**



Protect, care and invest to create a better borough



Touring show to deliver safeguarding messages



Josh Maddocks and Kavita Kumar of Loudmouth at Telford College

A travelling theatre company has visited Telford College to deliver safeguarding messages to students in a fresh and interactive way.

Loudmouth specialises in creating shows for students which explore topics such as relationships, sex education and health.

Caroline Welson, BeSafe manager and deputy designated safeguarding lead for Telford College, said: "Loudmouth are a highly respected company who come in and tackle tough topics in a way that younger students can relate to.

"It's all about re-educating and creating a culture that allows everyone to feel safe at the college and create an environment where it's safe to report.

"Their use of language and music to

highlight discussions and scenarios are relatable to students; it's more engaging and delivered by different people in a different way."

The two-person 'Calling It Out' show was performed by Kavita Kumar and Josh Maddocks.

Kavita said: "Our programmes sensitively raise awareness of safeguarding issues like grooming, exploitation, bullying, mental health, harassment and assault.

"These subjects are so important for students to learn about. We chat to staff all around the West Midlands about these types of issues - it's one of our newest programmes

and most popular issues for us to talk about.

"We like visiting all the schools and colleges. It's nice to hear how much the designated safeguarding leads really care about their students and bringing awareness on these issues.

"It's so important. With everything going on in the world, young people have so much on their shoulders. It's so nice to offer them a session that is a little bit refreshing and different to what they're used to.

Josh added: "I think the sessions went really well. It's very rewarding running the programme and seeing all the students engaged and listening to our performance."

"With everything going on in the world, young people have so much on their shoulders. It's so nice to offer them a session that is a little bit refreshing."



Education with a difference for primary pupils

Aico hosted a week of educational visits for Whittington Primary School students at their headquarters in Oswestry. Whittington Primary School brought a different school year each day, with the students participating in a variety of activities tailored to the different key stages.

Aico in the Community have developed a range of initiatives to support students in their local communities, from work experience placements, providing educational visits and activities, hosting educational events, and offering career advice and guidance.

Each visit began with an arrival and welcome at Aico headquarters, followed by a tour of the facilities. The students learned about the different departments and were given a glimpse into how a successful business operates.

For the younger year groups, students participated in a fire safety workshop which included an interactive challenge and had the opportunity to work on an arts and crafts project, creating their own hazard houses. The workshops are aimed at young people of all ages to make them aware of fire hazards within the home and the danger of Carbon Monoxide.

After the workshop, the students participated in a box challenge with members of Aico's operations team. The box challenge is a fun team-building activity



Pupils from Whittington Primary School at the Aico headquarters in Oswestry

where students work collaboratively to pick and pack an order of Aico alarms against the clock.

The older students took part in a product development workshop creating their own home life safety products. Colleagues from Aico's technical department also led a wiring challenge, where the students had the chance to prepare an Aico Easi-fit alarm base, encouraging problem-solving and communication skills.

All the students got to present their ideas to the rest of their year group in Aico's auditorium, giving them the opportunity to develop creativity, team development and presentation skills.

Clare Frost, Lead HLTA, from Whittington Primary School, commented on their week at Aico "I just wanted to say a massive thank you, to Jane and Laura from

Aico on what has been an incredible week for all our 124 pupils they have hosted. Staff and pupils have raved about the work they do and the experiences they have given to us. It's not easy to impress children but they have achieved that this week. From year 3 loving the chickens, to year 4s crazy presentations on fire in the home, then on to year 5 with life-saving inventions. I just know that year 6 will also have the best time.

We have seen so many wonderful moments with children being able to experience what life is like in a thriving business. The work and effort Aico put into our school is nothing short of miraculous. We honestly can't thank them enough for everything they do and I can't wait to continue this successful collaboration."

Laura Opechowska, Community Liaison at Aico commented "It was a pleasure to have Whittington Primary School pupils around throughout the week at Aico. They were very excited and looking forward to every challenge. I felt proud of how hard all the children worked and tried their best, pushing themselves to develop their skills."

Aico are committed to supporting students in their local community and believes that these educational visits are an important way to achieve this. To learn more about Aico in the Community's educational offerings, please visit [aico.co.uk/in-the-community/education/](https://www.aico.co.uk/in-the-community/education/)

Apprentice of the Year will celebrate future professionals

Aico is delighted to launch the **Apprentice of the Year Award for 2024**. The award has been established to honour the brightest talents within the electrical industry.

Education is a fundamental principle for Aico; we firmly believe that providing future installers with industry knowledge and expertise is vital to creating safer communities. Aico has introduced this new award to applaud the remarkable accomplishments made by future professionals within our industry.

In his statement, Aico's National Sales Manager, Tony Boyle, emphasised the purpose of the Apprentice of the Year award: "Our Apprentice of the Year award aims to recognise outstanding apprentices who not only have excellent technical skills but are role models for others in our industry.



The winner, announced at the Community Awards, will receive a top-of-the-range multi-function tester

"The electrical professionals of tomorrow are so important to our industry, and we aim to highlight and celebrate their success."

The award is now open for entries, with a closing date of the 1st of January 2024. All apprentices are required to submit their application forms to marketing@aico.co.uk. Application forms can be readily accessed on our website at [https://www.aico](https://www.aico.co.uk/news-and-events/apprentice-of-the-year-2024)

[co.uk/news-and-events/apprentice-of-the-year-2024](https://www.aico.co.uk/news-and-events/apprentice-of-the-year-2024).

From the entries, twelve selected nominees will attend the JTL Training Centre Day in Birmingham to take part in the final assessment. All twelve Apprentices reaching this stage will receive a fully loaded state-of-the-art toolkit. Following the assessment centre day, the top six apprentices selected will receive an exclusive invitation to the Aico in The Community Awards, set to take place on the 18th of April, 2024.

The deserving winner will be announced at the Community Awards and will also receive a top-of-the-range multi-function tester to add to their toolkit (worth up to £1200).

Alongside this brilliant prize, the winner can expect to be recognised industry-wide for their fantastic accomplishment.

Download the Entry Form: <https://www.aico.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/Apprentice-of-the-Year-2024-Information-Sheet-Entry-Form-1.pdf>
For more information about the award, visit our website (<https://www.aico.co.uk/>).



Annual report reveals good financial results

Accountants at a Shrewsbury firm have revealed strong financial results as part of an annual benchmarking report.

Dyke Yaxley Chartered Accountants, in Old Potts Way, are members of The Corporate Finance Network (CFN).

It's an organisation where members assist SMEs to grow a well-capitalised business, organically or by acquisition, and it encourages business owners to plan for their eventual exit, so they are more sellable and more valuable when the time is right for them to sell their business.

And The CFN has just released its latest annual benchmarking data which reveals increased activity and positive growth across the network.

Mark Bramall, Dyke Yaxley's corporate director, said: "We're very pleased to see the latest data from The CFN and the results that have been unveiled.

"The report shows that 80% of member firms are still experiencing an increase in demand for services such as exit planning advice and disposals, and that expected fees from the current pipeline at the start of this year are already 98% of next year's fee target.

"It's clear too that corporate finance services are in demand with CFN members increasing the number of staff they employ on average by a further 8% on last year.

"At Dyke Yaxley, we remain very busy and would encourage any companies interested in using a business acquisition as a vehicle for growth or owners looking towards their exit to speak to us at the earliest opportunity.

"This allows us the time and space to formulate a strategic plan and to deliver the best advice and solution for each individual business."

Kirsty McGregor, Chairman of The Corporate Finance Network, said: "In contrast to the mid-market and larger corporate finance deal sector, activity has continued to increase for our member accountancy firms.

"Some business owners are showing signs of losing motivation to continue running their companies, as the past few years' pressures in most sectors do not appear to be easing yet. Inevitably, they are now deciding to retire and approach our firms looking for advice about selling their company.

"Our firms also support growing companies who are seeking to purchase a business to grow more quickly or to mitigate weaknesses or threats and take advantage of opportunities.

"We provide our experts in accountancy practices with additional tools and resources to support their corporate finance activity, so we can ensure it is market-leading in the SME market."

Mark Bramall,
Dyke Yaxley's
corporate director



New equipment makes the grade for judo club



Wrekin Star Judo Club was founded in 1965. McPhillips helped them buy equipment.

McPhillips' Civils Estimator Tom Adams in his own words is "Slowly getting better at Judo." Tom and his son are members of Wrekin Star Judo Club (WSJC), Tom is also the players representative on the management committee.

WSJC was founded in 1965, the club is affiliated to the British Judo Association and provides expert training in the martial art of Judo for members aged 6 – 50 plus. The club is run as not for profit, relying on a group of volunteer coaches and helpers.

When the opportunity arose for the club to purchase second hand equipment from a local gym, Tom approached McPhillips on behalf of WSJC and asked for their help. McPhillips were only too happy to oblige, members of the club are now enjoying the use of 3 static exercise bikes, a static arm bike and a treadmill.

Tom Adams commented: "WSJC are extremely grateful to the management of McPhillips for their very kind support. This equipment has made a real difference to members of all ages and abilities."



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