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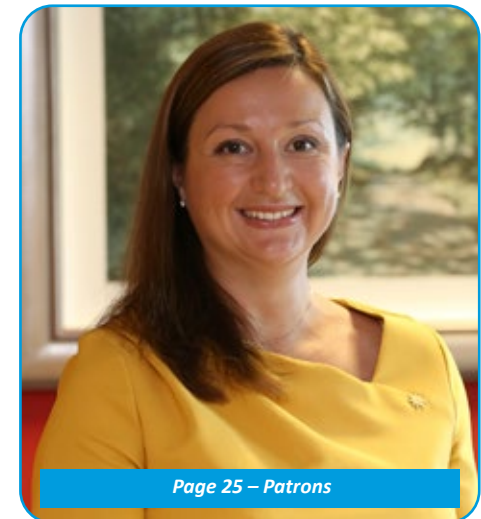
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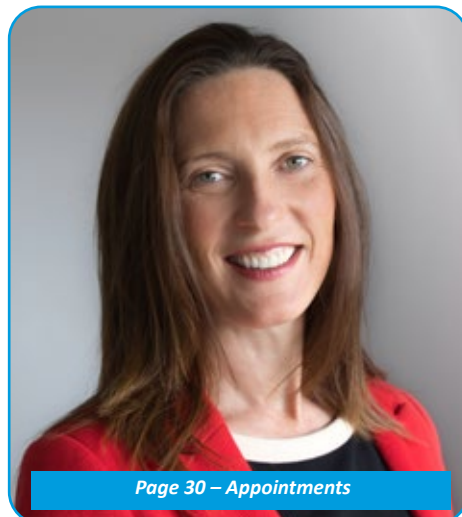
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## New members to engage with

- BIRMINGHAM**  
**Energy & Bioproducts Research Institute (EBRI)**  
 027 206 3430  
 Bioenergy Research Institute EBRI Provides practical support to Shropshire companies to help them develop low carbon products and services - at no cost to the business.
- Duckside IT**  
 0333 366614  
 IT support provider for business around Shropshire
- BISHOPS CASTLE**  
**Sandbag Ltd**  
 07955 70755  
 Distributor of nail and beauty products in UK and internationally
- The Protection Zone Ltd**  
 02484 47112  
 Distribution of antibacterial coating
- BIRCHGROTH**  
**Uvea LTD**  
 07946 70589  
 Manufacturing - Electronic Sub Contractors
- The Bridgorth Bus & Coach**
- OSWESTRY**  
**Luke Black Limited**  
 01851 61775  
 Furniture finishing and decorative arts
- SHREWSBURY**  
**Inspire Bids Ltd**  
 07724 467350  
 Supporting businesses in all aspects of bidding and tendering from full on end to end Bid Management, bid writing reviews and process consultancy
- RDC Safety Limited**  
 07943 36340  
 Health and safety consultants and training
- PCB Solicitors LLP**  
 07952 26494  
 Solicitors, Commercial litigation, debt recovery, Landlord/Tenant property and company matters
- Tanki Ltd**  
 07781 41682  
 A new approach to toilet tissue, made without glue and from sustainable products
- Premier Care Training Limited**  
 07943 36740  
 Care and training courses - adults and children
- Essex Limited**  
 0330 070 0140  
 Telecommunications
- Ambioplastics Limited**  
 01952 684022  
 Manufacturer of Packaging, presentation and promotional products
- AgroVista UK Limited**  
 01952 618169  
 Landscape, amenity, forestry products, turf renovation and weed control
- Resourcebank Recruitment Ltd**  
 01952 28500  
 Management Recruitment & Resourcing Consultancy
- MDT Reprographics Ltd**  
 01952 250201  
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- WEM**  
**Tandem Comms**  
 07776 34347  
 Offer specialist communications, engagement, leadership facilitation, campaign planning, public engagement, media training and presentation skills to public and private sector organisations, teams and individuals

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The deadline for the March/April edition is Friday, January 22nd. Publication date is Friday, February 19th. Please note: due to the ongoing situation and the effects of COVID-19 on our business community, some events and activities mentioned may no longer be going ahead. Please check on each businesses own website for further clarification.

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# Future full of hope and opportunities

**N**ot many will look back on 2020 with the fondest of memories, yet once again the Shropshire business community came together and performed extraordinary feats of kindness, diversification and creativity to support the needs of society and our NHS.

Whilst we have all learned so much in such a short time, now is not the time to look in the rear-view mirror as 2021 is on the horizon and with it comes challenges, new hope and opportunities.

At the time of writing the outcome of talks around the end of the transition period for exiting the EU are unknown, thankfully business does not move at the same pace. Agility is going to be a key strength in 2021, rapid response to opportunities will be key to success in the ever-changing world we all face, an adaptable workforce with the right skills and strong leadership will stand out from the competition and we are here to support our members whenever and however we can.

The new model of border controls will touch us all in some way no matter if you export, import or consume. Our team of fully trained professional customs declarations officers are ready to support the Shropshire business community; indeed, demand is so significant that we are actively recruiting and training additional staff to meet demand.

Covid-19 has decimated many businesses, in particular, sectors that traditionally employ a large number of young people who now find themselves back in the job market.

These are our future employees, business owners and managers and as a Chamber we recognise we have a vital role to play in connecting our young people with opportunities that businesses can present. The government has launched Kickstarters, a funded programme designed to support our 16-24 year olds on Universal Credit into six months of work, we are completely overwhelmed with the response from Shropshire businesses with over 500 opportunities offered with us as a

Shropshire Gateway, have you registered yours with us?

With senior team development high on the skills agenda, our Corporate Membership is going from strength to strength, unique in its approach it is providing businesses with the tools they need in this ever-changing world we find ourselves in.

We have all found new ways to operate, new ways to communicate and even do business. As a Chamber we absolutely own our responsibility to provide up to date information and ensure we facilitate the connectivity that we all need. So early in 2021 we will be launching Chamber TV, our latest venture bringing you the latest news stories, business support initiatives and guidance, streamed live to a PC near you, watch out for our updates.

In closing on behalf of your Chamber team may I wish you a truly magnificent 2021 and together we will achieve great things.

*In 2021 we will be launching Chamber TV, our latest venture bringing you the latest news stories, business support initiatives and guidance, streamed live to a PC near you, watch out for our updates*

**Richard Sheehan**  
Chief Executive Officer,  
Shropshire Chamber of Commerce

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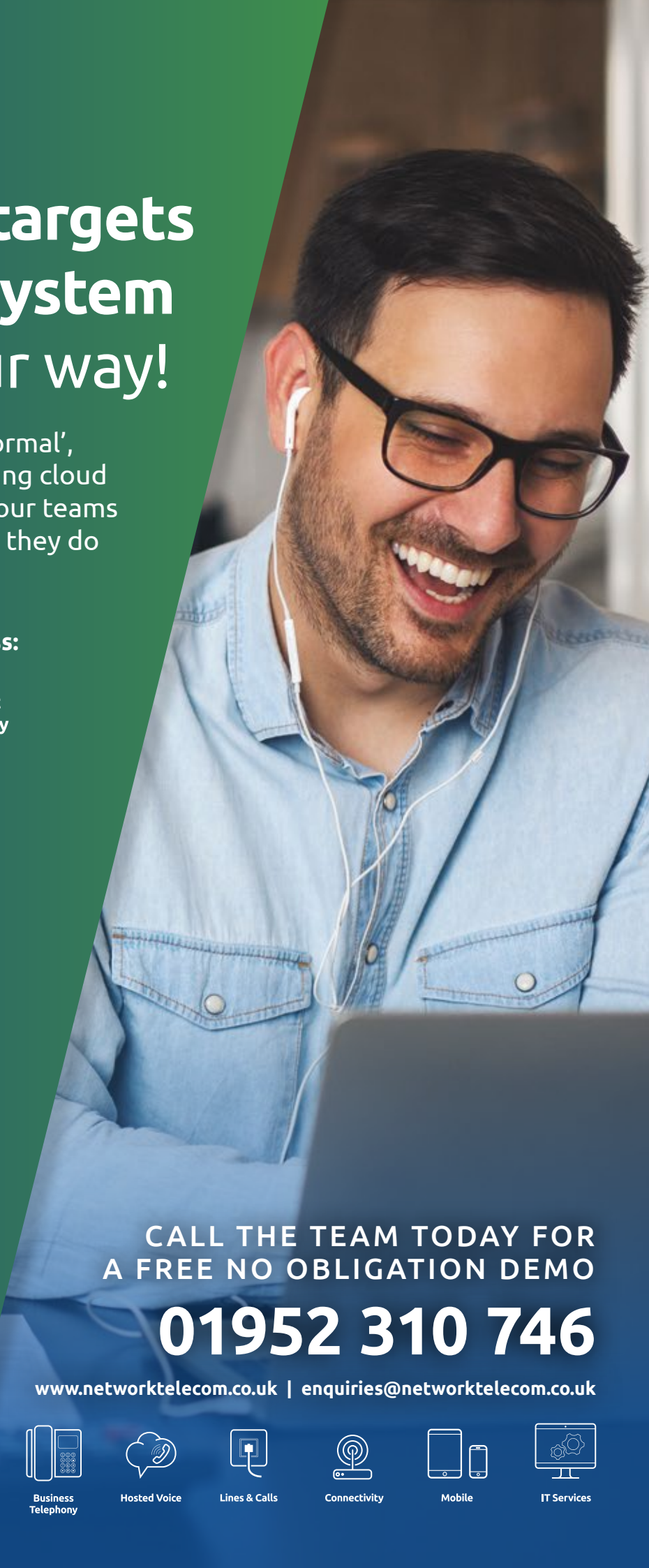
Connectivity



Mobile



IT Services



# Eco-friendly distribution deal for 3D Printz

A fast-growing Shropshire company has signed a new eco-friendly distribution deal as it continues to expand its product range for the 3D printing industry.

3D Printz Limited, based at Hortonwood West, Telford, has teamed up with Fishy Filaments, which turns recycled nylon fishing nets into engineering grade filament.

The Cornish-based business has seen its products used by hobbyists, artists and professional product designers, as well as heavy industry since launching them onto the market last year.

Director Ian Falconer said: "We are already getting enquiries from all over the world despite not having a huge marketing budget, but we only want to hook up with companies which share our values.

"All our polymer blends are 100% recycled. We add no pigments or other modifiers. Instead we work with the nets we receive from fishing fleets, grade them according to colour and wear, and process them separately in order to maximise their potential.

"We then combine the grades to provide customers with a consistent blend that they can add their own uniqueness and value to, through 3D printing."

He added: "If we didn't take these nets and re-process them into filament, the majority of them would be sent to landfill."

3D Printz director Peter Roberts said: "We're delighted with this



partnership. All business sectors should be doing what they can to help the environment, so we are very pleased to be able to add Fishy Filaments to our growing range.

"The Fishy Filaments product is available on the sales portal on our website, [www.3dprintz.co.uk](http://www.3dprintz.co.uk), where free delivery is available on orders over £50."

The Shropshire business, a former finalist in the county's annual business awards, already has a number of other high-profile partnerships.

It is an official UK distributor for Micro Swiss LLC, based in America's Mid West, which makes replacement nozzles and hot ends kits, and sells non-toxic and odourless adhesive solution Magigoo, used by hobbyists and professionals.

3D Printz Ltd was formed in 2016 by a group of Shropshire-based enthusiasts with decades of experience in sectors such as quality and manufacturing, information technology and business development.

The company was born out of frustration – wanting to make great parts from printers, but feeling let down by the range and quality of materials and filaments available.

Products supplied by 3D Printz Limited have been used to make a range of products around the world, from model aircraft to TV props and collapsible VR Domes.

# Core values are vital in such trying times

**The Covid-19 pandemic has put an unprecedented strain on businesses both national and globally, but Adrian Barker, Managing Director of CBSL Accountants in Shrewsbury says that the advice he is providing to clients has never been more crucial.**

At the core of how his practice operates is staying close to a set of values that he devised for his business over ten years ago. As he highlights:

The creation of a set of practical and demonstrable values should be the foundation of any business and must radiate throughout their day-to-day work. When times are tough, living and breathing values, rather than just telling people about them, could not be more important. Ours have been in place since we launched our business and during the pandemic, they could not be more appropriate.

Keeping our office open has been paramount. One of our key values is availability. To close it would have been the easy decision, but that would not have been right for our clients.

Firstly, we made sure that our team were safe, and we made common sense decisions based on the data and information available.

It is only relatively recently that the mental health aspects of the Covid lockdown are being recognised. We acknowledged that



immediately and made special arrangements where necessary.

Only when all plans were in place, did we commit to keeping our office open, and we

redoubled our efforts to be available for our clients. I have always taken calls out of office hours and at weekends, but over the last few months I have been making them too; calling clients that I knew had worries and concerns, rather than waiting until Monday morning for them to call me.

Linked to availability, is our practice of being professional but informal. Our profession has often been portrayed as being formal and complex. We prefer to be informal in our work and this has helped to promote fruitful and long relationships with our clients.

Another of our values simplicity could not be more appropriate during these challenging days. Our skill is in making the technical, simple and easily understandable. It takes time to explain things simply. But our clients prefer it, so that is what we do, without watching the clock.

We have talked a lot about cake in our office of late. Why cake? Well, how lovely to come into work on a Monday morning knowing that at eleven o'clock you will have something lovely to eat with your cup of tea. Affability is important too, which is why, for our team, we launched the Great CBSL Accountants' Bake Off. Aran Bhullar was the worthy winner this year with her cheerful six-layer rainbow cake.

We think we do things that others don't. We are the leading Corporate Finance firm in Shropshire, but at our core, we are Chartered Accountants, and always will be. Underneath our name it says, "For you and your business", and our values underpin this perfectly.

# Planning for the future

**W**ith many businesses currently operating hand to mouth and fighting every day to survive, for many business owners the thought of spending time on the long-term strategic direction of their business might seem like an investment they just can't afford to make. I would argue however, that now is exactly the time that business owners need to lift themselves out of their day to day activities and really consider the future for their business.

The reality is that not all businesses suffer to the same extent during a downturn. While many businesses do suffer (and sadly go under) there are others that will not only survive but indeed thrive during tougher times. It is also clear that there will be an end to this downturn and businesses that come out of the other end of this crisis with strong foundations and a clear plan for the future will be the ones best placed to take advantage of the opportunities the recovery will present.

At WR Partners, we have a leadership group that focuses on what really matters



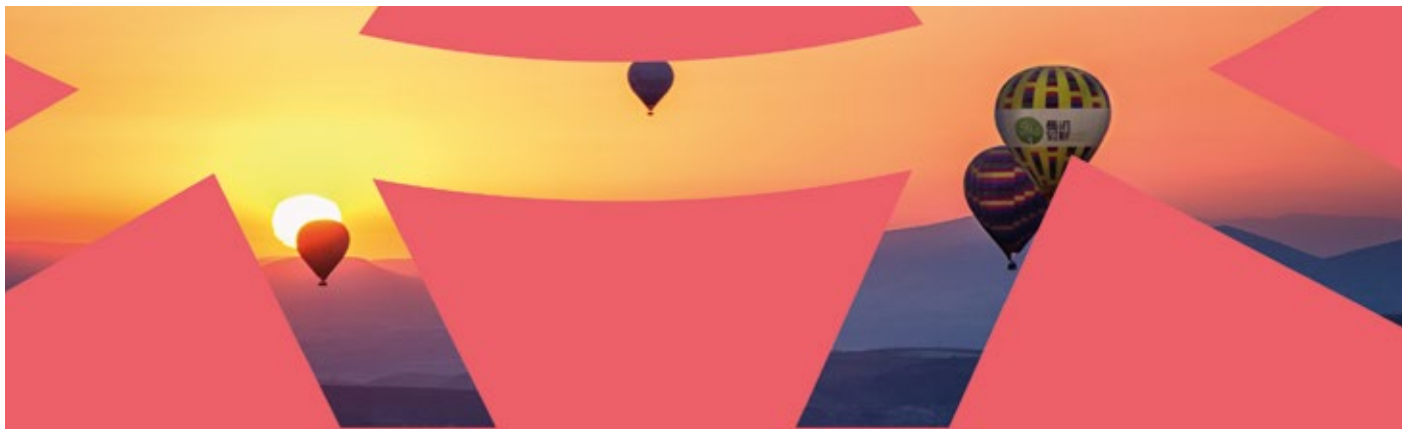
*Paul Brown, from WR Partners, looks to the future as we move forward in to a new year*

for the long-term future of our business. The time we invest working on our business is the most valuable time we spend together as a team. We do acknowledge however, that we could not have achieved what we have to date without external help. Having someone outside the business to challenge us and ensure we are on track has been a hugely valuable part of the process.

We would challenge every business owner to ask themselves if they really have a

clear strategy for the future – even if it's just "I can't go through this again so I want to find a way out!" then at least you have a goal to work towards.

If you would like to understand more about the strategic planning process and how we might be able to bring that to your business and help to protect your future, contact us today for a free, one-hour strategic business review. You can email us at [hello@wrpartners.co.uk](mailto:hello@wrpartners.co.uk) or call us on 01743 273273.



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[wrpartners.co.uk](http://wrpartners.co.uk)



# Wrexham hits a winner with sponsorship deal from an HR specialist



Laura Bray from the HR Dept Wrexham and Chester; Gemma Owen, joint business development manager and head of female football at The Racecourse Community Foundation and Niamh Kelly, director of The HR Dept Wrexham and Chester and The HR Dept Shropshire

**B**ack of the net! Just days after announcing a Hollywood takeover, Wrexham have hit another winner with a sponsorship deal for the female section including its ladies team overseen and delivered by The Racecourse Community Foundation.

Film stars Ryan Reynolds and Rob McElhenney have promised to transform the team into a global force after winning overwhelming backing from Wrexham Supporters Trust and, not to be outdone, a local HR firm is hoping to help the club's girls to epic, Oscar winning-style performances.

The HR Dept Wrexham and Chester is sponsoring the girls' section at the club which covers all ages from 4 to 16 years old. The firm is a leader in HR, focused on preventing people problems by providing an essential service for businesses who might otherwise be unable to access HR advice.

Laura Bray, the firm's senior HR consultant, said: "These are exciting times

for Wrexham Football Club and we are all delighted to see the Hollywood takeover by Ryan and Rob - hopefully they can transform the team into a real star turn!

"We always like to keep our eye on the ball at HR Dept and, while we are only part of the supporting cast, our goal is to get behind the girls at the club - without muscling in too much on the star attractions!

"HR Dept loves to get involved in the community wherever we can. The Wrexham Racecourse Community Foundation is doing a great job in supporting Wrexham female football in their plans to become part of the Welsh Women's Premier League - and we are proud to do what we can to help it along.

"It's an active girls' development section within The Racecourse Community Foundation, a charitable organisation that operates with the aim of utilising football, other sports and physical activities to improve health and wellbeing - a wonderful scheme which is doing so much good and deserves to be successful.

"Our company is run by women and we are always keen to support women and young

girls to succeed in realising their hopes and dreams. We are delighted to be providing sponsorship and look forward to working closely with the RCF team at Wrexham."

Gemma Owen, Joint Business Development Manager and Head of Female Football at The Racecourse Community Foundation, said: "Our thanks go to The HR Dept Wrexham and Chester for their sponsorship, it's much appreciated.

"It will be directed towards our girls' section which consists of sessions for all girls between the ages of 4 to 16 years old and provides the pathway up to our women's team, focussing on fun, enjoyment and player development.

"Within the section are the turn-up and play sessions which serve not only as an introduction to girls football but also as a way of keeping girls active and providing a social platform for them to make new friends.

"The sponsorship will assist the girls' section with facility and staff costs, enabling us to keep running costs down for the girls and their families who attend - particularly during the present testing times."

## Overseas sales boom in the face of adversity

A Shropshire manufacturer has reported a substantial leap in global trade, with overseas sales now accounting for a fifth of its annual turnover.

Fabweld Steel Products, the Telford based designer and manufacturer of access covers and other fabricated steel products for the construction industry, says exports rose by nearly 250% this year despite the challenges posed by the coronavirus pandemic and the lack of clarity over the future of trade deals after Brexit.

The increase from six per cent in 2019 to 20 per cent in 2020 follows a deliberate pro-active campaign by FSP to grow the overseas side of its business.

Germany remains the firm's biggest market outside the UK, closely followed by France, with Israel becoming a new market for FSP products in 2020. The firm's FAB TOPTM and FAB PAVETM covers were also shipped to Sweden and Malta for the first time this year.

Managing Director Richard Hilton said the export increase was positive news in a year when coronavirus had dominated the business landscape. "To have increased our export sales by nearly 250% in a year when we had to rapidly adapt our working practices is



Richard Hilton

a massive achievement and testament to the hard work of our team," he said.

"Despite the challenges posed by the pandemic we responded quickly and, with flexibility, continued to manufacture and meet our export goals. A weak pound has helped us to compete on a level footing with cheaper markets but where we really gain an advantage is with our in-house technical knowledge and facilities.

"For the German market we took an existing product and improved the design to make manufacturing efficient and reduce the cost.

"This is what we specialise in and do for

all our partners and clients and this must continue for us to survive and thrive."

Richard said FSP had focused on increasing its exports after Britain voted to leave the EU. He added: "We will still be doing business with EU countries where we have a good reputation and established contacts and suppliers over the years. But the uncertainty over the shape of Britain's future trade relationships gave additional weight to our decision to explore new markets and future proof the business.

"The hard work has paid off and we'll be aiming for even further growth in 2021 and beyond."

FSP's ability to offer bespoke products alongside its stock range of fabricated steel access covers and associated drainage products with rapid turnaround times has established its reputation as one of the UK's foremost manufacturers of its type.

As well as producing manhole and access covers for major infrastructure projects such as the London Power Tunnels project, its ranges include products for the security, below ground, water management and energy sectors.

For more information, visit [www.fsp.co.uk](http://www.fsp.co.uk)



# Full marks in NCAP tests

**F**urrows Mazda in Shrewsbury celebrates as the all-electric Mazda MX-30 has been awarded the maximum five-star rating by Euro NCAP in its latest series of tests. With 91% and 87% scores in its respective adult and child occupancy categories, the 91% rating is the best adult occupant protection result yet registered amongst all vehicles tested in the latest 2020 Euro NCAP tests.

Achieving maximum points in the lateral impact tests, the MX-30 also scored full marks for crash test performance based on six and ten-year old children for both frontal and lateral impact. The 2020 testing introduces new tests to enhance assessment of occupant protection and post-crash protection, plus promote the latest in advanced driver assistance active safety technology.

The all-electric small SUV MX-30 joins the CX-5 (2017), Mazda6 (2018), Mazda3 and CX-30 (2019) in achieving a five-star Euro NCAP rating. The Mazda MX-30 performed impressively in all four Euro NCAP test categories: Adult Occupant: 91%, Child Occupant: 87%, Vulnerable



Road User (pedestrian safety): 68% and Safety Assist: 73%. The rating is a result of three key factors: the adoption of the very latest Skyactiv-Vehicle Architecture, which features a high-rigidity, impact-absorbing yet lightweight bodyshell; a wide range of advanced i-Activsense safety technologies which help drivers identify potential risks and reduce the likelihood of damage or injury; and high standards of pedestrian protection performance.

A stand out design element of the all-electric small family car is its Freestyle doors, a heritage link to the 2003 Mazda RX-8. This, however, doesn't adversely affect safety. In fact, the "analysis of the deformed crush element from the offset frontal test indicated that the MX-30 structure did not pose a high risk to the occupants of a colliding vehicle in

a frontal offset impact," testers said. "In both the side barrier test - representing a collision by another vehicle, and the more severe side pole impact, protection of all critical body areas was good and the car scored maximum points for these two tests".

Available to order now at the Shrewsbury dealership, customers ordering a Mazda MX-30 First Edition by 31st March 2021 will receive a free home charger wall box.

Following the March arrival of the 500 First Edition models, the full UK MX-30 range will arrive at Furrows in April 2021. Each MX-30 comes, as standard, with a Type 2 AC charging cable and a socket for 50kW rapid charging, which can in just 36 minutes deliver up to 80 per cent battery charge.

As proved by the NCAP results, all MX-30s come with a comprehensive standard safety specification for customers, including Blind Spot Monitoring system (BSM) with Rear Cross Traffic Alert (RCTA), Smart Brake Support (SBS) with Turn-Across Traffic, Emergency Lane-Keeping with Road Keep Assist and Lane-keep Assist System. While GT Sport Tech adds to this with a host of extra active safety technology and a 360-degree view monitor.

For more information on Mazda's award winning range, call Furrows Mazda on 01743 454444, visit the dealership on Harlescott Lane, Shrewsbury or visit [furrows.co.uk/Mazda](http://furrows.co.uk/Mazda)

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# Insurance broker's online support opens up

A Shropshire insurance broker is using the very latest technology to help support employers and businesses during the Coronavirus pandemic.

Henshalls, which has offices in Newport and Shrewsbury, has developed a bespoke online portal that offers invaluable advice

Previously the service was only accessible to clients, but now, as part of their response to the Covid crisis, Henshalls have revamped the online presence and they are making it available to everyone.

Dave Williams said: "In these difficult times, we felt it was important to do what we could to support local companies, and opening up our portal gives businesses an opportunity to access all kinds of advice that could help them navigate through the ongoing crisis.

"We're committed to delivering effective and straight-talking advice, and we're the only broker in the region to offer this bespoke online service."

The MyWave Connect portal is designed to offer information on health and safety, human resources, risk management, legislative updates and insurance requirements, and it's accessible 24 hours a day.

It delivers automatic timely updates to keep businesses informed of relevant hot topics in the insurance sector and in individual industry sectors, so that they're up-to-date with all the latest developments



**Straight-talking advice - Dave Williams**

without having to spend precious time searching the internet.

Dave said the customised portal had been created to be efficient and simple to use, with clear and concise tools to streamline the process, as well as being fully-compliant with GDPR data rules.

"The portal gives businesses the option to select their preferences so that they receive the latest breaking news from the world of business and insurance – all tailored to their specific interests and area of business.

"They can access thousands of free articles on all kinds of topics including risk

management, risk education, the best ways to communicate with employees, wellness resources, workplace policies, and loss control.

"Thanks to the way the portal has been configured, business owners can carry out a simple search that takes their preferences into account and the most relevant resources will appear instantly – it's also fully mobile accessible too."

Dave said existing Henshalls Group clients would receive an email invitation to access the new-look portal in the coming days, and any other businesses interested should email [sburdon@henshalls.com](mailto:sburdon@henshalls.com)

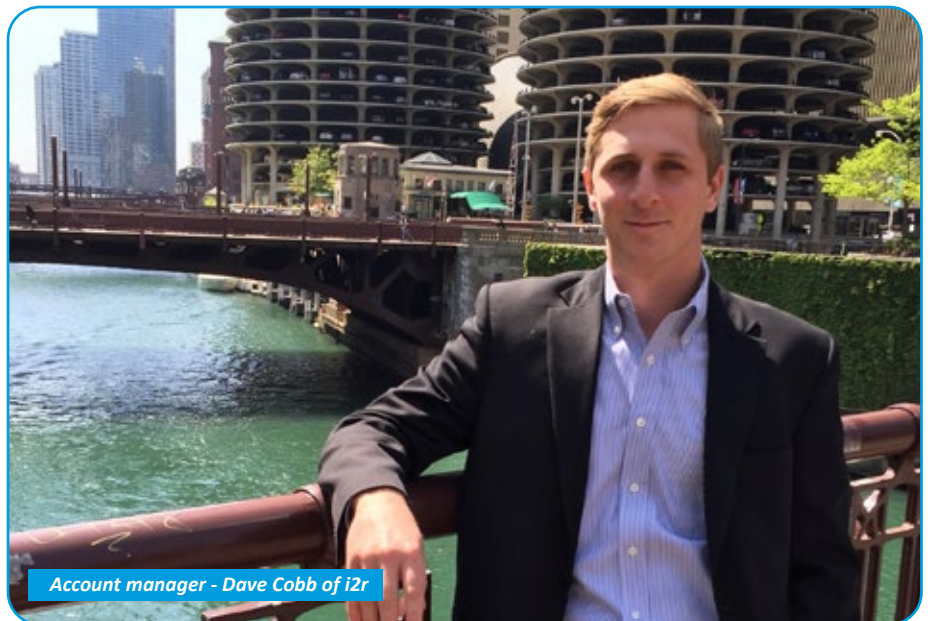
# Targeting growth in the USA

**S**trategic investments, impressive growth in capacity over the past 12 months and ongoing market penetration, particularly overseas, has resulted in i2r Packaging Solutions increasing its global offering by establishing a presence in the US.

In developing the operation, i2r has also recruited a national sales manager, Dave Cobb, to oversee their interests. Cobb joins i2r from a similar account management role in the aluminium industry.

Commenting on his new role, Cobb said: "i2r is a rapidly expanding business with a fresh and unique take on the packaging market. Their innovation and ability to pivot in new directions seems to be unmatched. The North American market will undoubtedly present us with a range of opportunities, which I look forward to pursuing."

Being part of the Italian Laminazione Sottile Group, a leading global supplier of aluminium products, i2r was awarded with a prestigious Queen's Award for Enterprise: International Trade, earlier in the year. Being one of only 220 UK organisations to win a Queen's Award in 2020, the company was recognised for its excellence in international trade, which has seen the firm return outstanding year on year growth in the last three years. Endorsed by the Prime Minister and approved by Her Majesty The Queen, the



**Account manager - Dave Cobb of i2r**

achievement is the highest official UK award for British businesses,

i2r last expanded its international operation in 2017 with an investment in South Korea. Following their ongoing success in Asia and likely opportunities in the US, the firm has not ruled out more investments to further enhance their overseas operations.

"The US is an important part of our international strategy and business expansion plans. Our key goals, objectives and vision

include delivering new 'eye-opening' product ranges, diversifying into new geographical regions and market sectors, championing engineering innovation and to be the lowest cost manufacturer in our sector - all strategies designed to fulfil ambitious financial targets," said i2r's Jon West. "We welcome Dave Cobb to the company and very much look forward to his impetus in helping us to further develop i2r's US market share."

Visit [www.i2rps.com](http://www.i2rps.com) to find out more.



£500 will be given to 40 primary schools throughout Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin



Dean Harris, High Sheriff of Shropshire

# Funding for vulnerable children

**S**ome of the county's most vulnerable children will be able to have winter clothes, shoes and school books thanks to the High Sheriff of Shropshire.

Dean Harris is giving £500 each to 40 primary schools in Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin, intended to be used to buy pupils winter clothing for school, as well as personal care items and equipment to help their learning such as stationery or books.

She said: "I know from headteachers across the county who I have met and spoken with, that this help is very much needed; will be appreciated by the children and families in receipt of the support; and will hopefully make a difference to them this winter and beyond.

"Childhood poverty and deprivation has been one of the key issues I have focused on during my year as High Sheriff, partly because I know the long-lasting impact adversity has throughout that child's entire life. Covid restrictions mean I haven't been able to visit as many schools as I wanted to during this year, but I hope this fund will go some way towards supporting those in some of our most deprived communities."

The fund has been created thanks to the generosity of the county's businesses including Aico, who had sponsored a charity ball Dean was set to host and provided an additional significant top-up to the fund. Sadly, the event has been cancelled due to the pandemic – but many of the sponsors and attendees who had already paid for tickets (as well as suppliers who have returned deposits) agreed she could keep the money and distribute it to local causes. Donations have been gratefully received from Aico, Brewin Dolphin, Marches Care, Peakes Travel, Caroline Morgan Catering, Jimbo's Bars, Wrekin Conveniences, Affinity Homecare, Hazles Farm Nursery and Clear Design.

Neal Hooper, Managing Director for headline sponsor Aico, said: "Dean has made a huge difference with her total commitment to the causes she has chosen to support. We are proud to be involved with her shrieval year.

"It is such a shame that the ball is being cancelled, it would have been a fitting conclusion to Dean's year as High Sheriff of Shropshire. Her work though will continue to be impactful."

Dean added: "As this was the inaugural High Sheriff's Charity Ball in Shropshire it is very disappointing, but the Coronavirus restrictions have sadly meant I was unable to go ahead, despite being a sell-out! This is in much the same way so many fundraising events have been cancelled in Shropshire and further afield in the past nine months.

"I am so grateful for the amazing generosity of so many of the organisations involved in the planning which means local children will still benefit despite the event not going ahead. Thank you to my headline sponsors Aico for their ongoing support, which has had such a positive impact on Shropshire's voluntary and charity organisations throughout my shrieval year so far."

For more information about Dean's key causes, search High Sheriff of Shropshire on Facebook or Instagram. You can also visit [www.highsheriffshropshire.co.uk](http://www.highsheriffshropshire.co.uk) to nominate an unsung hero for the High Sheriffs Awards or an exceptional young person for the Outstanding Young Citizen Awards.



Derwen College Industry champion – Dave Cank of Severndale Nurseries judging the horticulture competition 2019

## Skills on show from students

A week of virtual skills competitions led by a specialist Shropshire college will boost career opportunities for people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

Derwen College will be hosting the national competitions Derwen Skills Live from 1st to 5th March to coincide with National Careers Week as a platform to showcase the vocational skills of people with SEND.

Held at the college in 2020, this year provides the opportunity to host an innovative Virtual event to ensure as many students as possible can take part as well as providing interactive content for industry champions, business networks and organisations to get involved.

"As a Shropshire business there are many ways in which you can support this high profile event" says Meryl Green, Principal, Derwen College. "Industry experts are asked to show their support in judging, offering industry expertise or to visit the website [www.derwenskillslive.co.uk](http://www.derwenskillslive.co.uk) to participate in focus groups, interactive demonstrations of the award-winning CV Builder apps and much more".



Stephen Conroy from Moreton Hall School judging food

For more information regarding the competition please phone the marketing team at Derwen College on 01691 661234 or email [enquiries@derwen.ac.uk](mailto:enquiries@derwen.ac.uk)

# Back to the future for motoring

**L**ocal BMW retailer Rybrook BMW have recreated a BMW advert of the past, originally printed on the pages of British Vogue in 1987, the BMW 7 Series was photographed in front of the famous EP mosaic wall on the A442 Queensway that runs the length of Telford.

The whereabouts of the original advert became a mystery, remembered by so many locally but it couldn't be found. The ongoing question; 'was it a BMW or a Mercedes?' was answered when a follower of 'Telford Live' Facebook page found the advert in an old copy of British Vogue from the 1980s.

The car in question was a BMW 7 Series. The 750iL to be precise. A mile-munching executive motor, destined for business moguls and lottery winners back in 1987 when the car in the advert was registered.

Gareth Thomas, franchise director said "our marketing team thought what better way to celebrate how far BMW have come in the last 30 years than to recreate this iconic local advert with the most recent hybrid 7 Series.



We're proud of the past, enthusiastic about the present and looking forward to the future" The 745e in this advert is available at

Rybrook BMW in Shrewsbury, as an Approved Used car. Please call 01743 467467 to find out more information.

## Big thing holding back small businesses

Small businesses stay small either by choice, or because they start chasing growth in the wrong places.

When you strip away the layers, it all comes down to darts.

Imagine a dart board with a bull's eye and around it is a series of wider and wider circles. The bull's eye is where the people just like you hang out. They are the people (or businesses) who feel the problem your company set out to solve. They are usually your first customers and raving fans.

The further you go outside of your bull's eye, the less these prospects feel your exact pain.

Why do entrepreneurs go outside their bull's eye? When you're a self-funded start-up, you're scrambling — just trying to bootstrap your way to a company. You don't have a lot of money to invest in formal marketing, so you rely on word-of-mouth and referrals, which also means you're often talking to people outside of your bull's eye.

These prospects may experience the problem you're trying to solve, but they are slightly different (that's why they're not in the bull's eye). They like your product or service but want a little tweak to it: a customisation or a different version. You don't see the harm in making a change and start to adjust your offering to accommodate the customers outside your bull's eye.

Your new (slightly-outside-the-bull's-eye) customer tells her friends about how great you are, and how willing you are to listen to your customers, and she refers a prospect even further outside your bull's eye who again, asks you for another tweak.

Making these changes to your original product or service to accommodate customers

outside your bull's eye seems innocent enough at the time, but eventually, it undermines your growth.

Why?

To grow a business beyond your efforts, you need to hire employees (or build technology) that can do the work. As humans, we are usually lousy at doing something for the first time, but can master most things with enough repetition.

Think about teaching a toddler how to tie his shoes. The first few attempts are usually rough. It's a new skill and their tiny hands have never had to make bunny ears before. You break it down for the child and show them how to master each step. It can take weeks, but eventually they get it.

As adults, we don't even think about tying our shoes — we've mastered the skill by repetition.

The same is true of your employees. They need time to truly master the delivery of your product or service. Every time you make a tweak for a new customer outside your bull's eye, it's like changing the instructions on tying your shoe laces. It's disorienting for everyone and leads to substandard products and services, which customers receive and are less than enthusiastic about.

Having unhappy customers often leads the owner to step in and "fix" the problem. While some founders can indeed create the customized product or service for their new, outside-the-bull's-eye customer, they are making their company reliant on them in the process.

A business reliant on its founder will stall out at a handful of employees when the founder runs out of hours in the day.

The secret to avoiding this plateau, and

continuing to grow, is to be brutally disciplined in only serving customers in your bull's eye for much longer than it feels natural. When you want to grow, the temptation is take whatever revenue you can, but the kind of growth that comes from serving customers outside your bull's eye can be a dead end.

Shane Stark, from Business Doctors enjoys providing practical advice, support and coaching to small and medium sized businesses to maximise returns from assets and talent available.

Email [shane.stark@businessdoctors.co.uk](mailto:shane.stark@businessdoctors.co.uk) or call 07970 316 622.

## Protecting the public from harm

More than 250 people received specialist training in November, to help protect children, young people and vulnerable adults from harm.

For the past few years West Mercia Police has delivered exploitation and vulnerability training to frontline workers, including bar and hotel staff, council workers and drive thru staff. Almost 20,000 people have been upskilled to spot the signs someone may be being criminally exploited.

To find out more email [wedontbuycrime@westmercia.pnn.police.uk](mailto:wedontbuycrime@westmercia.pnn.police.uk)

# Specialist manufacturer celebrates 60 years

**W**e are very happy to be celebrating our **Diamond Anniversary 60 years in business.**

Fabdec was incorporated 24th November 1960 to manufacture refrigerated bulk milk tanks for the transition by the Milk Marketing Board from milk churns to bulk collection on dairy farms.

We are still at our original Ellesmere Shropshire base and still the only U.K. manufacturer of refrigerated bulk milk tanks, which we now supply throughout the world.

Over the years using our core skills in high quality stainless steel fabrication and thermal transfer technology we have diversified into other markets and are proud of our heritage and to be recognized as market leaders in the dairy, brewery and water heating sectors for both our manufactured products and our global after sales spares offerings.

We would like to thank all our present and past employees, customers and suppliers who have helped us achieve and now celebrate this important milestone and we look forward to our continued partnership.

**Chris Powell**  
**Managing Director**  
**[www.fabdec.com](http://www.fabdec.com)**

Fabdec employs over 100 people and has offices in Germany, Russia and Poland.

Fabdec has a turnover of £13 million half its sales are for export customers which



**Fabdec - Water Heater Robot Welding**

include Mainland Europe, Ireland, Russia, Japan, Canada and the USA.

In 2018 Fabdec won Best Manufacturer at the Shropshire Business Awards and the 2019 award for International Trade Through Export.

Last year the company made major investments in the manufacturing facility including a state of art laser welding machine for heat exchanger plates which is the only machine of its type in the U.K.

The company has real green credentials having installed LED lighting and generates its own electricity through solar PV panels installed on the factory roof.



**Fabdec is celebrating 60 years in business**



# Treat people right

**T**ake a break with Simon Thompson, Director of Development at The Wrekin Housing Group. Wrekin is a social landlord and care provider across mainly Shropshire but also Staffordshire. Firmly embedded in the community Wrekin drives social value and makes a difference to people's lives, through housing with over 30,000 people call one of Wrekin's 13,000 properties their home, through job employability schemes and through other community support initiatives. Wrekin will invest more than £250 million in to new homes across Shropshire over the next five years.

**Who is someone you admire, and why?**

I have just read Sir Ranulph Fiennes autobiography.....wow! What an inspiring account of pushing your limits, and achieving, even when age, funding and physical limitations are stacked against you.

**Tell me three pet hates?**

Procrastination, being bored and geese.....don't ask....

**What's a typical day like for you?**

In the bizarre COVID world I am trying to keep as much structure as I can. The spare room has become HQ! Days are filled with meetings (mostly virtual now), programme management, and still attempting to reach out to other partner organisations. It is so important that we don't lose human contact, even if at this time we need to be cautious.

**Do you have any skills or talents that most people don't know about?**

I have never had a headache!

**If you could be anywhere, where would you be?**

On the Cote d'Azur in the South of France. I lived there for four years with my wife and fell in love with the place.

**Flashback to when you were 10 years old. What did you want to be when you grew up?**

A journalist. I Loved writing and fancied being the Stoke City FC Correspondent.

**If we went to 'happy hour', what would you order?**

Depends where. In a pub, a pint of the finest ale. In a bar, an extreme ly dry martini.

**Finish this sentence. On Sunday mornings, you can usually find me...**

...with my family.

**How do you want people to remember you?**

A happy caring person who enjoyed life.

**What do you think are the best skills that you bring to your job?**

I have a knack for sniffing out an opportunity and then identifying the most effective means of going from A to B. My commercial background enables me to evaluate situations from a cost and risk basis that maximises benefit, whilst protecting the organisation.

**Name three words that best describe you.**

Balanced, empathetic and focussed.

**How do you think your colleagues would describe you?**

Professional, positive and a communicator.

**What do you want to make sure you do before you die?**

Watch the El Clasico between Real Madrid and Barcelona at the Bernabau.



Simon Thompson, The Wrekin Housing Group

**What's a goal you have for yourself that you want to accomplish in the next year?**

I want to establish a specification for a truly sustainable house type that is genuinely affordable. Carbon Zero is coming, and I am eager to ensure we are prepared for it.

**What are your highlights or lowlights of your career so far?**

-I am really pleased to have had the opportunity to work at a senior level in the Private, Public and Registered Provider sectors. It has given me a fantastic insight into what the drivers are from all perspectives. At times there have been big challenges, but each has provided valuable experiences that have helped me to grow as a housing professional.

**What publications do you regularly read?**

Inside Housing is a key read for anyone in the housing sector.

**What are you happiest doing, when you're not working?**

Being in the hills, mountains and countryside with my family and friends.

**What are some causes you care about?**

A very personal cause is families with children with disabilities or life limiting illnesses. My brother, Paul, has cerebral palsy, so I have seen first-hand the love and commitment that is needed. It has been a real pleasure to be involved with projects during my career to date that have provided specialist accommodation to meet these very specific needs.

**What do you do with friends and family in your spare time?**

Experience the great outdoors. It is so good to get out into the open spaces whenever you can.

**What would be your personal motto?**

You can't beat the golden rule, "do unto others as you would have them do unto you." Always try to treat people right. Everyone benefits!

# Accountancy firm launches new app



Helen Columb



Vicki Evans with the new app from Turas Accountants

## A Shropshire accountancy firm has launched a new app to help small businesses keep on top of their book keeping.

The app has been introduced by Telford based company, Turas Accountants headed by Helen Columb.

The app is available to all small businesses and self-employed people with extra features built in for Turas clients.

Helen explained that the UK tax system is moving increasingly towards a digital only system with the introduction of Making Tax Digital for VAT (MTDFV), and the roll out of Making Tax Digital for Income Tax in the near future.

“We are always looking for ways to make life easier for not only our clients but also for anyone running their own business.

“So, we’ve joined forces with MyAccountant to offer this app which provides everything you need to monitor, calculate and securely store the information you need for your business accounts,” she said.

The app includes a GPS mileage tracker, a document and receipts scanner, a tax calculator, personal reminders and direct links to the HMRC website for the latest news and analysis.

It also features an income manager which captures invoices and payments to give small businesses instant access to their cash flow information.

Turas clients will get extra features including links to accounting software Xero and Kashflow, access to secure documents requiring electronic signatures, plus a Turas message centre.

“One of the most important features of the app is that it stores all your business information securely in one place. It means you have all the information you need to send to your accountant with the peace of mind that it is stored safely. And what’s more, we’ve given it a thorough test run and it’s very simple to use,” said Helen.

Further information about the new app is available by contacting Turas Accountants at Hall Court, Telford Town Centre on 01952 882434 or email [info@turasaccountants.co.uk](mailto:info@turasaccountants.co.uk)

**Turas Accountants**

**The accounting app every business owner needs**

Download the **MyAccountants** app and scan the QR code to get our **free app today!**

**01952 882434**  
[info@turasaccountants.co.uk](mailto:info@turasaccountants.co.uk)  
[www.turasaccountants.co.uk](http://www.turasaccountants.co.uk)

Download on the **App Store** | GET IT ON **Google Play**

# Amanda steps forward to lead the way on ladder

With the Shropshire Chamber's involvement, the Ladder for Shropshire has been launched. The Ladder for Shropshire is a one stop shop to offer impartial advice and support to encourage employers to offer apprenticeship and traineeship opportunities, with the aim of contributing to the regions recovery from the devastating pandemic and supporting young people. As anticipated COVID 19 is having a devastating impact on unemployment rates amongst young people. Unemployment rates in Shropshire for 16-24 year olds were 1633 in January 2020, they have now more than doubled and October 2020 figures are at 3943. The need for action is now!

SBC Training has been appointed to manage the Clearing House for the Ladder and Amanda Carpenter has joined as the Project Lead. Amanda is extremely keen to use her passion, experience and expertise to offer impartial advice to employers, provide information on grants and incentives and putting employers in touch with the best local training providers to suit their needs.

We would like to encourage employers to pick up the phone and chat with Amanda to answer their questions to support the decision to take on a young person. Questions such as – "Can the training provider support with the recruitment? How much do I pay an apprentice? What incentives are on offer so I can support an apprentice? What is the calibre of applicants? What sectors do apprenticeships cover? What is my involvement as an employer? How do I find the right training provider to deliver the training?"

The Ladder for Shropshire would also like to talk to potential Ambassadors, who could proactively champion apprenticeships in their own networks by sharing experiences, knowledge and skills and



would be happy to speak to businesses about their own experiences before taking their first steps on the apprenticeship ladder. Ambassadors could also help to create a 'buzz' and get people talking about apprenticeships/traineeships using social media e.g. LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter. This networking could encourage more businesses to consider an apprenticeship opportunity and support a young person to take a 'Step on the Ladder'.

Please can you 'Step Up Now' to offer an Apprenticeship or become an Ambassador – telephone Amanda on 0800 999 8441 or email [amanda@ladderforshropshire.org](mailto:amanda@ladderforshropshire.org)

# Chamber of Commerce outlines 'exciting plans'

**Shropshire Chamber of Commerce outlined some of its 'exciting plans' to support the business community in 2021 at its annual general meeting.**

The meeting, held over Zoom this year, included the re-election of president Mandy Thorn, vice president Chris Greenough, and chief executive Richard Sheehan to the board of directors.

Members heard how the Chamber had dipped into its reserves to provide free membership for businesses during the worst of the Covid lockdown this year, as well as actions to ensure that staff remained in the office to help businesses when they needed it most.

Mr Sheehan said: "Going forward, it's very clear that we still have a number of bumps in the road – many of which we can't influence, but we can help to provide support.

"Nobody could have possibly envisaged the impact of Covid-19 on employment, and on young people across our county. Those people are our future workforce, business owners and managers.

"Right now they are in a really challenging place.

"The Government has introduced a Kickstart programme, which we have been instrumental in helping to shape, and things are starting to move.

"We are here to support our young people, and use our connectivity with the business community, to ensure they do get an opportunity to upskill over six months, becoming familiar with the workplace, and

hopefully find work with the companies they are placed with."

Well over 500 opportunities have already been offered by Shropshire businesses under the Kickstart scheme, and Mr Sheehan said: "The business community have really stepped up."

He also revealed plans for the Chamber to resurrect and modernise its 'People Portal' video CV service in the coming months to help job seekers overcome current barriers to physical interviews.

And he said the team was working creatively to develop new events, membership offers and training programmes to support business needs, which were evolving 'at a pace no-one could have imagined'.

"Providing support on the skills agenda to ensure people can capitalise on opportunities that come forward is something we are committed to," he added.

Mr Sheehan also outlined plans to launch a new 'Chamber TV' service in 2021, which he said would provide companies with updated information on business support and funding opportunities through its partners.

"We are playing a vital role in supporting our businesses, we are playing a role in supporting the community, and we've identified areas that we need to be active in, to ensure the best possible support."

"There are many other exciting things coming, and I'm blessed to have a team of people working with us that are really committed to making that happen, and a board that are supportive."

In her annual report, Chamber president Mandy Thorn said: "Covid has been an

absolute game-changer, and whilst for so many of us the business impact on staff, customers, turnover and margin has been significant it has also brought the best out of so many businesses.

"We have seen businesses who have enabled their teams to volunteer in their local communities and who have gone out of their way to support their staff and their customers through changing the way they work and deliver their goods and services.

"Most excitingly we have seen Shropshire businesses pivot and deliver whole new products and services to support the economy and our communities in different ways – for example through the manufacturing of PPE and through developing innovative digital offers.

"We have seen changes in our local economy driven through necessity that will have a long-term impact on all of us; some bad, but many positive."

She added: "I am so proud of the Chamber, and how it reacted so quickly to the emerging challenges that our business community were facing.

"The swift move to online engagement and training, the virtual networking and the decision, driven by our chief executive and his team, to open the Chamber resources to all Shropshire businesses to help them through the pandemic.

"The Chamber team have played an integral part in informing Government of the impact of the pandemic on the business community and have actively lobbied through local, regional and national fora for support for our business community."





**EIGHT-PAGE FOCUS  
ON THE VIRTUAL  
BUSINESS AWARDS**

# The show must go on



*Shropshire Chamber of Commerce Chief Executive, Richard Sheehan, presents Pete Sims of 7Video with the Best Small Business award*



*VIP – The Chancellor – Rishi Sunak – praised Shropshire businesses for their efforts in 2020*



*Coopers Gourmet Foods of Roden was named Manufacturer of the Year*

## **O**swestry-based alarm maker **Aico** has been crowned **Shropshire's 2020 Company of the Year.**

The fast-growing business, based at Maesbury Road, picked up three awards in the 20th anniversary year of the competition, which was live streamed this evening.

They also won the Workplace Health & Wellbeing, and Corporate Environmental Responsibility awards.

The Chancellor, Rishi Sunak, was a VIP guest of honour on the night taking time out of his busy schedule to praise the creativity and resilience of Shropshire businesses.

He said: "I wanted to pay tribute to all the businesses from Shropshire who are being recognised.

"This is the 20th anniversary of these annual business awards, and there has never

been a more important time to recognise the determination and achievements of our business community.

"I know you would all prefer to be meeting up in person for what has become the biggest event on the Shropshire business calendar, but we've all had to adapt our ways of working in these challenging times.

"It's fantastic to see the Shropshire Chamber of Commerce embracing new technology to recognise business excellence and success in new and imaginative ways."

Last year's company of the year winner, Pave Aways of Knockin, won the Education and Apprenticeships award this time, while Aviramp of Telford, which makes

products for the airline industry, won the International Trade award.

Shrewsbury-based events and production company Yarrington – which has built a new TV studio at its Frankwell site – won the prize for Digital Innovation.

The Manufacturer of the Year award went to Coopers Gourmet Foods of Roden, which has developed new products during lockdown, while 7Video of Shrewsbury was named Best Small Business.

Market Drayton-based optician Style Optique won the Outstanding Customer Service title, and the Business in

the Community Award went to the Dyslexic Dyslexia Consultant, based in Telford.

*The Manufacturer of the Year award went to Coopers Gourmet Foods of Roden, which has developed new products during lockdown, while 7Video of Shrewsbury was named Best Small Business*



# BEST MANUFACTURER 2020

Coopers Gourmet Foods is a family run business based on the outskirts of Shrewsbury, Shropshire, with a mission to produce the finest gourmet products.



COOPERS GOURMET  
TRAYBAKES

Our range began with our famous Gourmet Sausage Rolls, since then we have increased our product range to include Square Pies, Pork Pies, Individual Quiche, Turnovers, Fruit Pies and our new range of Traybakes.

WINNER  
**twenty20**  
Shropshire Chamber of Commerce  
VIRTUAL BUSINESS AWARDS  
Best Manufacturer



Yarrington won for Digital Innovation



The team from Style Optique receiving its award



Neal Hooper, managing director of Aico



Chamber director Chris Greenough talking to host Carl Jones

Richard Sheehan, Shropshire Chamber's chief executive, said: "It has been an extraordinary 12 months. No-one could have foreseen the kind of changes we have all had to make to our lives.

"But in times of challenge, it is even more important to see the work of employees recognised, as well as the businesses themselves.

"This pandemic has proved that

Shropshire businesses are resilient, creative and innovative – as the delivery of this event shows."

Normally, a team of judges would be visiting each of the shortlisted finalists at their premises before deciding on a winner – this year, those 'meetings' were held on Zoom.

In addition to the announcement of the 10 award winners, tonight's broadcast also included a pre-awards wine tasting session

from Tanners, and featured music from students at Telford College.

There was also an interactive quiz running throughout the broadcast, testing people's Shropshire knowledge, with the winner taking home a £100 hamper full of county produce.

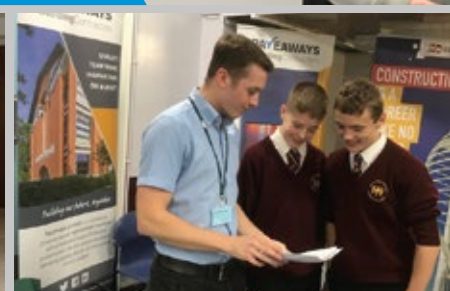
If you missed the live stream of the awards, the show will soon be available on a catch-up service soon, at [shropshirebusinessawards.co.uk](http://shropshirebusinessawards.co.uk)

# PAVEAWAYS

## Building Contractors

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**We are the leading Building Contractor in Shropshire.**  
We are PAVEAWAYS

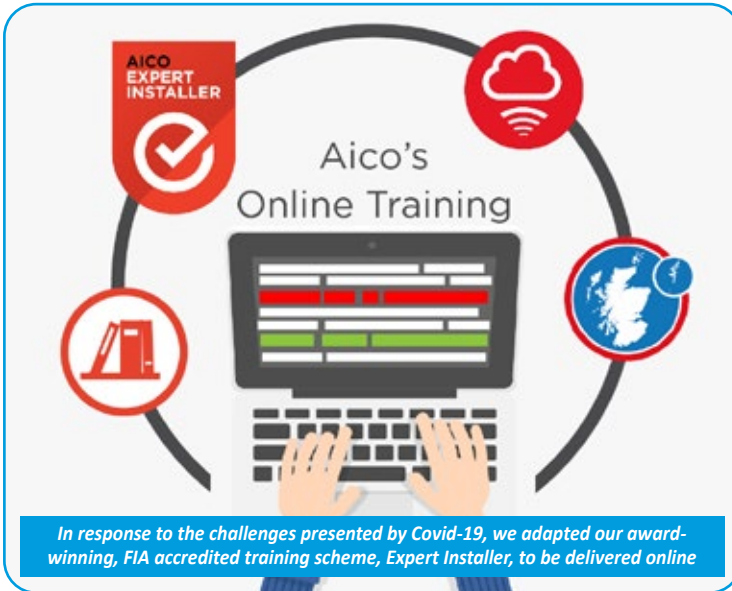




# The UK's market leader in **Fire** and **Carbon Monoxide** Protection

Aico, an Ei Company, are leading the way in home life safety by pioneering new technologies and offering high quality alarms, developed and manufactured in Ireland. All of our alarms meet UK standards and offer a variety of sensor types to guarantee protection for every home, the cornerstone of which is delivering education, quality, service and innovation.

Corporate Social Responsibility is a key focus for Aico; launching our 'Aico in the Community' initiative to help schools, colleges, charities and community organisations achieve their goals to help create safer communities and build sustainable futures. Aico does this through the core areas of Education, Business Enterprise, Volunteering, Charity and Environmental Impact.



*In response to the challenges presented by Covid-19, we adapted our award-winning, FIA accredited training scheme, Expert Installer, to be delivered online*



*Four acres of the seven-acre site is dedicated to open space, with the building itself utilising renewable energy sources*

# Ethos of innovation is at the heart of all we do

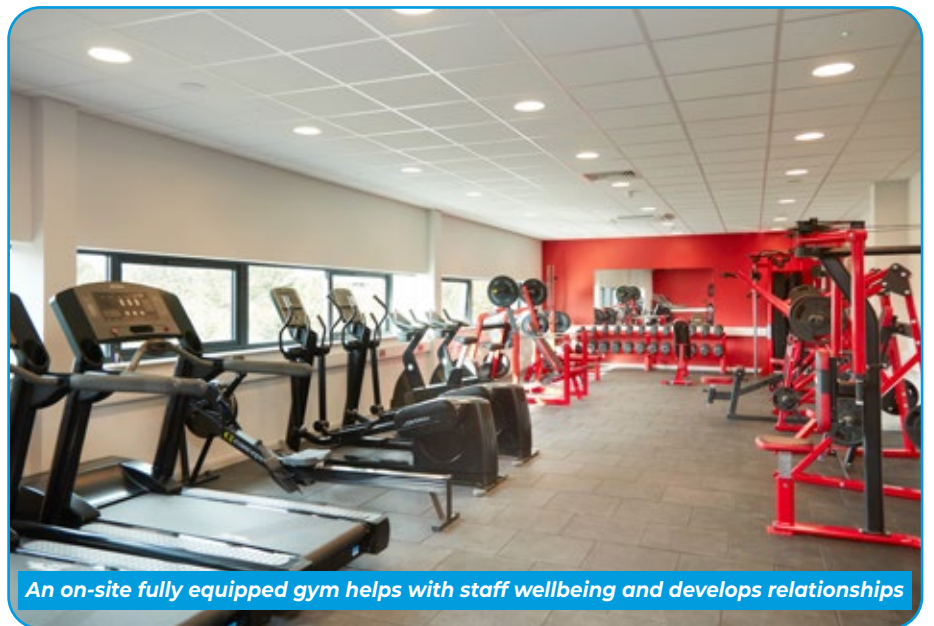
**A**ico, an Ei Company, is the UK market leader in Fire and Carbon Monoxide (CO) protection, leading the way in home life safety by pioneering new technologies and offering high quality alarms, protecting over 80% of UK households.

Supplying 4.5 million alarms each year, every alarm meets UK standards and offer a variety of sensor types to guarantee protection for every home, the cornerstone of which is delivering education, quality, service and innovation. We are proudly celebrating our 30th year in 2020, based in Oswestry.

With a 90% market share, our financial track record is strong; turnover has increased every single year, doubling every five years. This consistency comes from a dedication to quality and service, our products are manufactured in Ireland and each alarm undergoes robust testing to ensure reliability.

Innovation is part of our core ethos and we continue to lead the way in providing innovative solutions achieving numerous industry firsts in the field of fire and CO home life safety products. In response to the challenges presented by Covid-19, we adapted our award-winning, FIA accredited training scheme, Expert Installer, to be delivered online. This increased the accessibility and reach of our training, with over 3,000 attendees since the launch in April. Furthermore, the acquisition of leading Internet of Things solutions provider HomeLINK this year further develops our offering in the connected home arena, allowing for new and ambitious innovation.

This ethos of innovation is also applied to all Aico colleagues and the investment in development and progression. We continue to develop our apprenticeship programme,



*An on-site fully equipped gym helps with staff wellbeing and develops relationships*

with apprentices making up over 10% of our workforce. Every member of Aico's senior management team has been promoted from within and every colleague has inputted into the development of the company culture and values. Colleague wellbeing is at the forefront of decision making, such as with the design of our new headquarters; key input was gained from colleagues in the creation of the workspace to incorporate spaces devoted to relaxation, mindfulness and physical activity. A relaxation room, fully equipped gym and a games room where colleagues can get together has established the importance of staff wellbeing and relationships. This is further supported by Aico's partnership with the Electrical Industries Charity and the creation of a dedicated team of Mental Health First Aiders to create a mentally healthy workplace.

Aico are also committed to protecting the local and global environment, developing our products and services and implementing specific programmes to reduce our overall environmental impact.

Our state-of-the-art headquarters was completed in October 2019 and was designed and constructed with the environment and our impact of the local community in mind.

Four acres of our seven-acre site is dedicated to open space, with the building itself utilising renewable energy sources. This year we have digitised our product instructions which has resulted in a 15-tonne reduction in paper, and following a packaging review and customer feedback redesigned some packaging to be plastic-free and utilising 50% less cardboard, saving 6-tonnes of plastic and 8-tonnes of cardboard each year.

# Sponsors thanked



Richard Sheehan handing over the Education and Apprenticeships award to Commercial Director, Victoria Lawson of Pave Aways



The Shropshire Hamper Company provided the quiz prize, won by Lily Butters, presented by Hugh Strickland of Aaron & Partners

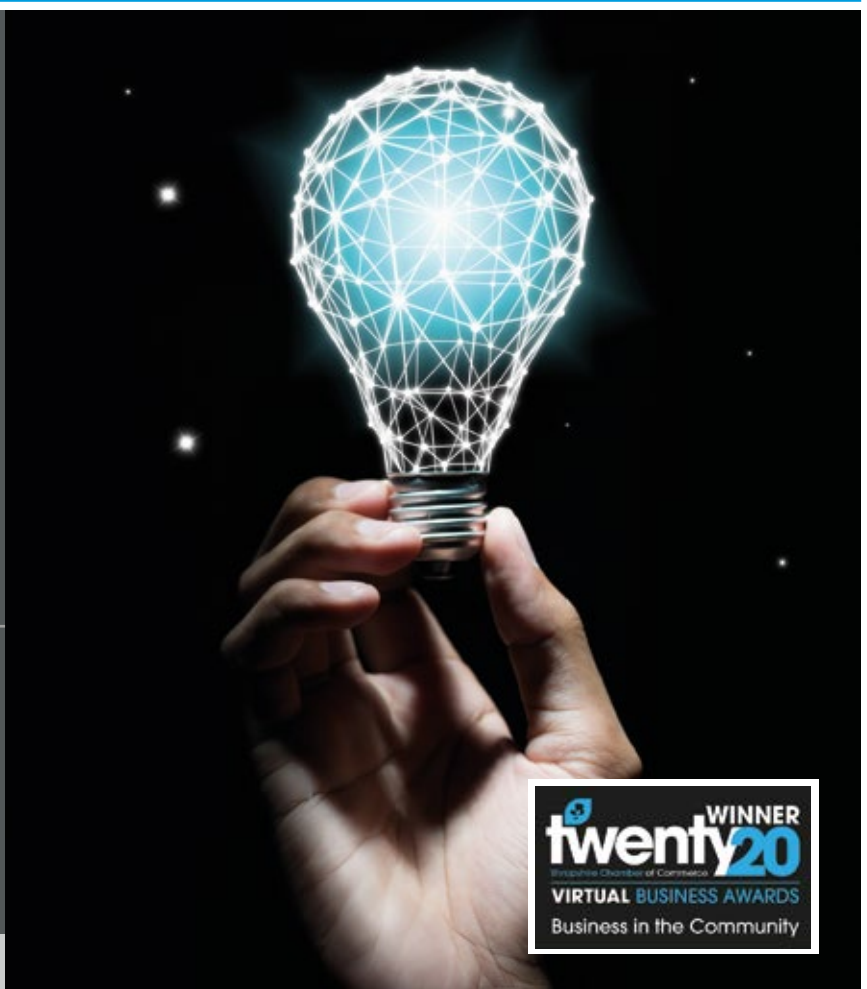
**S**hropshire Chamber of Commerce is grateful to the sponsors who helped the event to be such a great success. Without such valued support, events of this nature would just not be the same standard. A big thank you to those who helped on this occasion.

**The Dyslexic Dyslexia Consultant**

- Working with **Adults**
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Zoe Witham



Eva Dave

# Put your best face forward

**A study by Boots UK of 20,000 people showed that almost 70% care more about their style of glasses than how well they can see.**

Of those, 22% never wear their prescription because they feel old, unfashionable and unconfident.

Do you feel this way in your glasses?

If so, it's not surprising. As glasses are at the centre of our self image, our eyewear choices have a huge impact on our overall style and self esteem.

At Style Optique we are committed to helping you look and feel the best version of yourself in your eyewear.

As well as being fully trained optometrists and dispensing opticians, we are also image consultants and eyewear stylists. We offer bespoke, personal eyewear styling consultations and access to beautiful artisan eyewear.

**"Wow, you made me feel like the only person that mattered and time stopped. I am in love with my glasses, they make me feel fantastic."**

Eyewear can play an important part in giving you the confidence to put your best face forward both in business and life.

**"I have found frames that allow me to express the true me, without compromise."**

Did you know that inspirational business entrepreneurs have admitted to using eyewear as a way of activating the specific traits they needed to perform?

Steve Jobs, after being fired by the board of Apple in 1985, decided to reinvent himself. One of the first things he did was purchase a pair of circular, wire rim glasses to emulate his idol, Gandhi.

**"There is no one that embodies better what I want to become than Gandhi, he changed the world"**

In 1997 Jobs reacquired Apple and revived it beginning with the iconic "Think Different" campaign featuring Gandhi. He kept the same style of 'Gandhi glasses' throughout the rest of his life because they allowed him to tap into 'the leader' and 'change maker' he needed to be to make a difference.

## Put on Your Power

Are you looking for unique, stylish eyewear or a way to stand out against your competitors in 2021?

Many people struggle to find eyewear or know what suits them but with our help, your new eyewear can help you feel empowered, distinguished, playful or even sexy.

**"These glasses are so special to me - I feel so special, like the Queen."**

As winners of 'Outstanding Customer Service' at this year's Virtual Shropshire Business Awards, and winner of UK Fashion Practice of the Year

2019, we offer something a little different: expert eyewear styling advice, a relaxed fun experience and some

of the world's most beautiful eyewear.

**"Just loving my new glasses! You made me feel so comfortable and special."**

**"I can't stop admiring my new glasses - Life changing!"**

For a personal eyewear styling consultation please contact Style Optique on 01630 652945, email [info@styleoptique.co.uk](mailto:info@styleoptique.co.uk) or visit [www.styleoptique.co.uk](http://www.styleoptique.co.uk) And remember - It's not just a pair of glasses!

**"Just loving my new glasses! You made me feel so comfortable and special"**

**"I can't stop admiring my new glasses - Life changing"**

**STYLE OPTIQUE**  
Award Winning Stylists & Opticians



Going live - host Carl Jones with the production crew in the Yarrington TV studio



The team at Aico celebrating three award wins



Mandy Thorn, president of Shropshire Chamber



**Congratulations to all of the winners**

Company of the Year



Best Small Business



Best Manufacturer



Education and Apprenticeships



Digital Innovation



Corporate and Environmental Responsibility



Outstanding Customer Service



International Trade through Export



Workplace Health and Wellbeing



Business in the Community



**Marking anniversary with sponsorship**

Paycare is marking a year since becoming Shropshire Chamber members by sponsoring the Virtual Business Awards.

The Health Cash Plan provider and Wellbeing organisation sponsored the Best Small Business category at the awards, held on Friday 20th November.

Commercial Director Anthony Burns said: "We are passionate about championing the fantastic companies in Shropshire, many of whom have had a particularly tough 2020. Earlier in the year we were delighted to support the Chamber's Virtual Community Awards and we couldn't resist another chance to show the people and businesses of Shropshire that Paycare are here to help.

"It's never easy to run a small business - yet the finalists in the Best Small Business category have managed to not only sustain business, but also to develop, grow and thrive despite all the challenges this year has thrown their way.

"As well as our involvement in the Virtual Business Awards, as we mark our first year as members of the Shropshire Chamber, we want to support the region's dedicated managers and workforce with their physical, mental and financial health and wellbeing - so we are also offering a free trial of our Bundle wellbeing package to Chamber members."

Bundle is designed to protect employee health and wellbeing with access to a round-the-clock Telephone Support Helpline for any employee to call and confidentially chat about a wide range of life events. It also includes a 24/7 online and telephone GP Consultation Service to help individuals receive timely healthcare support, and access to Paycare Perks - an exclusive online discount platform which offers a variety of everyday savings on shopping, leisure, entertainment, travel, and health and fitness products and services.

The package has proven exceptionally popular since its launch earlier this year, and now Shropshire Chamber members will be able to sign up completely free until the end of March 2021. From April onwards, they can continue receiving the benefits on a no-obligation basis for £2 per employee per month.

Anthony added: "At Paycare we have a long and proud history of helping individuals and families, as well as companies and their employees to look after their health through our range of Health Cash Plans. Offering Free support when communities and businesses need it most, is just one of the ways we can really benefit the health and wellbeing landscape of the region.

"For us, it's all about looking at the entire health and wellbeing of our Members - not just their physical health but their mental, emotional and financial wellbeing too. That's why our Bundle has been designed to help employees access support for all these integral parts of their overall health and happiness.

"We're thrilled to be able to mark our first anniversary with Shropshire Chamber by offering the free Bundle trial, especially when employee physical and mental health is such a key focus for the county's businesses during these strange times."

Visit [www.paycare.org/bundle](http://www.paycare.org/bundle) more for information about Bundle, or if you're a Shropshire Chamber member and want to register for your free trial, please email [anthonyburns@paycare.org](mailto:anthonyburns@paycare.org)



# Businesses urged to be prepared for tax

Shropshire business owners and investors need to be prepared for tax increases that could be on the cards following a report commissioned by the Government.

Francesca Hutcheson, from Dyke Yaxley Chartered Accountants, in Shrewsbury and Telford, said the warning followed the publication of a report from the Office of Tax Simplification (OTS).

"This major review of the Capital Gains Tax system is likely to have real and wide-ranging consequences for local businesses and investors, and it's vital that entrepreneurs are ready for change."

Francesca said there were clear indications in the published report that Capital Gains Tax rates could be increased in the next Budget.

"With the Government under pressure to find ways to fund the cost of the Coronavirus crisis, it will come as no surprise that there are strong signals of an increase being planned in the near future."

"Business owners and investors who have been thinking about a sale or exit may be well advised to accelerate their plans and bank the lower CGT rates before any



Francesca Hutcheson

changes are introduced. It can take many months, and sometimes years, to achieve a successful sale of a trading company, so it would be prudent to take action now in order to start the process."

Francesca said the CGT regime was extremely complicated as there is no single rate of tax that applies to gains on disposal of capital assets – it can be anything from 0% to 28% with multiple rates in between.

"In the much-anticipated review from the OTS, there are wide-ranging recommendations as to how the CGT regime could be overhauled and

modernised. And the report suggests that aligning Capital Gains Tax rates more closely with Income Tax rates – currently up to 45% – would be a sensible starting point."

Other changes suggested include: the reduction in the Annual Exemption (from £12,300 to somewhere between £2,000 and £4,000); increased digitalisation by moving to real time CGT for all transactions; and improved reporting by investment managers.

"Worryingly, the report also questions whether the current uplift in valuation for assets on death should be retained. How this could be enforced though remains to be seen – is it realistic to expect children inheriting assets on the death of a parent to have a full record of the original cost and any enhancement expenditure on those assets?"

"We will have to wait for the Office of Tax Simplification's second report, due in early 2021, to find out more technical details but would recommend that anyone currently looking to exit business assets and investments push for early completion wherever possible."

# Sophie is welcomed to the team

**H**ere at Thomas Consulting we pride ourselves on the quality of our staff and recognise that our staff are our business.

**We concentrate on ensuring that each new member will work well with the existing team and have the abilities and personality to work with our existing client base.**

Our latest member of the Shrewsbury team has been no exception to that rule; Sophie Davies has returned to her Shropshire roots and has joined as a Principal Engineer. Earlier in the year Sophie began the process to become a Chartered Structural Engineer and sat the rigorous Institution of Structural Engineers (IStructE) exam. The IStructE exam is not an ordinary exam; it is a test of both knowledge and endurance. The exam lasts around 7 hours and has a pass rate of around 35%. The exam is in two parts and both parts must be passed. There is then a further interview panel consisting of two Chartered Engineers.

Due to the current pandemic the interview section of the two-part process to become a Chartered Engineer was delayed until earlier in November, and as is becoming the norm, was conducted remotely online.

Sophie has recently been advised that she has scored the highest mark of all the Midlands Counties Region candidates who sat the examination in 2020 and has earned Sophie the 'Bob Fisher Award'. This is an amazing accolade and signifies Sophie's commitment and passion for Structural Engineering.

In normal circumstances, Sophie would be presented with her certificate and award at a formal awards ceremony; again, this is going to have to be done virtually (unusual I hear you cry...). Professor Nethercot, who is a Past President of the Institution and who knew Bob Fisher well, will announce Sophie's award prior to his virtual talk on "Progressive Collapse of Buildings" to the Midlands region, this will take place on Tuesday 26th January 2021.

We have no doubt that Sophie we be confirmed as a Chartered Structural Engineer in the next few weeks and am sure you will join us to raise a glass to Sophie's success.

Stay safe and well from all of us at the Shrewsbury Office 01743 237940



Principal engineer - Sophie Davies

# Shropshire Business TV telling your story online

**T**he second edition of B2B streaming show, Shropshire Business Live TV, brought together award-winners, experts and new businesses for 90 minutes of informative entertainment.

The magazine-style show is editorially driven by the teams behind Shropshire Business and Shropshire Live, and produced and delivered by Yarrington from their new TV studios in Shrewsbury.

For the latest episode, host Carl Jones headed north to the Tern Valley business park in Market Drayton to chat to Shropshire Council and developers about the success of the latest phase.

Back in the studio, meanwhile, guests included Jordan Watkiss of Coopers Gourmet Foods, hot on the heels of the Roden-based company's success in the manufacturing category of the Chamber's virtual business awards.

There was also an in-depth look at the vision and principles behind Oswestry-based alarm maker Aico, the newly crowned Shropshire Company of the Year.

And there were a range of expert tips and advice pieces served up from local businesses including Nick Jones Wealth Planning, Lanyon Bowdler, and WR Partners.

The show was also the official launchpad for a new Shropshire-based venture, Soilife, a scientific approach for the wellbeing of soil run by a team of farmers, environmentalists and creatives.



*Jordan Watkiss of Coopers Gourmet Foods was a studio guest*



*Carl Jones on a fact-finding trip to Tern Valley business park in Market Drayton*



*Graham Mills of Nick Jones Wealth Planning was among the experts*

The next episode of the show will premiere on January 28.

There are a range of sponsorship and advertising opportunities available for companies looking to broadcast their

messages or engage with the business community in new and exciting ways.

For all the details – plus chance to watch the previous episodes and key interviews – see [sbltv.co.uk/episodes](http://sbltv.co.uk/episodes)

## Firms should look out for tax opportunities

Tax payers looking for higher returns on their investments are being encouraged to explore a lesser known form of tax relief.

Jess Swift, of Dyke Yaxley Chartered Accountants in Shrewsbury and Telford, said Investors' Relief was a largely overlooked but hugely valuable benefit that could be increasingly attractive with interest rates at record lows.

"The Spring Budget introduced some drastic overnight changes to Business Asset Disposal Relief which was formerly known as Entrepreneur's Relief, but the criteria for Investors' Relief remained unchanged.

"Where it is available, this relief reduces the rate of Capital Gains Tax from 20% to 10% on up to £10 million of lifetime gains.

"And now, given the low interest rates, investors may be prepared to take greater risks in order to potentially achieve higher returns, and Investors' Relief could play an important role in the decision-making process."

Jess said the aim of Investors' Relief was as an incentive to attract investment in unlisted trading companies.

"This means it's not generally available to employees and directors, but it may be available to directors who do not take a salary."

"The shares must be ordinary shares subscribed for in cash on or after March 17, 2016, and there is a minimum holding period of three years before the relief becomes available. There is also no 5% minimum holding and there are no excluded activities."

Jess said the April 5, 2020, self-assessment tax returns would be the first returns in which claims for Investors' Relief could be made as the three-year minimum holding period was only met on April 6, 2019.

"The legislation surrounding Investors' Relief and Business Asset Disposal Relief is extremely complex and investors should seek specialist advice before making any decisions to make sure they meet all the qualifying criteria."



*Jess Swift of Dyke Yaxley*

# College welcomes early decision on 2021 exams

**Telford College has welcomed the Government's early decision on the structure of GCSE and A level exams next year.**

Extra measures designed to 'boost fairness and support students' will be used in the summer, including advance notice for students on some of the areas to be covered.

Students taking vocational and technical qualifications will also see adaptations to their exams to ensure fairness.

Telford College principal and chief executive Graham Guest said the early decision would be welcomed by the 2,500 A level and GCSE students impacted at the college.

"I believe this is a good decision, because it takes the anxiety away for our students. Prior to this, they were facing the unknown, wondering exactly how they would be assessed this year.

"Our students have continued to receive learning throughout this difficult period, either on site or remotely, to ensure that they haven't fallen behind in their studies.

"But the flexibilities in the Government proposals will allow us to support any of the small number of students that may have been disadvantaged."

He added: "In our view, a decision made early is a good decision.

We can work with it, and would expect more of the details to start coming through to us from the exam bodies over the next few weeks."

The Department for Education said the plans were an attempt to make up for the disruption faced by students during the pandemic, and followed 'extensive engagement' with exams watchdog Ofqual, exam boards and senior leaders across the education sector.

As part of the plans, students will receive advance notice of some topic areas to be covered in exams, so that they can focus their revision.

There will also be exam aids - such as formula sheets - provided in some cases to cut down on the memorising required.

Mr Guest said: "The only reaction I've heard from students so far has been positive, because it takes away their uncertainty.

"They are happy that they now know what they need to contend with, and can just focus on the work required to ensure they progress to where they need to be.

"We are in unprecedented times, and I think that the decision which has been made is going to be positive for everybody - not just GCSE and A level students, but our technical and vocational students too.

"With a vaccine coming on board, everyone can see that there is light at the end of the tunnel, so we need to do everything we can to make sure that no-one gets left behind."



Telford College principal and chief executive Graham Guest

## Shropshire Chamber of Commerce Patrons . . .



Patron.

# Patrons participation



## Shropshire Chamber of Commerce's patrons got together in the virtual world to share their experiences, stories and top tips.

More than a dozen organisations were represented at the latest patron executive forum, which included a presentation from 7 Video – hot on the heels of their success at the Chamber's 2020 business awards.

The forums, currently being held on zoom, are an opportunity for patron members to update each other – and the Chamber – on good news stories, and share thoughts and ideas.

Chamber chief executive Richard Sheehan kicked off proceedings with an update on activities over the past few weeks, including an overview of how he sees the economy shaping up at the start of next year.

Each patron then had an opportunity to talk about their own trading experiences over the past few months, as well as outlining any opportunities for collaboration.

Neal Hooper, managing director of Aico in Oswestry which has just been crowned Shropshire's Company of the Year, spoke about the 'fantastic evening' at the Chamber's virtual business awards.

He also revealed how his company was looking to take on another apprentice, as well as further expanding its marketing team.

Each forum gives one patron a chance to deliver a more in-depth presentation about their business, and it was the turn of Pete Sims, director of 7 Video.

He explained how his business had been delivering everything from 10-second animations to full-blown feature films for customers looking to diversify and adapt to

the increasingly digital world during Covid-19.

"Everything that people had planned has been rapidly sped-up by Covid," he said. "People that do not like change are not going to thrive in this current environment.

"It's all about trying to utilise the mediums which are still available to them to get their message across."

He said 7 Video was looking to expand further in 2021, and was currently advertising two creative vacancies.

The next Shropshire Chamber patron executive forum is due to be held on January 27. For more details about the patrons, and the patron programme, see [shropshire-chamber.co.uk/about-us/patrons/](http://shropshire-chamber.co.uk/about-us/patrons/)

## Education hub is praised

Education secretary Gavin Williamson has welcomed Telford College's plans to open a new Maths and Digital Education and Enterprise Hub in the town centre.

The plans, part of Telford's growing 'station quarter', are a collaboration between the college, Telford & Wrekin Council, and other partners.

From January, a pilot Telford College project will be up and running to deliver innovative maths skills, including A level qualifications, operating from Addenbrooke House.

In a letter to Telford MP Lucy Allan, Mr Williamson says: "I am very pleased to see Telford coming forward with a proposal to use Towns Fund funding to strengthen technical education provision in the area.

"As we recover from the Covid-19 pandemic and look to take advantage of the opportunities created by leaving the European Union, skills are more important than ever as a driver of both productivity and social mobility.

"I welcome in particular the contribution that this proposal seeks to make to levelling up opportunity across the UK, and to strengthening higher technical education and STEM provision.

"I recently published reforms that aim to make higher technical education a high-quality, prestigious and popular choice. I also welcome the focus on responding to employer demand, and the engagement with local employers."

Mr Williamson's comments follow similar endorsements of the scheme from the chair of the Education Select Committee, Robert Halfon MP.

Mr Halfon has visited Telford College, and seen first-hand the work being done on boosting technical qualifications at facilities such as the college's automotive centre.

Lucy Allan said: "To receive a second letter praising the aims of the new digital and skills hub is a real sign of how important this scheme is for Telford.

"I will continue to work with the other members of the Towns Board to make this proposal a reality."

# Donation secures domestic abuse training

Teachers from every school in Telford & Wrekin will be trained to support children who have experienced domestic abuse.

Thanks to a £10,000 donation from Shropshire Freemasons, facilitated by the High Sheriff of Shropshire, the Severn Teaching School Alliance is able to run Expect Respect training sessions for one adult from each of the borough's 80 schools.

The training session aims to develop staff understanding of domestic abuse and the impact on children's mental health. The statutory curriculum for Relationships education, from September 2020, highlights the specific teaching of domestic abuse. The Expect Respect programme is an education toolkit for pupils aged four to 18 – teachers are trained to support those who have suffered domestic abuse, as well as giving all pupils an understanding of what a healthy relationship looks like.

The aims are to give youngsters the knowledge and vocabulary to identify and report domestic abuse, strengthen families, reduce incidences, and give teachers and children confidence about the issue.

The donation will also be used to fund training and classroom-based resources to roll the programme out to pupils, with the hope that the toolkit will be built into the curriculum for every year group going forward. Schools

will also be assisted to introduce a school-wide policy focused around supporting staff experiencing domestic abuse.

Course leader Sian Deane said: "The course is specially about both boys and girls understanding their emotions and accepting the consequences of their behaviours – if that isn't put in place at a young age, their behaviour is unlikely to change in their adult lives when they are forming relationships.

"We are aiming to reduce the number of young people who go on to become perpetrators or victims, and in the long-term would like to roll this programme out across Shropshire and beyond.

"By educating all children, we can offer a preventative curriculum, so whether or not the child experiences domestic abuse, they understand what a healthy relationship is and what it looks like."

There are 130,000 children in the UK living in homes with domestic abuse where there's a high risk of murder or serious injury; and thousands more live with domestic violence every day which has a serious impact on their health and wellbeing.

Nearly two thirds of children exposed to domestic violence are also directly harmed. Rates have sadly increased during the pandemic, and five women are now murdered a week by their partner or ex-partner – double

the pre-Covid figure. Telford & Wrekin has the highest rate of domestic abuse offences in West Mercia, with 4,800 incidents reported in 2018.

Dean Harris, High Sheriff of Shropshire, attended the first of the training sessions. She said: "I was delighted to facilitate funding for the project from Shropshire Freemasons. I was also pleased to connect Sian with Georgia Hooper and Rachel Williams who both gave their survivor stories, which were very impactful. This work will go a long way to ensure our young people understand what a healthy relationship looks like and in turn will hopefully help prevent them becoming victims (or perpetrators)."

Roger Pemberton, Shropshire Freemasons' Provincial Grand Master, added: "Domestic abuse is, more often than not, insidious. It breaks families; it wastes lives. We need to recognise it; we need to encourage victims to break their silence; we need to educate children to understand that it is not normal behaviour and that something can be done to help.

"The package that Sian Deane is rolling out to schools across the Borough of Telford and Wrekin is comprehensive and compelling. The Freemasons of Shropshire are honoured to have been able to assist by providing sufficient funds to enable the project to go ahead."

# UK Business Heroes honour

**A** Shropshire company has been recognised as one of the UK's 'Business Heroes' of 2020.

Bridgnorth-based Good2Great, which provides specialist business growth support to a range of firms and organisations in the county and beyond, received the accolade from The British Chambers of Commerce.

Johnny Themans, who runs Good2Great with wife Sally, said the nomination, from the Shropshire Chamber of Commerce, was made for the 'incredible' contribution their company had made to businesses and communities during this challenging year.

"2020 has presented so many unforeseen difficulties and stresses and we've really thrown ourselves into the challenge of helping people tackle these," he said.

"We were honoured and surprised to be recognised as a 'business hero' alongside a range of others throughout the country."

Good2Great was part of Shropshire Council's Covid Recovery Project offering targeted support to businesses, either start-ups or existing companies, via Zoom meetings.

"We helped 20 businesses on this scheme and many more in other ways - by offering an 'Emergency Cuppa' for our clients which means we are always on hand to listen and give guidance, especially appreciated during the pandemic, and we also set up the Growth Club to support businesses in a virtual environment and the Friday Hub, supported by the Marches Growth Hub Shropshire," Johnny explained.

Sally Themans also runs LoveBridgnorth on a voluntary basis and Love Wellington,



Sally and Johnny Themans of Good2Great

sponsored by Wellington Town Council.

Through these two initiatives she provided a wide range of support for retailers in both towns by sharing information on grants and loan schemes, gaining valuable publicity for the towns and promoting the popular 'Let's Get Local' campaign.

She also helped businesses which had 'fallen through the covid support net', such as The Crown in Bridgnorth and Burwarton Show. Andrew Corfield of The Crown commented: "Congratulations on this

award – much deserved. After weeks of not hearing anything from Shropshire Council regarding hospitality grants etc I finally got some help and support from them and none of this would have been possible without the intervention of Sally. Her advice in pointing me in the right direction has really helped and I am so grateful.

"So thank you Sally and please keep on doing the amazing work you do for Bridgnorth and all the retailers and business owners in the town."



Joanne Parsons has joined Aaron & Partners

## An expert property solicitor joins firm

An expert property solicitor from Shropshire has joined a leading local law firm to bolster its residential property department.

Joanne Parsons joins Aaron & Partners, which this month celebrated a series of listings in the prestigious Legal 500 directory, as a Senior Associate dealing with residential property matters for private clients.

Having started her career in the West Midlands, Joanne has been advising clients on all aspects of property for more than two decades, working for both national and regionally-focused legal practices.

As a Shropshire resident, she boasts a wealth of local expertise, and has represented a number of local developers in setting up new sites and dealing with large-scale plot sales within the region.

Joanne also specialises in dealing with London-based property, having assisted several long-standing clients with complex title leaseholds and shared freeholds in the capital.

Joanne said: "I'm pleased to be joining Aaron & Partners as it allows me to continue working in a region I'm proud to call home and a place where I really enjoy living and working.

"Property can be one of the most stressful and often complicated things a lot of us deal with in our lives, so my aim is to always provide clear advice and guidance to give everyone I work with peace of mind, especially in these challenging times.

"I'll be joining a team which already has an excellent reputation and successful track record in property and look forward to playing my part in the growth of our department."

Simon Ellis, Partner and Head of Real Estate at Aaron & Partners, added: "We've identified a need to further develop the residential side of our property team in Shropshire following a rising number of instructions from our private clients. Joanne joining us with her wealth of experience in this specific practice area is another fantastic boost for the team.

"The impact of the pandemic means there is uncertainty almost everywhere, which is why it's more important than ever to have the right advice when it comes to property. Joanne's exceptional level of knowledge, both locally and within the sector, allows us to bolster the residential conveyancing side of our Real Estate team and means we are perfectly placed to guide private clients through this current climate."

# Help for food and drink sector is here

**F**ood and drink businesses across the Marches are being provided with specialist support to help smaller, new and novice exporters break into international markets.

A new cluster group – overseen by a specialist adviser – is being formed to bring together small and large food and drink businesses in a Marches-wide network so that companies can work with each other and with one local on-the-ground contact.

Food and drink businesses who are new to export and those already trading overseas will be supported to target new export markets to help their sales grow.

A new specialist food and drink adviser for the sector has been appointed to cover the Marches Local Enterprise Partnership region, working with Shropshire Chamber of Commerce and Herefordshire & Worcestershire Chamber along with the Department for International Trade (DIT).

David Caine will work to connect businesses within the Marches Cluster to work together to share their knowledge and experience as well to help businesses enter new overseas markets and develop their export sales.

David, who has more than 15 years' experience working in the food industry and exporting, says food and drink plays a key part in the economy of Herefordshire, Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin.

"My role recognises the importance of this sector to our region and I want to help as many food and drink businesses as possible develop new routes into overseas markets by identifying and investigating international opportunities.

"I will also be working to develop more collaboration between all food and drink businesses so that they can share their knowledge, learn from each other and develop and forge new connections. I want to hear their concerns and challenges so that I can act as a voice for them and address the specific needs of the industry. By strengthening the amount of collaboration across the region we can work with companies to develop not only their international markets but



New food and drink specialist David Caine

also grow in the UK as well."

David said the new food and drink cluster would be officially launched at a special event on December 2 and that a range of workshops, advice sessions and networking opportunities would follow.

Mandy Thorn, chair of the Marches LEP, welcomed the appointment and said it demonstrated the way the LEP worked with partners such as DIT and the Chamber of Commerce to bring real help and support to businesses.

"The food and drink sector supports more than 9,000 jobs across the Marches in companies of all shapes and sizes, from international brands such as Heineken in Hereford and Muller in Shropshire and Telford, to the vast array of smaller artisan producers for which the region is famous.

"This new post is part of a wider team of specialist DIT ITA advisers working across the Marches to ensure the region is seizing the opportunities for international trade which are opening up.

"By working with our partners, we want to give all our food and drink businesses the best possible chance of success in this fast-changing world."

David, who will be based with Shropshire Chamber of Commerce, can be contacted on 07593 562050 or at david.caine@mobile.trade.gov.uk

To register for the launch event on December 2 visit: <https://www.events.great.gov.uk/ehome/index.php?eventid=200215246&>

*This new post is part of a wider team of specialist DIT ITA advisers working across the Marches to ensure the region is seizing the opportunities for international trade which are opening up*

# Glue down the loo – surely you are mistaken?

One thing shared by all humans and animals is the natural requirement to use the toilet, and yet our sensitivities and embarrassment stop us from having conversations about what really goes on in the smallest room. One notable exception, of course, must be the Japanese for whom the lavatory is not only a technical marvel, but a luxury experience and source of great national pride!

Toilets at sea have evolved from the original “heads” where sailors would perch precariously over the crashing waves with nothing but a plank of wood to hide their modesty to the notorious hand pumped devices still found on some private yachts all the way up to what we have today, which apart from the complicated sewage treatment plants found in the engine room, are pretty similar to what you would find at home. In fact, the similarities don’t end there as many rural properties are now connecting up to treatment plants as found at sea...with all of their inherent problems around blockages and servicing after the ‘General Binding Rules’ regarding off grid septic tanks came to a head this year.

In Europe, not much advancement was made after the famous Thomas Crapper, the son of a sailor, who supplied flush toilets to royalty in the 19th century; or Joseph Bazalgette who created the impressive steam powered pumping engines housed at Crossness in London

which, combined with his innovative sewer system famously cured the appalling Cholera Epidemic and “Great Stink” of the city. So proud were the grateful nobility of England, that the iconic Queen Victoria allowed the giant sewage pumps to be named after her children. Some old houses still have their original equipment in full working order!

Romans used natural sponge on a stick to polish their behinds (creating the idiom “getting the wrong end of the stick”), others used newspaper or rags and it wasn’t until “splinter free” toilet tissue was offered to the market in 1935 that the toilet tissue industry started to turn into something that we would recognise today.

We live in one of the most environmentally conscious times in human history, and whilst nano plastics have been almost eliminated from our toiletries, toilet paper is still being glued together for our comfort. In fact nearly 3 grams of lamination glue is used in each roll, which although not sounding like very much soon adds up; an average sized cruise ship of 4000 passengers, discharges nearly 1.5 tonnes of glue to sea over the course of a year, causing not only environmental issues but also creating adhesive sludge and foam within ships sewage systems. Locally, small towns and villages contribute incredible amounts to the UK tally with Much Wenlock and Bridgenorth flushing

3.7 and 5.3 tonnes of lamination glue, respectively!

Luckily, a new company has produced a solution that tackles both blockages and the discharge of lamination glues. Taking a more environmentally-friendly approach to the emergent toilet tissue issue, Shrewsbury-based Tanki is able to supply a sustainably sourced and produced paper that does not congeal to clog up sewage treatment systems or pollute the environment.

Matt O’Crowley, Director, Tanki: said: “It surprises many that the humble loo roll contains a lot more than just two or three sheets of very thin, biodegradable paper. Typically, every roll of two- or three-ply toilet paper contains around 2.7g of lamination adhesive and softening agents that bond the sheets together.”

While these glues are water soluble, they contain nano-plastics and frequently contain polyvinyl acetates (PVA) and silicon which cannot be broken down if released into the marine environment. Another constituent is Bisphenol A, a carcinogen and endocrine blocker which is not permitted for maritime use.

Within weeks of manufacture, Tanki has already won a UK Innovation Award, presented by Dee Caffari and introduced by HRH The Princess Royal as well as being announced as a National Finalist for the UK Rural Business Awards.

# Law firm maintains excellent rankings in a national guide

**A** Shropshire law firm has maintained its excellent rankings in a national guide, with 14 lawyers highlighted as recommended practitioners.

Lanyon Bowdler has eight practice areas recommended in the 2021 Chambers UK legal guide, six of which are ranked in the top band.

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.

Brian Evans, managing partner of Lanyon Bowdler, which has offices across Shropshire, Herefordshire and North Wales, said Chambers UK was a highly-respected guide.

He said: “Law firms are always very keen to be included in the guide because it is shaped by comments from clients themselves, along with independent research and interviews with other professionals.

“We are therefore very pleased to see eight practice areas and 14 individual lawyers recommended in the guide.

“It is a great achievement for every lawyer included in the guide, but I particularly want to highlight Edward Nutting who has been recommended for agriculture in Wales for the first time.

“I also want to mention Beth Heath from



*Brian Evans, managing partner of Lanyon Bowdler*

our clinical negligence team who is making her debut in the guide, and joins Kay Kelly and Lucy Small at the very top of their field.

“The firm’s head of personal injury, Neil Lorimer, is again ranked in the top band for his expertise and specialist knowledge which is nationally recognised.”

As well as the rankings, the guide includes testimonials from clients about

individual lawyers and firms. The guide says: “Beth Heath receives considerable praise for her clinical negligence expertise as well as her advocacy skills, with interviewees stating that ‘she excels in the tactical litigation process’.

“One client enthuses that Lucy Small is ‘absolutely fantastic: she has always been on hand and very helpful with explaining confusing situations to us in a simple, understanding way’.”

Describing the family law team, the guide adds: “One source describes the lawyers as ‘absolutely fantastic’, adding that ‘their advice is second to none’.

“Another impressed interviewee lauds the firm as an ‘excellent organisation that has true experts in the field’.”

The full list of recommended lawyers is:  
 Andrew Pegg (litigation)  
 Andrew Evans (agriculture)  
 Edward Nutting (agriculture)  
 Lucy Small (clinical negligence)  
 Emma Broomfield (clinical negligence)  
 Kay Kelly (clinical negligence)  
 Beth Heath (clinical negligence)  
 Sue Hodgson (family)  
 Lisa Grimmer (family)  
 Colin Spanner (family)  
 Neil Lorimer (personal injury)  
 Dawn Humphries (personal injury)  
 Louise Howard (personal injury)  
 Edward Rees (private wealth law)

## Support for parents experiencing abuse in workplace policies

Shropshire's High Sheriff is calling on employers to support staff members being abused by their children.

There is a perception domestic abuse is only between partners or former partners, but it is estimated up to 10% of families experience child to parent abuse (CPA), also sometimes called adolescent to parent violence and abuse (APVA).

Throughout her year in office, Dean Harris has been highlighting the work of PEGS – a national charity based in Shropshire which assists professionals and affected families. Now, she is hoping to encourage the county's businesses to include CPA in their domestic abuse policies.

Dean says: "It's encouraging to see domestic abuse being talked about more openly, but we need to include child to parent abuse within those conversations. There may be feeling of guilt, shame and embarrassment associated with CPA but it's only by encouraging victims to speak out that we can start to change that.

"It is a little-known and often misunderstood issue, with parents sadly all too often blamed. It is an invisible phenomenon with behaviours including

physical acts (hitting, kicking, throwing things), emotional (belittling, using humiliating language), coercion and control (refusing to attend education, threatening to harm themselves or others), financial (constantly demanding money, stealing from the household, taking out credit cards in parents' names) and sexual abuse (leaving inappropriate images around, inappropriate touching).

"Because parents may not feel able to speak about their situation with their employer, it's important for businesses to be alert to the potential signs which include: employees having to take time off work or being late constantly, the child's school or police contacting them while they're at work, difficult behaviour being mentioned but minimised or excused, or them having unexplained injuries that they don't want to discuss."

A PEGS 2020 survey revealed almost 35% of parents who are being abused by their children have had to reduce their working hours, and nearly 22% had to leave employment as a result of their family situation. Almost 40% of parents felt they would not consult colleagues for help.

Michelle John, founder of PEGS, says "there are many ways a business can support a staff member experiencing CPA: Domestic abuse policies and staff training should always include CPA – and displaying information around the workplace can also reinforce that anyone experiencing it will be supported".

"If a disclosure is made, then it's important to remain non-judgemental and not talk negatively about the child; make reasonable adjustments to working hours if it's possible and safe to do so; ask the employee what they feel would help; and consider providing a space for expert services to attend and offer support if these are not accessible at their home.

"If you do not feel the person is safe then the safeguarding policy will need to be followed, and if you are unsure on how to support them effectively then do seek professional support. Reassuring them in the first instance that you believe them, it's not their fault, and they are not alone can be so helpful."

Visit [www.pegssupport.com](http://www.pegssupport.com) or email [hello@pegssupport.com](mailto:hello@pegssupport.com) for more information about CPA.

## Shropshire firm's legal experts make the elite list of 500 again

**S**pecialist lawyers from a Shropshire law firm have been named among the best in the UK within the 2021 edition of the Legal 500.

Experts from mfg Solicitors are named in the elite legal list - with two teams ranked in the number one spot.

Highlighted in the guide as coveted 'Tier One' teams are mfg's Contentious Trusts and Probate department, together with its Agricultural and Rural Affairs team.

It is the seventh year in succession that mfg's Contentious Trusts and Probate department has been named as a top tier team. Representing clients across the country in complex wills and inheritance cases, it is led by lawyers Robert Weston, Suzanne Lee and Andrew Chandler.

Meanwhile, the firm's award-winning agricultural team move up to a Tier One rating following another successful year advising farmers, landowners and rural businesses on a range of issues.

Also singled out for extensive praise is litigation partner and insolvency expert Sam Pedley, while senior associate Andrew Chandler and associate Nick Playford are labelled as 'rising stars'.

Tom Esler, partner at mfg Solicitors, said: "Led by Robert Weston, our Contentious Trusts and Probate team has consistently been one of the leading teams across the UK for several years.

"This is another tremendous milestone for them, but also for our agricultural department who with Iain Morrison at the helm are



Andrew Chandler and Robert Weston

amongst the country's most sought-after specialists.

"It's a superb testament to the professionalism of our teams and underlines the quality of advice we provide to clients every day.

"We are also delighted to see rising stars such as Andrew and Nick being recognised, while Sam Pedley is deservedly picked-out again for the strength and consistency of his

advice to businesses. Overall, it is a fantastic way to conclude what has been a successful but tough year."

More than 250,000 people were interviewed across the world during the past 12 months to produce the latest Legal 500. Firms and lawyers are recommended purely on merit. mfg Solicitors has six offices across the region in Kidderminster, Bromsgrove, Birmingham, Worcester, Telford and Ludlow.



# A national finalist

## Adcote School is a finalist for 'Senior School of the Year 2020'.

The news comes after the non-selective all-girls' school won a national award for its Prep School last year and marks the fifth time in three years that Adcote has been a finalist for a major national award.

Last year Adcote was the winner for the prestigious national award for 'Academic Excellence and Innovation' in the Prep/Junior School category at the Independent Schools Association (ISA) annual awards.

Now it hopes to secure a win for its Senior School in this year's ISA Awards in recognition of the far reaching changes it has implemented over the last three years.

These include the introduction of greater personalised learning, which has led to impressively improved academic standards and exam results and an enhanced programme of personal development that nurtures individual talent and equips students with the skills they will need to lead happy and successful lives.

Headmistress Diane Browne said: "This is the third year in a row that Adcote's excellence has been recognised at a national level.

"To be a finalist for 'Senior School of the Year' is an amazing achievement and we are so proud that our transformational journey over recent



Adcote School is a finalist for 'Senior School of the Year 2020'

*To be a finalist for 'Senior School of the Year' is an amazing achievement and we are so proud that our transformational journey over recent years has culminated in this incredible honour*

years has culminated in this incredible honour."

Adcote, which welcomes students of all abilities between the ages of 7 and 18, has seen exam results soar over recent years.

Published Government performance tables for secondary schools, measuring the academic progress of individual students between GCSEs and A-Level, put Adcote at the top of the table of schools in Shropshire and

in the top 50 independent schools in England.

This year more than 70% of the school's A-Level results were A\*/A grades with 86% of all grades being A\* to B. A total of 41% of A-Level students achieved straight A\*/A grades. In GCSEs more than 50% of the grades were at the highest levels of 7, 8 and 9 (A/A\*).

Throughout lockdown Adcote students continued their normal timetable of lessons through virtual classes led by teachers online.

Adcote is one of the first schools in Shropshire to become a Google For Education School, giving students and teachers access to innovative digital teaching and learning support tools.

## It's awards news galore

Shropshire's top events company is in the running to be named one of the best rural businesses in the UK after being shortlisted for a Rural Business Award.

Shropshire Festivals has been shortlisted in the Best Rural Tourism Business category at the 2020/21 awards, held in partnership with Amazon. The local company will battle it out against fellow rural businesses, entrepreneurs and enterprises from across the country for the chance to be named a national winner.

Director and Co-Founder of The Rural Business Awards, Jemma Clifford, said: "This year has been an unprecedented challenge for businesses across the country but we have still had a fantastic amount of entries from rural businesses, showing the true determination of people working in the rural economy. On behalf of the RBA team, we want to say well done to Shropshire Festivals, and all the shortlisted businesses, and wish them luck ahead of the national final."

The Rural Business Awards will be hosting an online National Final on Thursday 25th February 2021.

Shropshire Festivals have also



Beth Heath of Shropshire Festivals

recently been nationally recognised as a 'UK Business Hero 2020' by the British Chambers of Commerce. The Shropshire Chamber of Commerce nominated Shropshire Festivals for the award following their work throughout 2020, which saw them diversify in to drive-in events and hampers. They received a

special message of support from HRH The Countess of Wessex, who congratulated nominated businesses on their positive contributions and wished them every success in the future.

Owner, Beth Heath, has also been nominated for a National Business Women's Award in the Business Chameleon category. She said, "My eternal optimism and positivity has been truly tested this year, so to come to the end of 2020 with a raft of award nominations under our belt feels like a big pat on the back for making it through! We have had to be really flexible to keep the business strong. Our PR and marketing arm, Shropshire ThinkTank, is busier than ever, we have hampers flying off the shelves, lots of events lined up for 2021 and now award nominations recognising our hard work, so there is actually lots to be positive about – although of course there is lots still to be cautious about too.

"We will be crossing our fingers on the night of the awards, and whatever the result we are ready to take on 2021!"

Visit [www.shropshirefestivals.co.uk](http://www.shropshirefestivals.co.uk) for more information.

# Ten year partnership marked

Telford-based reputation management and communications business, Zen Communications, is celebrating the start of its 11th year supporting a fellow West Midlands-based company.

Zen began working with Wedge Group Galvanizing Ltd, headquartered in Willenhall, in the summer of 2010 with an initial requirement to expand brand awareness, explore more creative media opportunities, and ultimately drive new business leads.

Ten years on and the partnership is still going strong, with the Zen team supporting the largest hot-dip galvanizing organisation in the UK to strengthen its already world-class reputation across core sectors including construction, architecture, and rail.

Rhiannon Williams, Head of Agency at Zen Communications, said: "We're so

proud to work alongside such a fantastic business as Wedge, and it really has been such an honour to support the team over the past ten years.

"As an agency, we only ever work with clients who we truly believe in, who share our own ethos and values, and who we love working with! We work in true collaboration with each of our clients supporting them to shout louder – and more strategically – about what they're doing, which is testament to the long-term relationships we have with them.

"In fact, it's very rare in the PR and communications world to have an agency-client relationship last this long (the average is under three years), and we're proud to have a number of clients heading for such a milestone."

"We've been by the Wedge team's side through many milestones over the

years including the company's 150th anniversary, the launch of a new Head Office, and numerous long-service celebrations, and we're looking forward to marking many more together as we head into 2021."

Andy Harrison, Director of Sales & Marketing at Wedge Group Galvanizing Ltd, said: "Zen has been an excellent PR partner for us over the years, and are extremely proactive, very professional, and highly organised.

"One of our core values as a business is that of loyalty and we're proud of the long-standing associations we have with our partners and suppliers, including our decade with Zen."

For further information please call 01952 200722, alternatively visit [www.zen-communications.co.uk](http://www.zen-communications.co.uk) or email [hello@zen-communications.co.uk](mailto:hello@zen-communications.co.uk)

# Wrekin increases social investment



Wayne Gethings and construction ready trainees (taken before covid-19 restrictions), construction ready is an employability project bringing people in to the construction sector

## The Wrekin Housing Group has published its latest Social Value Report.

The report sets out how the non-profit housing and care provider generated £55.9 million of social value in the local economy during 2019-20.

Through social investment Wrekin aims to improve wellbeing and resilience across communities and for individuals. Opportunities, initiatives, placements and other investments provided by Wrekin bought

49 people in to employment, created 21 apprenticeships and 45 training placements.

Wrekin drives social investment in four areas: financial and social inclusion, health and wellbeing, environmental sustainability and employment, skills and training. Outcomes include over 350 volunteering days enabling staff to give back and others to gain new skills, saving over 498 tonnes of waste from landfill and providing dementia awareness training to over 500 people.

Group Chief Executive Wayne Gethings said "At Wrekin we make a difference to

people's lives and social value is at the heart of how we do this. The results of this report clearly set out how we share the benefits and opportunities right across the whole community, economically, socially and environmentally.

"Nothing says this better than our response to Covid-19 where, in addition to our usual services, we have completed over 3,500 additional tasks ranging from delivering medicines to befriending phone calls, this is all down to our staff and the approach we take to our work every day."

# Support online workers

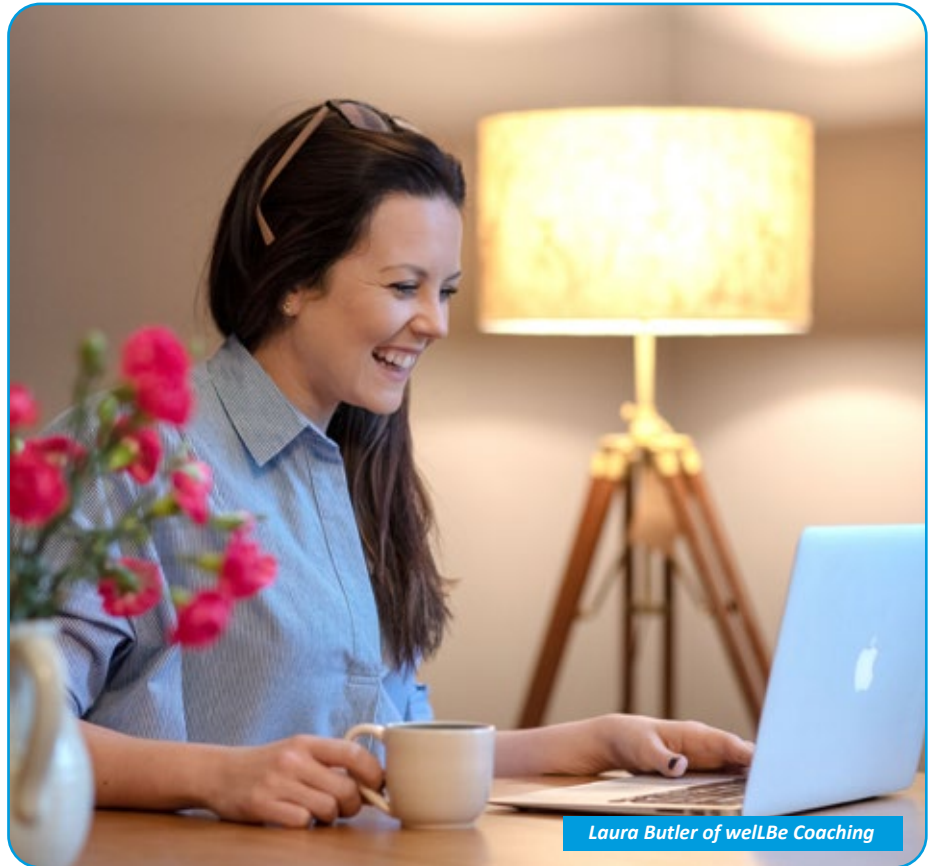
**W**ith social distancing set to remain and remote working becoming more prevalent, leading professional health and wellness coaching provider, wellBe, has strengthened its digital offering. The new online webinars and coaching programmes have been specifically designed to help organisations and staff tackle the new normal.

With remote working becoming commonplace as society focuses on practicing social distancing, it has placed significant pressures on companies and staff alike. Working from home can leave employees feeling out of sync with their regular routine, increasing anxiety and feelings of isolation. Working alone, away from colleagues, also makes it harder to find the motivation and focus required to achieve success.

Adapting to the changing environment, leading health and wellness coaching providers, wellBe, have launched a range of online webinars and coaching programmes. Designed specifically to be undertaken virtually, these new offerings help organisations navigate the challenges that working from home brings whilst supporting the mental and physical health of employees.

Since launching their online workshops, wellBe has been able to help transform companies by creating a healthy, positive and focused workforce. Teaching a wide range of strategies, the courses are designed to effect real change within the organisation, helping staff to cope with remote working and ensuring they are supported throughout.

Laura Butler, Owner of wellBe, added, "The global pandemic has completely



Laura Butler of wellBe Coaching

transformed our way of life. Remote working has become commonplace, and many people are now facing rising anxiety and stress. At wellBe, we have had to adapt our own services to meet the social distancing restrictions, and our new online courses have proven incredibly popular, with packages to suit every industry and budget.

Your staff's health and wellness has never been more important, and our mission is to

help businesses enjoy a stronger and happier workforce. Our highly experienced team can provide you with techniques to create a permanent positive change within your colleagues, creating a happy culture and keeping your team connected, even if they cannot be together." For more information on wellBe Coaching, visit the website at [www.wellbecoaching.co.uk/](http://www.wellbecoaching.co.uk/) or email Laura directly [Laura@laurabutlercoaching.co.uk](mailto:Laura@laurabutlercoaching.co.uk)

## Is it possible for the internet to go off?

Here's an interesting question posed to chamber member PC Net by a client: "Can the internet go off?"

"And if it can, what happens to all my important data?"

PC Net managing director Katy Jones thought the simple enquiry might be of interest to other chamber members - business owners who have probably had the same thought from time to time.

"Our level of dependency on the internet is growing all the time," she says. "We use it for pretty much everything we do, running the country, keeping our airports and railways functioning, operating a business, right down to ordering mum's birthday present - all of which can be a bit scary if we sit and think about it for too long!"

So, what would happen if the internet went off? Could it happen and, if so, what about all that vital information we rely on to carry out our day-to-day lives?

Would it be lost forever?

Katy says the short answer is no, your data isn't going to be affected.

"The internet is purely a flow of information without one single connection point where data travels through.

"It's fluid, a bit like a river, if one tributary is blocked water always finds a new route to continue on its way and it's almost impossible to block every part of the river at the same time.

"Free flowing data is much the same and the internet was designed to enable data to find a way around the parts of a network which may 'go down'.

"The internet is actually more of a concept than something tangible, relying on a physical infrastructure to enable it to work.

"So, having offered reassurance about flowing data, it's also worth mentioning that aspects of the internet can go down or be taken down which can affect access

and the way you operate. It's a fact that Governments around the world can 'switch off' the internet by ordering service providers to block certain areas from receiving signals.

"This happened more than 200 times across 33 different countries last year, with most of the shutdowns being made during protests while some occurred during elections and, of course, there are other glitches and issues which can more ordinarily occur.

"A much bigger worry than internet data flow is the loss of your important, sensitive, information by other means - namely a security breach.

"It's a growing problem and one which needs your urgent attention if you want to protect the integrity of your business."

For more information about keeping your business secure, contact PC Net Solutions on 01743 290588 or send email to [katy@pcnetsolutions.co.uk](mailto:katy@pcnetsolutions.co.uk)

## Put a spring in your step



Bruce Orme and Bob the Hydration Station

Wenlock Spring is a family owned business, established in 1989, supplying water coolers and award winning natural sourced waters that are responsibly bottled at source and packaged in an environmentally friendly way.

The company has an ethos based around sustainability and caring for the environment. Recently 25 acres of Miscanthus grass have been planted to provide carbon neutral energy for the biomass boilers that heat the water for the washing and sterilising of the returnable water cooler bottles.

Recently the company has rebranded the retail side of the business to Wenlock Water, which supplies businesses, schools, colleges, shops, cafes, restaurants, hotels and private homes with bottled and mains fed water coolers, hot water boilers, hydration stations and small packs of Wenlock Spring Water.

Director, Bruce Orme along with his team have been developing new products and services for their customers – including “Bob the Hydration Station” which earlier this year was installed and tested in Church Stretton Secondary School. Bob has recently been fitted with optional hands free foot pedals for dispensing the filtered and chilled water into the children’s refillable bottles.

“I wanted to produce something robust, adaptable and sustainable”, added Bruce. “It’s also important to me that we are able to build Bob locally in Shropshire, supporting local jobs and the economy”. Bob – which stands for Best of British, has been designed to be fun to use, reliable and easy to keep clean and maintain.

With plans to become the water cooler supplier of choice locally and installing more Bob’s at schools, colleges and workplaces in the coming months, it’s certainly looking like a busy start to 2021. Visit the newly updated website at [www.wenlockwater.co.uk](http://www.wenlockwater.co.uk) where it’s easy to see the full range of products and services on offer from this great Shropshire business.

# Soaring sales of local produce via hamper initiative



Beth Heath with one of the hampers from her range

**Local food businesses have sold more products through Shropshire Festivals’ hamper company than they normally do at their festivals.**

Amid the 2020 pandemic, Shropshire Festivals diversified in to hampers. The Shropshire Hamper Company sources products from local food and drink companies that have been unable to exhibit at their festivals this year.

Producers including Heather’s Harvest and Patchwork Pâté have reported selling more products to the local hamper company since it launched in September, compared to how much they sell at events such as the Shrewsbury Food Festival, organised by Shropshire Festivals.

Founder of the Shropshire Hamper

Company and Shropshire Festivals, Beth Heath, says that sales of hampers have been far higher than she anticipated, indicating that the people of Shropshire are keen to get behind our local, independent food and drink businesses.

She said, “The response to our hampers has been absolutely amazing! They have been flying off the shelves, which has meant we have been buying in produce from local businesses in much higher volumes than we originally planned to. I’m sure that has been very welcome to our local suppliers during such a challenging time.

“In particular orders for corporate hampers have proved very popular. Businesses have loved choosing bespoke options with personalised packaging.

Visit [shropshirehamper.co.uk](http://shropshirehamper.co.uk) to view the full range.

# One life – make sure you live it

**T**hea Roberts is an Executive Coach & Mentor, Advanced Facilitator, and Speaker. Drawing on 3 decades of retail and consumer goods experience to MD level, she now supports businesses and individuals to reach their personal, career and commercial goals. Thea works 1:1 coaching clients from The Premier League, to Solopreneurs and business owners, she delivers Leadership Masterclasses for the Shropshire Chamber of Commerce's Corporate membership and has recently spoken at TEDx Wolverhampton. In addition to her coaching business, she is co-founder of HorseFest – a summer festival for horse lovers.

**Who is someone you admire, and why?**

New Zealand's Prime Minister, Jacinda Ardern for her well-articulated belief that it takes courage and strength to be an empathetic leader.

**Tell me three pet hates?**

Selfishness, Bigotry and Wonky pictures on the wall (I always straighten them!)

**What's a typical day like for you?**

Life has a rhythm at the moment, much more than pre-Covid life! I'm generally working at home now and so I'm up around 6.30 to feed my horse and 4 cats.

I ride before work if I can squeeze it in, then move into a day of zoom coaching and meetings!

**Do you have any skills or talents that most people don't know about?**

I'm known for being horsey now, so a lot of my Shropshire based friends don't know how many other sports I have played in the past, such as rugby, cricket, hockey and I used to play football and fence when I was little!

**If you could be anywhere, where would you be?**

I'm very fortunate to live in a beautiful county and I'm really quite happy to be here, however if I were to choose somewhere far flung it would be on horseback in the Okavango Delta in Botswana.

**Flashback to when you were 10 years old. What did you want to be when you grew up?**

A Barrister – because my Mum said I was good at arguing!



Thea Roberts

**If we went to 'happy hour', what would you order?**

A Gin and tonic, I love that crisp fresh taste – have you tried Ludlow gin? It's incredible.

**Finish this sentence. On Sunday mornings, you can usually find me...**

...hacking around the beautiful Shropshire countryside on my horse Jonny.

**How do you want people to remember you?**

As someone who cared, was there when they needed help and made them smile.

**What do you think are the best skills that you bring to your job?**

My ability to actively listen, understand, ask open questions and use my commercial experience to support others.

**Name three words that best describe you.**

Positive, energetic and determined.

**How do you think your colleagues would describe you?**

Focussed, supportive and organised.

**What do you want to make sure you do before you die?**

My bucket list is so long!! Here's some snippets - I'd love to visit Argentina, see the Flamingos at LeKhubu Island in Botswana & drive a Porsche 911.

**What's a goal you have for yourself that you want to accomplish in the next year?**

Deliver a fun, inspirational, exciting and Covid-safe HorseFest Festival at Weston Park 23-25 July 2021.

**What are your highlights or lowlights of your career so far?**

HIGHLIGHTS: Dining at Buckingham Palace, with a select group of businesses that had showed significant support for the Prince of Wales's Charity 'In Kind'

Joining the global consumer goods leadership team at Essity as the only female Regional Managing Director, responsible for the UK and Republic of Ireland, over £450M turnover and more than 110 people. I was in a privileged position to role model and shine a light for more females to step into senior commercial roles.

Starting 2 of my own businesses and thriving in a completely new career chapter in my late 40's.

LOWLIGHTS: I don't really believe in lowlights – there's always something positive to come out of a challenging situation, even if it takes a while for it to show!

**What publications do you regularly read?**

The Horse & Hound because – well it's clear by now that I love horses!

Your Chamber Your Voice – to keep up with the local business news.

I also read a lot on the web, including articles on The Harvard Business Review.

**What are you happiest doing, when you're not working?**

Anything horsey, road biking, cooking and chilling with friends.

**What are some causes you care about?**

I'm an enormous supporter of breaking down barriers to diversity and inclusion. I recently did a TEDx talk on increasing the female talent pool.

I also support charities through HorseFest, such as the Lingen Davies Cancer Fund and the Midlands Air Ambulance. They need as much help as we can give them and do incredible work.

**What do you do with friends and family in your spare time?**

I'm a big foodie so I love to visit some of the incredible restaurants in Shropshire with friends and family. To help burn off the calories I road bike with my husband and I'm an active member of the Shrewsbury & District riding club with my horse Jonny, where I was Chairwoman for 4 years.

**What would be your personal motto?**

One life – live it!

# Landmark achievement for a document management firm

**D**ocument management company Topwood Ltd has successfully achieved the British Standard 10008 for the legal admissibility of electronic documents. Through a series of audits, both the quality of scanned documents and the security of controls and procedures have been adjudged as meeting the most stringent of standards.

Owner of Topwood, Mr Tom Gilruth stated, "We are delighted to have successfully achieved 10008. This was a key target for us since we scaled up the scanning bureau earlier in the year. In truth, I have been amazed by the commitment of my staff team and their 'buy-in' to the vision we put forward to them. Getting 10008 is a real affirmation that their hard work is paying off and that we are now a very serious player in the Electronic Document world".

"2019 was an exceptional year for Topwood Ltd. It saw us move into our new 60,000 sq ft home on the Wrexham Industrial Estate, which has enabled us to push forward with significant growth in both storage and shredding services. The major part of 2020 was to be mainly about consolidation, embedding some new processes and software and increasing tonnage on each of our regional 'shred on site' routes. Like most businesses, we had no idea of the drastic change of circumstance that hit us in March.

Working from home, and the lockdown of many city centre offices, meant that the needs of our clients changed overnight and our move into a more digitally led business was a necessary response."

Having documents scanned by Topwood's 10008 compliant processes means that any electronic document is automatically categorized as evidence B which is the second tier down after Eyewitness accounts and is the very highest for digital documents. This is very important for Topwood's clients, many of whom are the region's major law firms.

Commenting on the 10008 Standard, Topwood's new Business Development Director, Mark Baterip explained, "Achieving 10008 literally puts us in the top 10% of companies in our industry. In terms of what is says to our clients, it is the 'gold standard' both in terms of the quality of work we do but also the security and robustness of our processes. Having begun this journey in June, I am justifiably proud of the efforts of my team and the work and learning that they have put in".

Topwood continues to build on a solid fifteen year history and the development of more electronic solutions is a natural and almost inevitable part of its evolution.

The company is expanding its workforce and is growing its client base at a time which poses some very specific challenges for all businesses. Topwood is proud of the good news that is surrounding its development at present, at a time when good news is a rare commodity.



Tom Gilruth, Managing Director Topwood Ltd

## Five go scanning at Topwood



New recruits – Dave (Sales Admin); Brooke (Senior Prepper); Ivan (IT Technician); Mark and Tracey (Senior Scanner)

Despite a difficult 2020 for all businesses, document management business Topwood Ltd has expanded its workforce with FIVE new appointments being made in the last six months. The appointments support the strategic development of Topwood's bulk scanning service to provide more advanced digital services and cloud based solutions.

The appointments are at all levels throughout the business with the most senior being that of Mark Baterip (pictured) to the role of Business Development Director. Mark explained, "To develop the digital offering at Topwood we have had to invest heavily in all aspects of the process. New hardware and software are all well and good but the strength and uniqueness of any business is only really the people it employs. We are delighted with the team we have built and we are looking forward to a very exciting 2021".

# New members to engage with

## ASTLEY

### On The Pitch Coaching

07709 357467

Business Coaching / Training areas of coverage are Shropshire, Telford, Staffordshire, Worcestershire and Birmingham

## BIRMINGHAM

### Lillian Stanley Financial Services Ltd

0121 8278827

Motor, Asset, Commercial Finance  
Specialist Broker

## MARKET DRAYTON

### Capex Procurement Ltd

07796 170927

Consultancy Procurement

## NEWCASTLE-UNDER-LYME

### Keele University

01782 734492

Officially the University of Keele, Whatever your needs, Keele University has the tools, expertise and resources to complement your business perfectly and allow it to reach its full potential

## OSWESTRY

### Rocking Horse Oswestry Ltd

01691 570218

Film making videography company specialising in creative, commercial and community projects

### Evolved Group Limited

01691 778846

Design & construction of low energy homes and supply of goods

## ROSS-ON-WYE

### Accredited Marketing Ltd

01989 762243

Marketing, sales and social media training and consultancy

## SHREWSBURY

### Ryminster Healthcare Ltd

0871 704 2727

Medical, private healthcare

### Shrewsbury Half Marathon

07535 324056

UKRunChat Hour is a twice weekly chat hour on all things running which takes place every Wednesday & Sunday on Twitter at 8-9pm. UKCycleChat hour Tuesday 8-9pm on Twitter.

### Pure Reyn

0800 669 6350

Pure & Eco-Friendly Cleaning Solutions and Compliance Consultation Services

### Rybrook BMW & MINI

01743 467467

Motor vehicles

## STOURBRIDGE

### Midlands Air Ambulance Charity

0800 840 2030

Provider of Pre-Hospital critical care via heli-led services

## TELFORD

### Deskside IT

03330 166614

IT Support provider for business around Shropshire

## Scott Risk Management

01952 794796

Scott Risk Management (SRM) offers a fully inclusive SHEQ (Safety, Health, Environmental and Quality) Management service

## Oaklands Farm Eggs Ltd

01952 770322

Egg Wholesaler

## Bolt King Limited

01952 350100

Manufacturer of special fasteners/ engineering

## WEDNESFIELD

### Great Annual Savings

07803 413446

Utilities auditing

## WELSHPOOL

### S J Roberts Construction Ltd

01743 891 858

Building Contractor and Developer within Residential and Commercial Sectors

## WESTON RHYN

### Aeon Omega

07312 680557

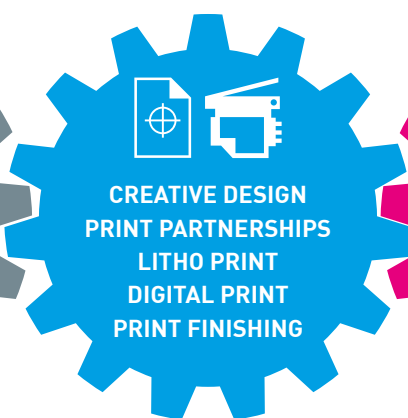
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