

# YOUR CHAMBER YOUR VOICE

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2022



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Picture taken on Climbing Out fundraising hike

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## Gaining skills should never be underrated

**W**hen the furlough scheme came to an end, many analysts predicted we would finally see the true scale of Covid's impact with a sharp rise in unemployment.

But it's not quite turned out that way. Shropshire, like most regions across the UK, is currently seeing job vacancies running at near record levels.

What does this tell us? On the plus side, it shows that companies are growing, or at the very least making back the ground they may have lost during lockdown.

On the downside, however, it also suggests that many sectors are suffering from chronic staff shortages which, if anything, are only escalating.

This is a very serious situation which could have far-reaching consequences, because if the upward trend continues into the new year, it could derail our economic recovery by forcing firms into a long-lasting decline in operating capacity.

That's why this skills challenge is right at the top of our agenda at Shropshire Chamber at the moment.

We are focused on providing a package of rapid upskilling for the existing workforce to aid efficiency and productivity, delivering advice, training, and support in tandem with many of our partner organisations.

Together with the challenges of recruitment are issues surrounding business running costs.

Although earnings are continuing to grow, so is the cost of living. And achieving wage increases over a sustained period will be challenging without a marked improvement in productivity.

And that requires not only a solution to the recruitment challenges, but an easing of unavoidable cost pressures faced by many firms.

Our Shropshire Chamber team are hearing many stories from local businesses about huge jumps in utility costs – and with our county's central location favoured by many logistics firms, the rising cost of fuel is starting to bite too.

We're entering the season of goodwill, so there's no need to be overtly downbeat about the state of Shropshire's economy; the last thing we need to be doing is talking ourselves down.

But at the same time, we need to be realistic about the fact that Covid has left its scars, and the challenges of the past couple of years are certainly not yet behind us.

Despite the success of furlough, our colleagues at the British Chambers of Commerce say the likely squeeze on hiring intentions from next year's national insurance hike and more sluggish growth could mean that labour market conditions start to weaken over the medium term.

There's no doubt that significant support is needed to help firms access the skills they need – and if they can't recruit locally, we need to be finding out why, and coming up with long-term solutions

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





# January launch date for business awards

**Shropshire Chamber of Commerce will be officially launching its 2022 business awards and conference at an event in Shrewsbury on January 27.**

The chamber cancelled its awards in 2021 due to ongoing uncertainties caused by the pandemic.

Instead it has concentrated on expanding it into a 'bigger than ever' two-day celebration for the summer of 2022 with new categories including a 'Covid response award' and fresh categories for wellbeing in the workplace, and sustainability.

There will be a Shropshire Chamber Showcase and Conference at the Mercure Telford Centre Hotel on June 8, followed by the Shropshire Chamber Business Awards at Telford International Centre June 10.

The plans will be officially unveiled to the business community at an early evening launch event at Salop Leisure in Shrewsbury on Thursday, January 27th.

*Launched in 2001, the Shropshire Chamber Business Awards have attracted audiences of up to 900 people for the black-tie celebration, earning them a reputation as the local business 'Oscars'*

"The Shropshire Chamber Business Awards are established among the largest events of their kind in the country, and we want to ensure we do them justice," said chief executive Richard Sheehan.

"Alongside our traditional categories like company of the year, best new business and best small business, we will be introducing new categories which reflect the challenges Shropshire businesses have faced.

"And our conference will give us the chance to bring top-level speakers to the county, to tackle the issues that matter to our local business community."

A range of exhibition and sponsorship packages are available, including joint packages covering both the conference and awards celebration. For more details, email [awards@shropshire-chamber.co.uk](mailto:awards@shropshire-chamber.co.uk) or call 01952 208200.

Launched in 2001, the Shropshire Chamber Business Awards have attracted audiences of up to 900 people for the black-tie celebration, earning them a reputation as the local business 'Oscars'.



# New members for you to engage with

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Centre  
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NEWPORT  
Shropshire  
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Battlefield  
Enterprise Park  
SHREWSBURY  
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Unit 1 St Georges  
Road Industrial Est  
Donnington  
TELFORD  
Shropshire  
TF2 7QZ

Inspec Technology  
Ltd  
7380268793  
Carinya House Birch  
Grove  
Alveley  
BRIDGNORTH  
WV15 6LE

Newport Girls' High  
School  
01952 797550  
Wellington Road  
NEWPORT  
Shropshire  
TF10 7HL

Anser Consulting  
07708 701846  
9 Church Croft  
Lawley Village  
TELFORD  
Shropshire  
TF4 2FJ

Charlotte Foster  
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07795 185396  
24 Brynmelyn  
Llynclys  
OSWESTRY  
SY10 8AG

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Hotel  
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Hadley Park East  
Hadley Park  
TELFORD  
TF2 9TX

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Parker Ltd  
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1 Knights Court  
Battlefield  
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SHREWSBURY  
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Sarah Belcher  
Events Ltd  
7737615930  
6 Winsley Cottages  
Westbury  
SHREWSBURY  
Shropshire  
SY5 9HB

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Near Shifnal  
Shropshire  
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Hencote  
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Shropshire  
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Way  
Battlefield  
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Leighton  
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Shropshire

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Leisure  
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Penley, Wrexham  
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LL13 0NE

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Wem Engineering  
Centre  
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WEM  
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Masstech Solutions  
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Unit 9  
Cedar Court  
Halesfield 17  
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Shropshire  
TF7 4PF

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Scaffolding  
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Crosby Court  
26 George Street  
BIRMINGHAM  
West Midlands

Bawden &  
Associates  
01582 466704  
Noneley Hall  
Noneley  
SHREWSBURY  
Shropshire  
SY4 5SL

EcoFastUK  
01691 887760  
The White House  
Llwyn-Y-Go  
Maesbrook  
OSWESTRY  
Shropshire  
SY10 8QN

Hunkington House  
Kitchen  
07968 676441  
Hunkington House  
Walford Heath  
SHREWSBURY  
Shropshire

Nanny`s Craft  
Bakery  
07562 705436  
12 Crown Street  
Wellington  
TELFORD  
TF1 6AD

Volvo Cars  
Shrewsbury  
01743 454060  
Featherbed Lane  
SHREWSBURY  
Shropshire  
SY1 4PP

Black Box Spice Co  
07858 722052  
9 Benyon Street  
Castlefields  
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Shropshire  
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01952 913 178  
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Centre  
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NEWPORT  
TF10 7AN







Here she comes – Ruth Ross abseils 60ft down the Aico building in Oswestry

# Ruth scales the heights for fundraising challenge

**I**t was a tall order . . . but Shropshire Chamber of Commerce director Ruth Ross proved she was up to the task.

Ruth joined an adventurous band of local businesspeople who abseiled down the side of the Aico building in Oswestry, raising money for charity.

The challenge to scale the side of the 60ft building was laid on to raise funds for The Movement Centre, a local charity which provides specialised therapy to children with movement disabilities.

Ruth joined representatives from many other Shropshire businesses, including BBC Shropshire, Furrows, Sol Distribution, Pave Aways, Beaumont Wealth, HSBC, Borders Physio, Adrenaline Sporting Events, and more.

Many members of the Aico team also took part in the challenge, which they described as ‘a fantastic day’.

“Everyone who challenged themselves smashed it - well done to everyone who took part,” they said.

“We created this event to raise much needed funds for the charity, who provide targeted training for children across the UK with movement disabilities.”

Ruth said: “It was such a fun thing to do – once my feet were on the ground! We were delighted to be able to support and raise the profile of this worthy local cause.”



Richard Sheehan and Rachel Owen were there to give Ruth some moral support



## Cycle hub takes advantage of free Chamber membership

Charities and not-for-profit organisations across the county are continuing to take advantage of a valuable free membership offer from Shropshire Chamber of Commerce.

Among the latest recipient is Shropshire Cycle Hub, a young Shrewsbury-based charity that has already made a big difference to hundreds of lives across the county.

From humble beginnings renovating a handful of bikes for people displaced by war, the hub has evolved into a pioneering charity, committed to addressing the big challenges of our time.

Cycling is proven to be major contributor in reducing obesity, improving mental health, countering air pollution and climate change, and addressing transport poverty and rural isolation.

The Hub says it aims to create a healthier, more sustainable and vibrant county, whilst actively promoting active travel.

Based at the Riverside Shopping Centre, it has three employees and over 20 volunteers renovating bikes for people who could not otherwise afford one, and providing discounted repairs for those on low incomes.

"Our membership of Shropshire Chamber of Commerce will benefit us in many ways," said Sian Davis, from the Hub.

"As a young but fast-growing charity, input and advice regarding strategy and marketing will be invaluable, and likewise support and ideas regarding our digital marketing and social media presence.

"We have already taken advantage of



*Ian Matthews from Shropshire Cycle Hub receives the Chamber membership from McPhillips duo David Wauchope, left, and Paul Inions*

the superb free webinars, and look forward to meeting and being involved with fellow Chamber partners going forward."

The Charity Membership Fund is being delivered in conjunction with Enterprise Flex-E-Rent, McPhillips and Aico - three 'ambassadors' who have all donated to the fund to support the third sector.

"The past 18 months have been particularly tough for many charities, with the Covid-19 lockdown cutting off vital income streams," said Mia Carter, Shropshire Chamber's director of membership.

"So, we felt this was the perfect time to create an opportunity which would make a positive difference to local charities, at a time

when it will be of maximum benefit. The fund gives these organisations access to our essential level membership, which includes a host of benefits such as HR, tax, legal services and health and safety support.

"It also entitles them to a wide range of discounted training programmes, and attendance at six Chamber's network club sessions of their choice."

To qualify for consideration, the organisations must have a Shropshire postcode, and an annual turnover of less than £1 million.

More details are available at [www.shropshire-chamber.co.uk/membership/join-us/charity-membership-fund/](http://www.shropshire-chamber.co.uk/membership/join-us/charity-membership-fund/)

# Chamber appoints new vice president

**Shropshire Chamber of Commerce has announced the appointment of a new vice president.**

Piran Littleton, managing director of Jesmonite in Bishop's Castle, will succeed current president Mandy Thorn when her three-year term comes to an end next summer.

Piran has been a non-executive director of the Chamber since 2019, and has more than 25 years of experience helping SMEs and corporates through training, coaching and leadership development.

"I joined the Chamber because I wanted to grow my business, and I'm passionate about raising awareness of what membership can do for businesses of all sizes, in all sectors," he said.

"I would love every company in Shropshire to have the kind of opportunities it has brought for me - the help and support, and chance to grow both as an individual

and a business, working with good, interesting and fun people.

"I am passionate about promoting business in Shropshire. These are times of massive change, and the benefits of being part of the Chamber, working with its suppliers and partners, have never been greater."

In addition to Piran's appointment, Shropshire Chamber is also keen to add more new faces to its board, and is currently looking for non-executive directors with specialisms in areas such as property, and digital marketing.

Anyone interested is asked to contact director of business Ruth Ross on 01952 208203, or email [r.ross@shropshire-chamber.co.uk](mailto:r.ross@shropshire-chamber.co.uk)

Richard Sheehan, Shropshire Chamber's chief executive, said: "No-one should underestimate the important part that our non-executive directors play in helping to shape the Chamber and the support it provides.

"We have a wealth of skills and experience around our board table, from people who give their time freely for the good of the Shropshire business community."



*Piran Littleton, the new president-elect at Shropshire Chamber, with one of his company's Jesmonite products*



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# Bodyshop brothers are award finalists

**I**ndependent bodyshop Autocraft Telford, based in Shropshire are celebrating the recent announcement that they have been selected as a finalist at the bodyshop of the year awards 2021.

They are one of only four businesses in the UK that have been selected for the 'Independent bodyshop of the year' award category.

With more than 280 top-quality submissions, it was a difficult job for the 14-strong judging panel of industry experts who rose to the challenge at the bodyshop magazine offices on the 29th September 2021 to select the finalists.

All the winners of the bodyshop Awards 2021 will be unveiled during the live in-person celebration at ICC Wales on 17 December 2021.

Autocraft Telford is an independent Body Shop serving Shropshire, Staffordshire, and the West Midlands. The Bodyshop is a 20,000 square feet facility that has been designed with flow as its key feature. The team at Autocraft is now 40 strong with 24 productive staff to 16 support staff.

External consultants are also part of their team to bring expertise when and where needed.

Autocraft Telford have continued to invest in its business and have also recently acquired an additional repair facility to continue its ongoing growth, as well as numerous manufacturer approvals.

Directors of Autocraft, Darren and Matt Fielding are proud to be finalists: "The bodyshop magazine awards have been running for decades and are prestigious within the industry," they said.

"We are proud to have been nominated as a finalist and this announcement is a reward for all of our team who have been working so hard, especially during the recent pandemic."



Darren and Matt Fielding at Autocraft in Telford

## Training company supporting the Scottish Prison Service

Shrewsbury based training company, Always Consult has won a major contract from the Scottish Prison Service.

It is the second time Always Consult has supported the Scottish Prison Service in its First Line Manager Development programme. Candidates are newly appointed managers seeking a management qualification.

Under the new contract, Always Consult will provide an ILM assessment marking service.

Managing Director, Carol Ewels said: "We are delighted to work with the Scottish Prison Service again and to have come first in the tender process. The feedback we previously received was entirely positive and has resulted in the new contract

Always Consult will provide both assessment and an internal quality assurance service, leading to the Leadership & Management Level 3 Award, for a minimum of two years.

The company, now in its 12th year, is based at, Upton Magna Business Park and has a team of forty-three. It currently works with local authorities, the NHS, schools and universities, Shropshire & Telford businesses, as well as numerous companies throughout the UK and overseas.



Carol Ewels, MD is in the centre of the first row picture and Roddy Christie, Director of apprenticeships, second row far right



# Firm backs World Heritage Site

**S**hropshire insurance brokers Henshalls have signed up to become a Corporate Patron of one of the county's most famous sites.

The firm, which has offices in Newport and Shrewsbury, has backed the Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust as part of its ongoing corporate social responsibility plans, and the Henshalls team are looking forward to the partnership.

Managing Director Mark Freeman said: "We're very proud to be supporting such an incredible educational charity that is considered so important that it has been recognised as a World Heritage Site.

"We're keen to work with the Trust and to encourage our staff to take up volunteering opportunities at some of the ten museums and multiple sites throughout the Gorge.

"Supporting local organisations and community groups that make such a difference is a key aim for us, and it has been fantastic learning just how much hard work goes into running the Trust on sites that are widely considered to be the birthplace of the Industrial Revolution."

As part of their Silver Corporate Patronage package, Henshalls staff will now get the chance to attend VIP events, private exhibition views, and receive an insider's view of how the Trust's curatorial work is done.

Adam Siviter, Fundraising Manager of the Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust, said: "We are absolutely delighted and thrilled



Adam Siviter (Fundraising Manager of the Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust) and Mark Freeman (Henshalls Managing Director)

that Henshalls are supporting us through our Patron Society as a Silver Corporate Patron.

"Their support will really help IGMT with its mission to preserve and protect the Ironbridge Gorge World Heritage Site – it's one of the UK's most important historical landscapes.

"Each year, the generosity of our

supporters and donors makes a huge difference to what we do."

Attractions run by the Trust include: Blists Hill Victorian Town, Enginuity, Jackfield Tile Museum, Coalport China Museum, Coalbrookdale Museum of Iron, Museum of the Gorge, the Darby Houses, The Iron Bridge and Tollhouse, and Broseley Pipeworks.

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## New chairman for Severn Valley Railway (Holdings) PLC

After a decade as chairman of the Severn Valley Railway Holdings (SVRH) board, Nick Paul CBE is stepping down, as former deputy chairman Mike Ball takes over the role. In a further change for the Railway, general manager Helen Smith has now been named managing director designate.

Incoming chairman Mike Ball said: "Nick brought astute senior level business management experience and significant financial expertise to the railway. During his tenure, he focused the board on the management of its finances, and his skills were invaluable as he led the company through the financial challenges emanating from the Covid-19 pandemic. In addition, as a trustee, he has played a major role in the transformation of the Severn Valley Railway Charitable Trust into a highly successful fundraising organisation.

"The board would like to thank Nick for his leadership, hard work and the outstanding contribution he has made to the SVR's progress over the past 10 years."

Nick will continue as a director, a decision warmly welcomed by the board.

Taking on the chairman's mantle, Mike Ball brings expertise garnered through many years at a senior level in the engineering and IT services sectors. He has been a volunteer



Helen Smith



Mike Ball



Nick Paul CBE

on the Severn Valley Railway for 35 years, spending 10 of those as deputy chairman of the SVRH board.

During this time he helped lead the company through some of its toughest challenges, including dealing with major repairs to Falling Sands Viaduct and County Boundary Slip, and more recently dealing with the pandemic. Mike has also been key in developing the SVR's working relationships with main line train operating companies, boosting the Railway's income through contract work.

Mike's appointment will provide continuity

moving forward, as he combines his business expertise and considerable volunteer experience within various SVR departments to meet the demands of the organisation.

Further to Mike's appointment, a change of role for Helen Smith from general manager to managing director designate allows her to take complete responsibility for the safe operation of the railway, its financial health and future growth.

As part of the SVR's safety management system, a review and validation of this change will take place in the near future before the managing director position is confirmed.

# A trio of qualifications at Shropshire law firm

**A Shropshire law firm is celebrating a "trio of qualifications", with three departments welcoming newly-qualified solicitors to their ranks.**

Lanyon Bowdler, which has offices across Shropshire, Herefordshire and North Wales, is proud of its reputation for the training and development of lawyers.

Alexander Spanner, Chloe Hassall and Jordan Sadler are the latest in a long line of solicitors who have qualified following successful training contracts with the firm.

Alexander, a third generation solicitor in the local area, graduated with a Masters in Law from Cardiff University before joining Lanyon Bowdler, and has now qualified into the personal injury department.

He will be assisting clients in both Shrewsbury and Ludlow, and said he was excited about his new role.

"Lanyon Bowdler is renowned nationally as a very strong personal injury firm, so I am delighted to be given the opportunity of joining such an established team," he said.

"It doesn't seem that long ago when I was here doing work experience, which changed my outlook completely and encouraged me to pursue a legal career.

"I am really looking forward to assisting clients with legal matters during what is always such a vital stage of their lives."



Alexander Spanner, Chloe Hassall and Jordan Sadler

Chloe Hassall is a former teacher who joined Lanyon Bowdler in 2019 as a trainee solicitor after gaining a Masters in Law at the University of Law in Manchester, and is now part of the corporate department in Telford following her qualification.

She said: "During my training programme, I had experience in the Court of Protection, personal injury, corporate and family departments, before returning to the corporate team.

"I really enjoy this area of law, and so I am delighted to have returned to work in this team following my qualification."

Jordan Sadler also joined the firm in 2019 as a trainee solicitor, after graduating with a Masters in Law at Cardiff University, and has joined the private client team in Telford.

He said: "Everyone at Lanyon Bowdler

has been so supportive throughout the training contract and I'm proud to now be a fully-qualified solicitor.

"I am excited to be specialising in trusts within Lanyon Bowdler's trust team in the private client department. It's great to be a part of such an experienced and accomplished team."

Brian Evans, managing partner of Lanyon Bowdler, said the firm's training programme was a great source of pride.

"We have always been very committed to providing opportunities for lawyers to start and develop their legal career with us," he said.

"This trio of qualifications is testament to the hard work of Alex, Chloe and Jordan, and I would like to wish them every success in their future careers."



# Our People Your Team

## Here to Help

We continue to offer meetings via telephone and video and where necessary we are able to offer face to face appointments, please use our letterbox when dropping off documents.

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Anna Walker's birthday meal



Jodie Harding serves up food

# Derwen College Orangery Restaurant has reopened

**A** popular Gobowen restaurant, which supports young adults with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) into employment, has reopened to lunchtime diners.

The Orangery Restaurant, at Derwen College, near Oswestry, welcomed back customers to its newly refurbished dining rooms in early November. Some of the first customers through the door were former students visiting the area with their families.

The restaurant has been closed since March 2020, and students and staff were delighted to usher the first diners to their tables.

The restaurant has a new look and a new menu which includes customer favourites such as locally-produced pork sausages, home-made steak and Stonehouse beer pie, and beer-battered cod and chips, alongside Chicken Tikka Masala and Thai green vegetable curry. Starters, desserts, children's options, and a wide selection of drinks are also available. Prices have been kept as competitive as they were pre-pandemic.

The Orangery Restaurant is part of the College's commercial area which is open to the public. The College's 'High Street' has easy parking and is a popular destination. It includes a Garden Centre & Shop, Walled Garden Café, The Vintage Advantage charity shop and Hotel 751 training hotel. The shops and eateries are all open to the public and provide work experience for students with SEND.

Hospitality students Jodie Harding and Ellie Simons were pleased to be taking orders, and to see some students and former



Libby Grigg and her family served by Jodie Harding

students and their families, making the most of the restaurant on its first day of opening.

"We are very excited to be working in the Orangery again, and to see customers coming back," said Ellie.

Diners included former student Josh Asterley who took current student Anna Walker out for lunch at the Orangery to celebrate her birthday.

Another student, Libby Grigg, visited with her parents, who were dropping her back after the half term holiday.

She said: "It's lovely to be able to visit the Orangery Restaurant again. We ordered a steak and beer pie, vegetable lasagne, and I had a burger with chips. The food was delicious, with big portions. It was great to be served by friends too!"

Commercial Supervisor Sharon Jones said

that the College was over the moon to be able to now open all of their outlets to visitors.

She said: "Our Walled Garden Café, Garden Centre and new Vintage Advantage charity shop have been open since March, but we delayed the opening of the restaurant to enable a make-over. It's wonderful to be back in business. We know a lot of regular customers have really missed the Orangery, and we hope to see them back again soon. Having the support of members of the public is vital to the success of our venues as work-experience for our students. It's always a pleasure to welcome them here."

The Orangery Restaurant is also open for group bookings and events, and will be launching its Christmas menu soon. The restaurant is open Monday to Friday 12pm-2pm.



# Hencote signs up to Chamber

**A**n award-winning Shropshire wine estate says it will do everything it can to support the county's business community after joining Shropshire Chamber of Commerce.

The Hencote estate in Shrewsbury is the latest recruit to the Chamber's growing numbers – and says it has joined so that it can play its part in helping the region recover from the impact of the pandemic.

General manager Mark Stevens said Hencote was delighted to be joining the Chamber at such an important time for the region's economy.

"The Chamber brings together many of the best businesses in the region and helps them share and learn from each other's experiences in a unique way, as well as playing an important role in representing our interests.

"We want to play a full part in helping our business colleagues and partners in any way we can, either by sharing our own experiences or by hosting events, team-building days, corporate functions or business seminars at Hencote.

"Hencote can certainly offer a little star factor to corporate events and we are happy to work with any business to provide them with a venue to remember for their functions."

Mia Carter, director of membership at Shropshire Chamber said: "Hencote is a fantastic addition to our growing network of businesses here at Shropshire Chamber. The View is an amazing venue and one we have been delighted to host chamber events at previously.

"Like Hencote, Shropshire Chamber sits at the heart of the community. We work with and support companies of all shapes and sizes and represent all sectors. Wherever you are based in Shropshire, membership of your county's accredited Chamber of Commerce makes you part of a growing network with a host of solutions to support your business every step of the way."

Hencote made history earlier this year when its Mark I 2018 red wine struck gold at the International Wine Challenge (IWC) – widely regarded as the Olympics of the industry.

The award means the vineyard is the first in the UK to have won gold for two different still red wines at the competition, having previously picked up the award for its 2018 Amphora Pinot Noir in 2020.

To find out more about Hencote visit <https://www.hencote.com/>

General manager, Mark Stevens



Shrewsbury's co-educational prep school for 3-13 | [admissions@prestfelde.co.uk](mailto:admissions@prestfelde.co.uk) | 01743 245400



# Busy year for Climbing Out



*Put your hands in the air if you're on a fundraising hike*

**A**s 2021 draws to an end, Climbing Out reflects on everything they have achieved. The year started slowly thanks to ongoing Covid restrictions, but the charity made up for it – holding 8 5-day programmes between June and November.

The pandemic has increased the need for their work, which helps people find a new way forward post mental or physical trauma. This year alone they have helped over 100 individuals with their mix of outdoor activities, mental resilience coaching teamwork, camaraderie, fresh air, fun and one-to-one support.

Tony, who participated on a programme said, "Having attended other similar courses, none have had such an impact on my life as this experience with the Climbing Out team. You leave with a plan, an increase in your self esteem, and you feel accountable for your own personal recovery."

This year Climbing Out extended their services to support members of the NHS, Emergency services and armed forces community.

Another participant, Jasmine, said, "I arrived feeling like a list of diagnosis's, but I left feeling like a person in their own right with so many opportunities."

All places on their programmes are fully funded and anyone who feels they would benefit from taking part can either be referred through an organisation or they can self refer. To find out more visit [climbingout.org.uk/our-programmes](http://climbingout.org.uk/our-programmes) or contact Kelda on [keldawood@climbingout.org.uk](mailto:keldawood@climbingout.org.uk).

During tougher Covid restrictions, when Climbing Out couldn't hold their residential programmes, they launched 'Walk and Talk Days' to get people active, reduce social isolation and help people to rebuild their motivation and direction. The days were a success, so they have continued. In 2022 they will hold one a month in Shropshire.

Charity founder, Kelda Wood, leads a small group on a 4-hour walk, at a pace to keep things achievable for everyone. The walks are open to anyone aged 18 years and over who has been through a mental or physical trauma.



*A group of canoeists enjoy a day out*



*Thumbs up for abseiling*

They would love to hear from anyone who would like to take part. Contact Jo on [admin@climbingout.org.uk](mailto:admin@climbingout.org.uk) to find out more.

This year's fundraising hike was a resounding success with over 45 people taking part and raising over £6,000 for the charity with the Snowdonia challenge. Next year's fundraising hike will take place on 1st October 2022 and they will be taking on a section of Hadrian's Wall. Everyone is welcome to take part. More details will be released in the New Year.

Climbing Out has 8 programmes lined up in 2022 between March and October, in

various locations including the Lake District, North Wales, Shropshire and the Peak District. Some of the programmes are for specific groups, such as Veterans, those with a higher level of physical limitation, and members of the emergency services; and the rest of the programmes are open to anyone aged 18 or over, who has experienced a mental or physical trauma, which includes injuries and illnesses.

Climbing Out will be holding a Charity Ball and Awards night on 21st May 2022 to celebrate their 10th anniversary – a milestone they have been waiting to mark for two years! The ball is a 'Roaring Twenties' theme and will be held at Shrewsbury Town Football Club. There are tickets available for £40 per person. Contact Jo on [admin@climbingout.org.uk](mailto:admin@climbingout.org.uk) for more details.

Kelda Wood said, "It's been an exciting, busy, challenging, interesting, and amazing year! Despite all the challenges everyone has faced we've still been able to support people to find a new sense of purpose, motivation and direction and to move forward beyond their trauma with hope and a sense of control."

"A huge thank you to all of our funders and supporters who have helped us to develop and support so many people. Without you we wouldn't be able to keep doing the life changing work that we do and continue to expand the programmes we offer and the people we support."

"It has been a fantastic year – with so much to look forward to in 2022. I can't wait to get stuck in!"

For more information on Climbing Out visit [climbingout.org.uk](http://climbingout.org.uk)



# Turning the tide on growing mental health crisis

**A new book highlighting the real-life stories of those impacted by severe mental illness has been published by a Shropshire charity in an effort to turn the tide on the nation's deepening mental health crisis.**

Wellington-based supported employment and training charity Landau operates one of the UK's most successful Individual Placement Support (IPS) services and is a nationally recognised Centre for Excellence for the work it does to support thousands of long-term unemployed people back into work.

Now, by revealing the inspirational stories of some of the people it has helped in a new book called 'Road to Recovery', it's hoping to reach more people in need and reduce unemployment levels among those with mental ill health and increase diversity in the work place.

Research shows that one in four adults nationally are recognised as having at least one diagnosable mental health problem and the impact of this on the British economy is estimated at £105 billion a year — a situation that Landau's Chief Executive Sonia Roberts claims is 'unsustainable' and 'unacceptable'.

"All too often people living with mental health problems experience stigma and discrimination," she said.

"Many people struggle to get the right help at the right time and evidence-based care is significantly under-funded. The human cost is unacceptable and the financial cost to government and society unsustainable.

"This new book aims to highlight some of the inspirational success stories of the individuals that we have supported back into employment and give hope to others who find themselves in a similar situation.

"These are people who thought they had no future and no real prospects but through our intervention and targeted support, they are now positively moving forward with their lives.

"Having achievable goals, a purpose, and financial independence is absolutely crucial and supporting recovery through employment can have a remarkable long-term impact on a person's life and their overall mental well-being."

Whilst its head office is based in Wellington, Landau has a team of employment specialists working with individuals across multiple regions in England, Wales and Scotland.

Annually, it is supporting in the region of 3,000 individuals back into the workplace, many of whom have enduring mental health issues.

Earlier this year, the charity was awarded the Queen's Award for Enterprise for Promoting Opportunities to those facing social mobility



*Sonia Roberts, Chief Executive of Landau*

barriers and in 2020 it became a Centre of Excellence for its IPS services as well as becoming the highest scoring RAND reviewed service in the UK.

The new 'Road to Recovery' book tells the life-stories of 10 individuals suffering from long-term mental health problems and it's hoped their journey will inspire others in need of help to make contact with Landau.

The free book, which can be viewed at <https://www.landau.co.uk/shop/>, forms part of the charity's 'We See You' campaign, which was launched earlier this year to raise awareness of invisible illnesses and drive greater diversity and inclusivity in workplaces across the UK.

The campaign also encourages other businesses to strive for greater workplace diversity and those interested can sign the We See You campaign pledge at [www.landau.co.uk/we-see-you/](http://www.landau.co.uk/we-see-you/).

For further information about Landau and to access a link to the new book visit the website <https://www.landau.co.uk/>.

You can also follow the charity and its work by visiting @landaulimited on Facebook, Landau Limited on LinkedIn and @landaulimited on Twitter.

Outside of work, Mary-Jane enjoys performing and singing after having professional singing lessons for around seven years in a range of different styles.

## Celebrating 20 years' service from Trustee Irena Sobolewska

It was National Trustee Week in November and what better way for Bethphage to commemorate it than by celebrating one of our very own Trustees 20 years' service to the charity!

Irena joined Bethphage's Board of Trustees in 2001, becoming Vice-chair in 2004. With a Master's degree in Business Administration, Irena has over 30 years' experience in the private, public and not for profit sectors as a leadership coach and organisational change consultant.

At our recent board meeting, we celebrated Irena's 20 years' service and the significant growth of service provision that had been achieved over that time. On behalf of Bethphage, Derek Lum Chair of Trustees, thanked Irena for her fantastic service saying:

"Over the 20 years which you have served as a Trustee, the majority of which has been as Vice Chair, you have played a significant role in Bethphage's successful growth. Part of this has been leading the recruitment of key management appointments as the Charity has grown. Your experience and clarity of thought has served Bethphage well when key strategic decisions have been required. The importance of Trustees' experience in their roles has helped the Executive Management Team steer a course through the challenges that Covid-19 has presented. Bethphage, and the board are very fortunate to have your continuing contribution."

Our Chief Executive Officer, Stef Kay presented Irena with a handmade, personally engraved keepsake box which was created by a local craftsman and carpenter, Tommy Woodpecker Woodworks. Stef thanked her saying:

"Having long standing Trustees gives stability and continuity to the organisation which is so important. You ask our Executive



*Stef Kay and Irena Sobolewska*

Management Team some really insightful questions, facilitating robust discussion and decision making, and ensuring a high standard of governance."

Bethphage's founder and Honorary President, Donna Werner praised Irena's leadership and reflected on how she has supported the development of the organisation:

"You have made good decisions and been so generous with your time and talent. I value your contribution professionally and personally. Here is to another 20 years!"

Linda Timmons, CEO of Mosaic (USA), one of Bethphage's two founding corporate members, joined via Microsoft Teams for our AGM and commented:

"What a remarkable legacy for an organisation that makes a difference every day. On behalf of Mosaic and Bethphage, thank you."

Irena thanked everyone for their kind words, "I am very touched but you must know that I get more back from being a trustee than I put in."

# £60k boost for training facility

**A** national charity has scooped a £60,000 funding boost to transform their training capabilities, including the outdoor learning area at its headquarters in Shropshire.

The Small Woods Association, based at the Green Wood Centre in Coalbrookdale, has secured the money from the National Lottery Heritage Fund and comes at a time when the charity is seeing a boom in interest for its courses.

Small Woods runs a wide range of sustainable woodland management and social forestry projects, courses and events across the country - including its Build a Bench and Telford Woods programmes hosted at the charity's Green Wood Centre headquarters.

The rise in popularity means courses have been sold out for this year but the £60,000 grant provides the charity with an opportunity to expand its offering in 2022 to meet the increasing demand.

Ian Baker, Small Woods Chief Executive Officer, said: "We thank the National Lottery Heritage Fund for their support in awarding us this grant - it really is much appreciated.

"It means we are able to transform a garden area at the Green Wood Centre into an outside learning area for courses to take place and invest in online resources, which will become available increasingly over the next few months.



*Ian Baker, Small Woods Chief Executive Officer*

"By the end of the summer, on-site facilities will become available for booking, supported by catering provided by the acclaimed and independently-run Green Wood Cafe on site.

"It all comes at an extremely busy time for us and, with the Covid restrictions finally easing, we are seeing an unprecedented level of interest from people who want to get involved with nature - viewing us as the best way to help them achieve that.

"The pandemic has certainly made people realise the benefits to health and wellbeing of being outside and raised the profile of the work Small Woods is doing. We have seen a boom in interest in courses at The Green Wood Centre as people have come to more readily appreciate nature, our woodlands and the great outdoors.

"Courses are fully booked at the Green Wood Centre for 2021 but this investment will give us the chance to expand in 2022. Our courses have helped so many people who otherwise would have been isolated - especially through the pandemic, and is something we want to provide access to for even more people."

Mr Baker said there were many benefits to being outdoors with nature and taking part in the range of activities offered by Small Woods - helping to enhance skill-sets and maintain a healthy lifestyle.

"Our Build a Bench programme at the Green Wood Centre has been very popular and of great benefit to those taking part," he added.

"It's a 12-week fully-funded course aimed at people who are not currently involved in paid employment and a marvellous opportunity to participate in weekly craft sessions while being supported in action planning.

"Another project we are immensely proud of is our involvement with Telford Woods - a social enterprise involving our partnership with Telford & Wrekin Council. It engages the community in the sustainable management of local woodlands, the use of local forestry products, and development of woodland spaces for education and improved physical health and wellbeing."

For more about Small Woods and the Green Wood Centre, visit the website at <https://www.smallwoods.org.uk/>

## SYST adapts and thrives in difficult circumstances

Shropshire Youth Support Trust's (SYST) mission is to empower young, disadvantaged people into sustainable self-employment or employment. A mission that has remained consistent for over half a decade now. The charity has shown resilience and adapted through difficult times brought on by the Covid-19 Pandemic.

As with a lot of organisations the charity and income were affected due to the pandemic, however, due to perseverance and passion from the SYST team, they were able to secure funding including ESF funding and funds to run the Covid emergency response projects, which enabled them to support/reach out to a wider range of beneficiaries, including those over the age of 30 and those that have been recently made redundant.

Due to the adaptability of SYST, it has identified additional opportunities to be able to increase their support. This includes facilitating fully funded Level 2 Training Courses through a partnership with Dimensions Training Solutions, online workshop support in Enterprise and Wellbeing with two national banks, TSB and Barclays, and taking SYST's beneficiaries on an online wellbeing journey to Portugal with Portuguese charity Thumbs Up. Event information can be found on the following link: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/o/shropshire-youth-support-trust-31185802133>

This has led to SYST recruiting three new members of staff including an Enterprise Co-Ordinator, Sarah Evans, and two Kick-Starters, Edward Lawton and Sadie Edwards. All three new members of staff have settled into their respective roles rather quickly and have managed to hit the ground running.

With new members of staff and an increased spectrum of beneficiaries, SYST has proven that they can handle whatever hurdle comes at them. Their hard work and level of constancy hasn't gone unnoticed either as MP Lucy Allan paid them a visit recently. Lucy Allan visited the charity to learn more about the work they do and the level of support on offer to their beneficiaries and for the community of Shropshire and Telford &



The Wrekin. Chairman Robert Bland and Chief Executive Richard Nuttall discussed ways to work together.

"The pandemic has caused a lot of challenges for our charity and our local community. I am extremely proud of what our team of employees, volunteer mentors, and coaches have achieved. They have shown resilience and determination to support local individuals and businesses so that they not only survive through the pandemic but be able to move forward and aspire to a more secure future. It was good to have the opportunity to talk to Lucy about the crucial work SYST has been and continues to do. It was a very positive meeting, and we look forward to continuing to make new connections for collaborative work and much needed corporate/business support, from our local community."

To find out more about the services and support, and how your organisation can help please go to the website [www.systbusiness.co.uk/appeal-to-local-businesses/](http://www.systbusiness.co.uk/appeal-to-local-businesses/) or contact us on T: 01952 299214 E: [hello@systbusiness.co.uk](mailto:hello@systbusiness.co.uk)





#AicoInTheCommunity

# Building sustainable futures for our communities

As the European market leader in home life safety, we strive to deliver safer homes through engaging with our communities to educate and promote best practice. Our Corporate Social Responsibility programme enables us to do just this. **Aico in the Community** was developed to provide support to both local and national educational and charitable organisations, focusing on core areas; **Education, Business Enterprise, Charity, Volunteering** and **Sustainability**.



If you would like to know more about **Aico in the Community**, please get in touch with our Community Liaisons: [community@aico.co.uk](mailto:community@aico.co.uk)



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an  Company

The European Market Leader in **Home Life Safety**

# Treat folk the way you would like to be treated

**T**ake a break with **Carl Jones** – editor of **Shropshire Business** magazine, producer and presenter on **Shropshire Business Live TV**, media consultant and event master of ceremonies, and host of the weekly film show on **BBC Radio Shropshire**.

## 1. Who is someone you admire, and why?

*My parents for everything they sacrificed to give me – I'm a mixture of my impetuous outgoing dad, and my calm, thoughtful and logical mum. And to my wife Rachel for putting up with this strange hybrid for the past 30 years.*

## 2. Tell me three pet hates?

*Bad timekeeping, over-promising and under-delivering, and wanton abuse of the apostrophe.*

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

*Well, I've represented Great Britain at tenpin bowling, and won silver and bronze medals in the British youth championships – but that was a very long time ago!*

## 4. Who would be your 3 dream dinner guests?

*Ian Fleming (to satisfy my 007 fanboying), Ray Reardon (the man who made me fall in love with snooker as a child), Olivia Newton-John (playground crush – I was hopelessly devoted to her when Grease came out!)*

## 5. If we went to 'happy hour', what would you order?

*Real ale all the way, particularly with the wealth of fantastic 'made in Shropshire' choices. But a cheeky rum might slip down nicely too.*

## 6. What is your favourite holiday destination?

*I love a cruise. The idea of waking up every morning with a different place to explore is just the dream ticket for me. The Norwegian Fjords are amazing, the Med is full of jewels, and a trip through the Baltic is a cultural feast for the senses.*

## 7. Name three words that best describe you?

*Conscientious, loyal, stubborn*

## 8. If you were stranded on a desert island what 3 items would you want with you?



Carl Jones

*Sun screen for the sake of my receding hairline, the complete James Bond movie DVD collection, an inflatable lilo with puncture repair kit*

## 9. What's a goal you have for yourself that you want to accomplish in the next year either in your personal or work life?

*Having already made the leap from a 30-plus year of print industry editing to learn all about creating radio audio, I'm keen to further expand my knowledge of video editing too – particularly with my involvement in Shropshire Business Live TV which is going from strength to strength.*

## 10. What was the last book you read?

*Don't Believe A Word – the autobiography of former West Midlands football star Garry Thompson*

## 11. What is your favourite aspect about your career?

*The variety – the fact that no two weeks are the same, from writing and editing*

*magazines to working on the radio, hosting events all over the country, and producing or presenting TV shows. I love getting out and about, meeting new and fascinating people.*

## 12. Are you doing the job you thought you would do when you were a child?

*Sort of – I always wanted to be an author, so a career in the media was always on the cards. But my parents would have laughed at the thought of a young Carl being outgoing and confident enough to work on live radio and TV, or stand up in front of huge crowds to host events, theatre shows and awards.*

## 13. What are some causes you care about?

*My wife and I are long-time supporters of Alzheimer's research having both had first-hand experience of the heartache this causes. I've also given time to help the likes of The Prince's Trust and Young Enterprise – and supported many animal charities.*

## 14. What do you do with friends and family in your spare time?

*Getting out and about as much as possible with our energetic and water-loving golden Labrador Bosley, making a token effort to keep fit by playing tennis most weeks, and – partly because I love it and partly because it's my job at BBC Shropshire – going to the cinema to keep up to date with all the latest movie releases.*

## 15. What would be your personal motto?

*Always treat people the way you would like to be treated yourself. Do your best, try your hardest, and never lose your sense of humour.*



# Growing businesses are urged to apply to equipment grant scheme

**B**usinesses across Shropshire are being urged to take advantage of a grants scheme which can help them purchase vital equipment to support their growth.

The Marches Small Equipment Grant still has more than £324,000 available to help small and medium-sized enterprises in Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin buy new equipment which will create jobs, boost productivity or develop new products and services.

The scheme – which is supported by the Marches Local Enterprise Partnership and its business support service the Marches Growth Hub – has so far approved £448,000 of grants to 58 businesses across the Marches – helping to create 41 full time jobs and 35 new products or services.

Grants of between £1,000 and £10,000 are available under the programme which is part-funded by the European Regional Development Fund and available to firms within Herefordshire, Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin.

Programme manager Caroline Cattle urged businesses to move quickly to take advantage of the scheme.

“Based on the progress of the scheme to date, we anticipate that the funds for Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin will be fully allocated by Summer 2022, so we really do want to hear from companies as quickly as possible.

“The programme has been a huge success to date but we still have a sizeable pot of money to award and would be delighted to help any companies in Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin which meet the criteria.”

Companies which have benefited from the grant to date include Caradoc Charcoal at Leebotwood, SureGRP in Telford and Kudos Blends in Cleobury Mortimer.

The grant is available as a contribution of up to 50 per cent and

*Caradoc Charcoal from Leebotwood was awarded £10,000 from the Small Equipment Grant Scheme to help purchase a sifting machine. Programme manager Caroline Cattle is pictured with Kevin Fryer from Caradoc Charcoal*



*Kudos Blends in Cleobury Mortimer was awarded an £8,160 Small Equipment Grant to help purchase a texture analyser. Richard Farrington, product specialist, and Yvette Taylor, bakery project manager, with the new machine*

primarily covers B2B companies. Items purchased must exceed £500 in value and have a life expectancy of three years. Eligible projects must lead to the creation of at least one part-time job within six months or the creation of a new product or service to be used by other businesses. Details of the scheme are available through the Marches Growth Hub.

The Marches Growth Hub Shropshire can be contacted at: [marchesgrowthhub@shropshire.gov.uk](mailto:marchesgrowthhub@shropshire.gov.uk)

The Marches Growth Hub Telford & Wrekin can be contacted at: [enterprisetelford@telford.gov.uk](mailto:enterprisetelford@telford.gov.uk)



## Marches Small Equipment Grant (SEG)

Capital grants up to a maximum of £10,000 are available for SMEs to purchase new equipment that will create new jobs, boost productivity or develop new products and services.

Visit [www.herefordshire.gov.uk/segrant](http://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/segrant) to find out more



Each individual item must be equal or exceed £500 in value. Minimum grant award is £1000 - project costs must equal or exceed £2000. Find out more

[www.herefordshire.gov.uk/segrant](http://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/segrant) • Email: [seg@herefordshire.gov.uk](mailto:seg@herefordshire.gov.uk) • Call: 01432 261511

MBIP is managed by Herefordshire Council and has been awarded £3,404,026 of European Regional Development Funding



## Funding Innovation in Low Carbon Technologies



**We are pleased to announce that the Low Carbon Opportunities Programme is now available to assist businesses in Shropshire!**

LOCOP helps develop innovative low carbon technologies or services to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Shropshire.

The programme is part-funded through the European Regional Development Fund.

SMEs can apply for grants for up to 40% of the costs of eligible capital or revenue projects. Grants of up to £50,000 will be considered with a minimum grant of £2,000.

### Eligibility:

- You must be situated in and trading from Shropshire (or Worcestershire)
- Employ fewer than 250 employees
- Have a turnover of less than the equivalent of 50 million Euros per annum or a balance sheet of less than 43 million Euros
- Be within the low carbon innovation sector

Some industries, such as primary agriculture and certain retail, are not eligible. Other activities excluded are social welfare and education facilities, banking and insurance.

### Potential low carbon innovation project examples could include:

- Low carbon product, process or service development
- Commercialisation or implementation costs
- Market research and assessment • IPR protection • Accreditations
- Prototyping, demonstration or testing of new products • Manufacturing scale up or market rollout



### Other programme benefits:

- Potential collaboration with CREST UCS (Environmental Research & Business Support programme)
- Opportunities to take part in Programme organised events and forums
- Engagement with other similar types of organisations and further collaboration with both business and academic institutions

Low Carbon Opportunities Programme Team on **01905 843902** or **01905 845398**  
or email: [sustainability@worcestershire.gov.uk](mailto:sustainability@worcestershire.gov.uk)



# Helping your business to save money and reduce your energy & resource consumption.

Growing Greener Together.



**FREE energy and resource assessments and grants of up to £20,000 for small and medium sized enterprises in Worcestershire, Herefordshire, Telford & Wrekin and Shropshire.**



Part of the government-supported growth hub network

## Business Energy Efficiency Programme

### Grant examples:

- Lighting
- Compressors
- Insulation
- Fast-shutting doors
- Renewable technology
- Energy storage
- Electric Forklift & Machinery
- Heat recovery
- Energy management
- Heaters and boilers
- Energy efficiency equipment that leads to process improvements
- Waste and water reduction and recycling

### Eligibility

#### To qualify, your business must:

- ✓ Be situated in and trading from Worcestershire, Herefordshire, Telford & Wrekin or Shropshire
- ✓ Have less than 250 employees
- ✓ Have an annual turnover of less than 50 million Euros or balance sheet of less than 43 million Euros

A minimum energy spend applies.

Please note some industries such as primary agriculture and retail are not eligible. Other activities excluded are social welfare and education facilities, banking and insurance.

The Business Energy Efficiency Programme can provide grants of up to 40% of the total cost of a project (to a maximum contribution of £20,000) for businesses to improve their energy efficiency and reduce carbon emissions.

#### The Business Energy Efficiency Programme is a partnership between:

Worcestershire County Council • Herefordshire & Worcestershire Chamber of Commerce • Bromsgrove District Council • Malvern Hills District Council • Redditch Borough Council • Worcester City Council • Wychavon District Council • Wyre Forest District Council • Herefordshire Council • Shropshire Chamber of Commerce • Telford & Wrekin Council • Shropshire Council

Find out more at [www.business-central.co.uk/BEEP](http://www.business-central.co.uk/BEEP)  
Email [info@business-central.co.uk](mailto:info@business-central.co.uk) or call 01905 677888



Clean Growth  
Worcestershire

# Free mental health conference on offer to help people build mental resilience

**People are being offered the chance to better understand their mental health and access support for those who might be struggling at a free virtual conference.**

The Kaleidoscope Plus Group, a leading mental health charity based in the Midlands will host the free two-day Mending Minds Conference between 26 and 27 January 2022.

People with a general interest in mental health, including healthcare professionals, students and business owners, are invited to attend to learn more about building mental resilience.

Keynote speakers from around the world will share their own experiences of mental ill health and the coping mechanisms they have used. Speakers include Former SAS leader and star of SAS: Who Dares Wins, Colin Maclachlan, British Paralympian Wendy Smith and former England Test Cricketer Matthew Hoggard.

Gary Wheway, Head of Business Development and Fundraising said: "The last few years have been challenging for everyone, and it's never been more important to look after your own mental health and wellbeing.

"Our Mending Minds conference will be home to a number of speakers who each have an incredible story to tell about their own mental health struggles and how they



overcame them. There will also be workshops and wellbeing sessions which, in turn, will help you to build mental health resilience."

Across the two days there will be coping strategy workshops to give attendees guidance and support to help them cope with feelings of anxiety, stress and burnt out. A series of wellbeing sessions will also be delivered by the charity's own team of

experts to help ensure people can look after themselves both now and in the future.

Mental health advocate Petra Velzeboer will be one of the event's keynote speakers. Petra was born and raised in the infamous Children of God cult, conditioned to believe she was being groomed to save the world.

Having escaped that world, she now talks to audiences about hitting rock bottom, her battle with mental illness including addiction and depression, and her subsequent transformation leading to her founding a mental health business.

She said: "I'm really looking forward to speaking at the Mending Minds Conference hosted by Kaleidoscope Plus Group. It's my mission to teach people to embrace adversity and turn their biggest weakness into their greatest strength.

"There's a misconception that if we talk about our mental health at work, we'll open the floodgates of emotions, and no one will ever get any work done. The reality is that the opposite is true.

"If we normalise conversations about mental health, not just mental illness, then we put in place a system of connection that helps people know who they can talk to when they are struggling, long before they reach crisis point."

To register for the event and get your free ticket visit [kaleidoscopeplus.org.uk/mmgc2022](http://kaleidoscopeplus.org.uk/mmgc2022)

## An eco-friendly fire resistant alternative to cladding

It is estimated that up to 11 million people are living in 'unsafe' properties in the UK. Remedial costs to replace unsuitable cladding and improve fire alarms systems can be expensive, with residents hoping to sell and move, feeling trapped if they are unable to supply a EWS1 certificate to evidence the building's safety.

Alternative options to cladding will undoubtedly evolve, but one such product range which conforms to the most rigorous fire safety standards (A2-s1, d0 according to EN 13501-1) has been right under our noses; eco-friendly, incombustible, mineral paints manufactured here in the UK.

Vanessa Fox, Commercial Manager explains, 'KEIM Mineral Paints has perhaps been the industry's best kept secret, until now. We have seen a significant increase recently in the number of enquiries we've received from housing associations, local authorities, and commercial building owners, all looking for an alternative option to re-cladding. On a recent site visit with a major City Council, we saw four residential flats that could benefit from our product, with a further potential for 43 blocks. That was just in one area alone.'

Vanessa continues, 'It's interesting that until recently it's been the breathability and durability properties of our paints that have seen them being



chosen for projects such as the Royal Opera House, London Underground, and Battersea Power Station. Now though, with the inevitable emphasis on fire safety, contractors, architects, and decorators are specifying KEIM as a cost effective, eco-friendly alternative to re-cladding.'

It's not just high-rise blocks that could benefit from KEIM, where exterior cladding may need replacing to improve the building's fire safety. Currently the European Standard stipulates buildings of 18 metres or higher, but all manner of structures, houses, flats, hotels, could reduce the risk of fires spreading by using KEIM. It's durable properties, mean that as few as two coats of paint could last as long as 15 years.



An 11-storey, sea-facing, office block in Portsmouth uses KEIM Concretal W

KEIM offers a range of paint options for exterior and interior use, plus colour washes to mimic concrete. All are odourless, manufactured using natural ingredients, with no added VOCs. Their ME paint neutralises noxious gases and pollutants, designed specifically for use in industrial or high traffic areas.

Vanessa concludes, 'We are delighted to play our part. KEIM products have always been kind to use and kind to the environment, but now they've been proven to offer users that extra peace of mind too.'

KEIM conduct no obligation site surveys across the UK, and a colour matching service.

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



## My Shrewsbury partners with Shropshire Festivals

Local lifestyle publication My Shrewsbury is to partner with award-winning Shropshire Festivals to help expand its new digital subscriptions.

Editor Katy Rink set up the much-loved hyperlocal magazine five years ago with the aim of redefining local media – producing high quality articles and the best photography and illustration for a local readership.

“Free magazines tend to be full of commercial advertorial and very little genuine content,” Katy explains. “I wanted to give Shrewsbury a magazine it could be proud of, that properly represented the artistic spirit of the place, reflecting its rich culture and amazingly talented residents.”

10,000 free copies of My Shrewsbury fly off the stands every other month. My Shrewsbury remained in print throughout the coronavirus crisis and became a leading voice, supporting local businesses as they moved online.

“I am fortunate that the business community in Shropshire has supported me from the get-go – we have some very loyal advertisers who understand and share my vision and I am tremendously grateful for that.”

Katy has now launched My Shrewsbury online – at [www.mysbshrewsbury.co.uk](http://www.mysbshrewsbury.co.uk) – to



Katy Rink and Beth Heath

share local news and features, along with a ‘revolutionary’ weekly digital content package, available on subscription.

My Shrewsbury ‘In the Loop’, gives readers a weekly What’s On, exclusive local offers and the pick of the week’s stories delivered directly to their inboxes every Wednesday. Katy has also launched paid-for print subscriptions, plus digital and print combined.

“If quality content is to be sustained in future, creators cannot continue to give everything away for free,” Katy says. “Readers are beginning to realise that they

need to contribute to support that content. By launching My Shrewsbury online, I am creating new revenue streams that will ensure the magazine will be here for many years to come – and will have a future beyond me!”

“My Shrewsbury online also has scope to offer digital advertising and advertising features, allowing businesses to find a highly engaged, local audience.”

The partnership with Beth Heath, Director of Fun at Shropshire Festivals, Katy says, will help her promote and champion these digital projects by tapping into her Shropshire ThinkTank marketing team, huge reach across digital channels and connections throughout the region.

Beth adds, “I’m a huge fan of My Shrewsbury and Katy’s vision of what a community magazine should be. Katy and I began working together on joint projects last year, including Doorstep Carols. It proved to us that there are many synergies between our ways of working and passion for local life. Both My Shrewsbury and Shropshire Festivals want to provide enriching experiences for our community.

“We will combine our enthusiasm and determination to grow both the magazine and our events. I can’t wait to see where this journey will take us!”

## £60k boost for training facility

**A Shropshire law firm is celebrating another strong performance in two highly regarded national guides - retaining its position as one of the most respected firms in the region.**

Lanyon Bowdler has a number of departments and individual lawyers highlighted in The Legal 500 and Chambers UK guides - both of which are viewed as important barometers of the legal profession.

The Legal 500 guide is based on feedback from clients, barristers and professionals, whilst the Chambers UK guide ranks law firms based on independent research and interviews with clients, so the two guides present a well-rounded assessment of a firm’s expertise and service provision.

Lanyon Bowdler was among the best-performing firms in the latest edition of The Legal 500 in 14 categories in the West Midlands and one in Wales, and has 44 recommended lawyers - 18 new to the guide this year.

The law firm features in the guide’s Tier One for agriculture and estates, and clinical negligence in the West Midlands.

Other departments recognised include commercial litigation, family, personal injury, personal tax, trusts and probate, corporate and commercial, commercial property, contentious trusts and probate, crime, debt recovery, education, employment and planning.

For the first time, the firm’s agriculture



Brian Evans of Lanyon Bowdler

and estates team is recognised in Wales.

Meanwhile, the Chambers UK guide highlights nine of Lanyon Bowdler’s departments - six of which are in the top band - and 14 individual lawyers.

Head of clinical negligence, Beth Heath; experienced clinical negligence solicitor, Emma Broomfield; and head of family law, Sue Hodgson, have all moved to Band 1 of the Chambers UK guide, with specialist collaborative lawyer, Lisa Grimmett, moving up to Band 2.

Managing partner, Brian Evans, said he was proud of the firm’s standings in both guides.

“The Legal 500 and Chambers UK are highly-respected in the profession because they combine feedback from clients with professional research,” he said.

“It’s pleasing to see that our expertise across so many practice areas has once again been highlighted. Our clinical negligence

team returns to the top tier in The Legal 500 and I am delighted to see a new entry for the firm with our agriculture and estates team being recognised in Wales.

“This is a fantastic achievement and came a little under two years after the opening of our office in Conwy, which has flourished since 2019.

“Chambers UK has ranked our crime, agriculture and rural affairs, clinical negligence, family law, personal injury and private wealth law departments in the top band, which is fantastic for all concerned.

“I would like to thank everyone at Lanyon Bowdler for their dedication to always strive for the very best outcomes for our clients.”

Among the list of the firm’s 44 recommended lawyers in The Legal 500 guide were “Leading Individuals” Edward Nutting and Steven Corfield, agriculture & estates; along with personal injury solicitor Neil Lorimer.

“Next Generation Partners” were named as Claire Vale, contentious probate, Dawn Humphries, personal injury, Debbie Humphries, personal injury, Edward Burrell, corporate & commercial, and Emma Broomfield, clinical negligence.

The firm also has six “Rising Stars” - Louise Howard, personal injury, Neil Davies, personal tax, trusts and probate, Nick Playford, agriculture & estates, Stephen Scully, crime, Tania McGee, commercial property, and Tracy Lovejoy, planning.

One of the testimonials in the Chambers UK guide for Lanyon Bowdler’s clinical negligence team said: “They are very efficient and respond quickly. They are also very caring and compassionate.”

# Strong showing in legal guides

**A** Shropshire law firm has expanded its family division amid rising demand for its services including advice around cohabitation and pre-nuptial agreements.

mfg Solicitors has welcomed newly-qualified lawyers Amy McGowan-Docherty and Katie Banks to its respected family team where they will work across the firm's offices in Telford and Ludlow alongside head of department Claire Backler, partners Katherine Tippetts, Gurdip Brring, Alison Webber and senior associate Rupinder Nandra.

The growth of mfg's 13-strong family division comes as the team are responding to rising numbers of enquiries for their specialist advice.

Claire Backler, partner and head of the Family Division at mfg Solicitors, said: "We have remained busy throughout the pandemic as people re-evaluated their lives, but we have been experiencing a further upturn in demand for our services as people



*Katie Banks, Katherine Tippetts and Amy McGowan-Docherty*

look to the future. This includes more people wanting to formalise cohabitation agreements without getting married and a host of other marital and family issues.

"As fewer and fewer couples opt for marriage, this is an area of work that is going to become increasingly important in order to ensure that everyone's rights and obligations to their partners are set out in the event that the relationship ends. For those couples who

do tie the knot, more of them do so later in life when they have perhaps acquired more in terms of their own assets and wealth – leading to greater numbers of people opting for nuptial agreements.

"This, along with people wanting to ensure that their wishes will be acted upon following their death and that their loved ones will be able to inherit their estate, has also led to a rise in demand for succession planning.

"It's for all these reasons and more that we're delighted to have Amy and Katie join our team. They are two stars of the future, already hugely popular with clients, and will add another dimension to our family offering."

Amy McGowan-Docherty joins the Family Division at mfg having recently completed her training and will work across all family matters, including divorces, finance, cohabitee agreements and disputes, injunctions, pre and post-nuptial agreements and arrangements for children.

Katie Banks joined as a paralegal, having successfully completed Level 4 of her Diploma in Paralegal Studies.

## Shropshire architectural designer scoops national award

*The Barn Field bungalow was built on the hillside in Trefonen*



A Shropshire architectural designer has scooped a national industry award for one of his self-build designs.

Ke-design, which has offices in Oswestry and Shrewsbury, lifted the Best Self-Build For Under £250k honour at the Build It Awards organised by Build It magazine in the face of stiff opposition at a prestigious ceremony in London.

The award-winning design has been built in Trefonen, near Oswestry.

Craig Marston, who launched Ke-design in 2011, was the designer behind the award win. He set up the firm with the goal of improving the quality of design and services locally.

During the last 10 years Ke-design has built up an enviable reputation for designing and delivering many successful projects.

The Build It Awards were held at the Hilton London Bankside Hotel in the presence of more than 350 guests which included industry-leading architects, designers and suppliers. More than 20 award winners were unveiled at the ceremony.

Mr Marston said: "The win came as a total surprise and I feel very honoured for the Ke-design team to be recognised in this way.

"This award goes to show that a project doesn't have to be a big 'Grand Designs' with a multi-million pound budget to be well designed.

"The client originally had a planning application lodged for a



*Craig Marston, centre, pictured with his award*

local needs home. They weren't 100% happy with the design and asked if we could redesign it after seeing our extensive portfolio of work.

"The Barn Field bungalow was built on the hillside in Trefonen by local builders Jones Brothers, has two bedrooms, a snug, vaulted ceiling open-plan kitchen, dining and living. The roof overhangs, creating an oak post veranda for the clients to sit outside all year round and enjoy the stunning views.

"The client didn't believe they would ever enjoy living in a new-build property having lived in a farmhouse for more than 40 years, but they told us: 'We feel so at home here and it has changed the way we live. We continually receive lots of compliments from locals and passers-by.'"

Build It Awards judges said: "This year's winners came into the project part-way through to reimagine a design for a boring red brick bungalow.

"They've created a simple yet stylish new home, packed with characterful details – and all for a build budget of just £150,000."

The London awards were hosted by comedian Sindhu Vee and the guest speaker was Richard Bacon MP, a Right To Build Task Force Ambassador.

For more about Ke-design, telephone Oswestry 01691 656964, Shrewsbury 01743 298080, email [info@ke-design.co.uk](mailto:info@ke-design.co.uk) or visit <https://www.ke-design.co.uk/>



# Do I need an IT Department for my business?

IT is one of the essential component parts to running a successful business in the fast-moving world of the 2020s - but do you actually need an IT department to achieve it?

Chamber member PC Net Solutions has worked with a number of companies providing an outsourced IT department - dedicated to the task of keeping systems working efficiently and being prepared when things start to break down.

But they do get a lot of companies asking whether they need an IT department at all.

Managing Director Katy Jones said: "The chances are the people we are talking to, and their staff, are not IT experts, which is why it's important to have that professional guidance - but sometimes that doesn't require your own IT department.

"The majority of businesses do not actually start off needing full IT support, but it can become more and more imperative in order to develop and maintain the success business owners

*The team at Shrewsbury-based PC Net Solutions can advise and support employers*



are looking for while facilitating further growth.

"This means when a business is launched and the team is planning for the future an IT department really needs to be on the radar."

An IT department provides the technical support to keep businesses operating at peak efficiency, implements and manages IT infrastructure, advises on technology needs and investment and

maintains IT security.

"If these IT responsibilities align with the needs of a business, or if employers find that employees are spending an increasing amount of time on technical tasks that are not part of their role, then it may be that you require an IT department," adds Katy.

"We would advise making a plan for the future. It is a good idea to map out your company's IT needs before investigating the implementation options that make sense for your business and the budget you have.

"Having an IT strategy that is bespoke to your business and how you want it to grow will ensure that you make the right decisions both for your company now, and in line with how it will look in the future.

The team at Shrewsbury-based PC Net Solutions can advise and support employers.

For more information about how they can help your business, contact them on 01743 290588 or email [katy@pcnetsolutions.co.uk](mailto:katy@pcnetsolutions.co.uk)

# Building specialist is a winner

**A** scheme to breathe new life into Ludlow's Assembly Rooms has taken the top spot at awards that recognise the cream of the Midlands' property industry.

Pave Aways Building Contractors, which carried out the £3.5m scheme for Shropshire Council, won the Fit-out / Refurbishment of the Year at the Insider West Midlands Property Awards for its work on the south Shropshire arts, entertainment and community venue.

The 21st edition of the awards, that took place in Birmingham on November 4, had attracted a record number of entries and reflected the surging confidence in the sector.

The renovation and refurbishment of the Assembly Rooms included re-instating the original Castle Square entrance, redesigning the auditorium, creating a new box office, improvements to accessibility, a visitor information centre and café bar, modernisation of the mechanical and technical equipment and the installation of photovoltaic panels to generate electricity.

The work was predominantly funded by Shropshire Council with grants also received from the European Regional Development Fund and Arts Council England and Ludlow and District Community Association.

The judges commented: "This was a project beset with challenges, including a constrained budget, the Covid-19 pandemic and a deathwatch beetle infestation. But the end result was a true community facility, which adds to the fabric of the town centre, aiding its economic recovery."

Pave Aways' Commercial Director Victoria Lawson, who collected the award, said she was delighted that the project had achieved the recognition it deserved.



*Pave Aways' Commercial Director Victoria Lawson and Finance Manager Charlie Davies collecting the award*



*Volunteer CEO of the Assembly Rooms Helen Hughes and Pave Aways' Commercial Director Victoria Lawson*

"The Assembly Rooms is an important asset for Ludlow and the work we carried out has created a state-of-the-art venue that is fit for the future. Our team worked in challenging circumstances including throughout the covid pandemic and deserve the credit for their hard work.

"Shropshire Council and the team at the Assembly Rooms had a clear vision to deliver a first-class venue for Ludlow and achieving this recognition from our colleagues in the industry is the icing on the cake."

Cecilia Motley, Shropshire Council's

Cabinet member for communities, culture, leisure and tourism, and transport, said: "This was a complex project but we are absolutely thrilled with how it has transformed the cultural jewel of South Shropshire into a modern and impressive facility.

"It is fantastic to hear the project has won this award and we also pay tribute to the impressive work the Pave Aways team carried out. It is a perfect example of how Shropshire Council, the community and private enterprise can work together to improve our facilities countywide."

# If you help, you'll get back ten-fold

Take a break with Myles Day, Business Support Manager for Quest. Quest forms part of the Shropshire Chamber core solutions they cover Chamber HR, H&S, Legal and Tax their advice line is available 365 days a year and have over 400 free downloadable employment documents. As a member of the Shropshire Chamber you have access to Quest as part of your membership for more information please contact the advice line on 01455 852037.

## 1. Who is someone you admire, and why?

*Barack Obama. An amazing communicator.*

## 2. Tell me three pet hates?

*Lateness, Change for no reason and arrogance..But were all guilty of these at some point!*

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

*Karaoke is my hidden pleasure! I love it! James Arthur or Ed Sheeran are my go to songs!*

## 4. Who would be your 3 dream dinner guests?

*Sir Alex Ferguson, Barrack Obama, Steve Charles (Head of Partnerships at Quest!) What a table. All Legends!*

## 5. If we went to 'happy hour', what would you order?

*Tequila and Beer. Oh dear!*

## 6. What is your favourite holiday destination?

*I have a family place near Barcelona so we tend to go there each year!*

## 7. Name three words that best describe you?

*Cheeky, Loud & Helpful..I hope!*

## 8. If you were stranded on a desert island what 3 items would you want with you?

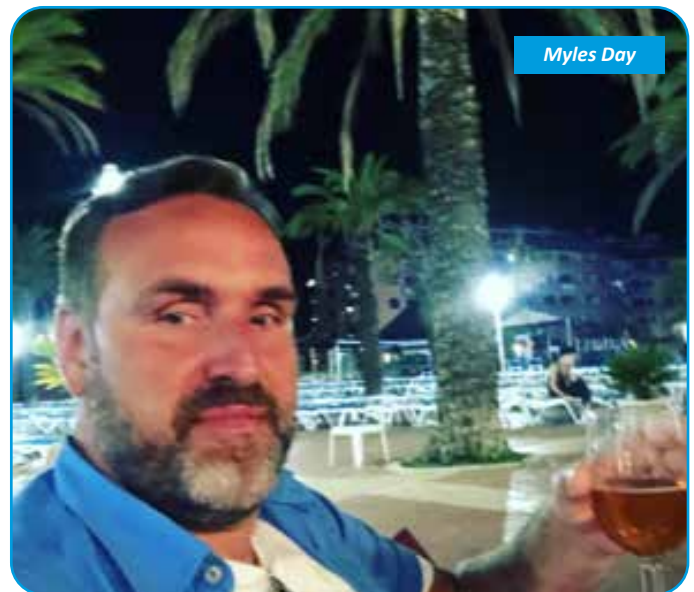
*Great question. Rambo Knife, Football , Karaoke Machine!*

## 9. What's a goal you have for yourself that you want to accomplish in the next year either in your personal or work life?

*Improving my Work life balance is key. After Lockdown I think most people have looked at this part of their lives.*

## 10. What was the last book you read?

*Exactly what to say by Phil Jones.*



## 11. What is your favourite aspect about your career?

*I genuinely get to help people daily in areas of their business that they never trained for yet have to deal with. Taking that pressure away and seeing them be able to re-focus on growing their business is a really great feeling.*

## 12. Are you doing the job you thought you would do when you were a child?

*No! I was an apprentice footballer and that was the dream! Not quite good enough though!*

## 13. What are some causes you care about?

*The main one is the environment which I think is in everyone's thoughts now.*

## 14. What do you do with friends and family in your spare time? Mainly time with my children who are 15, 10 and 18 Months respectively.

*I am "Dadding at all levels" so that takes most of my time now.*

## 15. What would be your personal motto?

*"If you help, you get back ten-fold"*



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**3 Insurance**  
Optional EPI (Employment Protection Insurance) Not limited by a 'Prospects of Success' clause is available to you, giving you peace of mind that should you be taken to tribunal, you have support.

**4 Training**  
For guidance and a practical insight into HR & Health and Safety, the Quest courses are a must.





Branded balloons at the offices in Shrewsbury



Birthday cake was of course a feature of the event

# Birthday wishes as company turns 12

**F**rom a one-man band founded by Rob Hughes, Managing Director, to a talented team of 20+ design, digital marketing, and website experts, Reech Media has now established itself as one of the leading full-service marketing agencies in Shropshire.

In November, the agency welcomed another milestone in the form of its 12th birthday. To celebrate another year of growth, the team at Reech celebrated the agency's birthday in style. The office, based on Shrewsbury Business Park, was decorated with branded balloons from Alexa & Bud and the team enjoyed a freshly prepared lunch from Fish Heads. The team then raised a toast and enjoyed a slice of cake, which was hand-decorated by Merricakes.

"As we celebrate our 12th Birthday, I want to say a big thank you to all of our clients who trust us to get creative and present new ideas for their brand, website and digital marketing. I also want to thank the team here at the agency who continue to push boundaries and expand their skillsets to create fantastic work for our clients," said Rob Hughes, Managing Director.

"Although the past 12 months have been very different from years previous, it's been a year full of development and growth for the agency with the addition of new digital and website services and new experts to our internal departments. We look forward to



Rob Hughes and the team at Reech

seeing what lucky 13 has in store!"

To celebrate, Reech is gifting 12 prizes to 12 lucky winners with its fantastic competition! Businesses and charities across Shropshire are invited to enter for a chance to win some of Reech's specialist services, including website hosting, branded social media assets and professional photography.

Other prizes up for grabs include 12 matchday tickets to cheer on local club,

Shrewsbury Town FC, and mouth-watering doughnuts from Planet Doughnut (specially decorated in Reech's bright pink colour!).

Anybody who enters the competition will receive 12% off their next quotation from Reech. Simply request a quote from now until 31st December 2021 to qualify.

To find out more about how you could help change a young person's future prospects, please contact Abi Baker by email via [abi.baker@derwen.ac.uk](mailto:abi.baker@derwen.ac.uk)



*Rachel Owen, Shropshire Chamber's membership manager, said: "It was a fabulous morning of friendly, fun competition, as well as a wonderful opportunity for our patrons to enjoy a face-to-face catch-up."*



## Patrons networking event hits the target

**S**hropshire Chamber of Commerce's patrons put their sharp-shooting skills to the test at a networking event with a difference.

Hencote vineyard on the outskirts of Shrewsbury was the location for a morning of laser clay shooting, followed by lunch.

Each player was given the chance to use a modified shotgun which shot an infrared beam at real clays launched from a clay launcher.

When the trigger is pulled, the digital control scoreboard generates the 'bang' and when a player hits the target it reproduces the sound of a breaking clay.

Rachel Owen, Shropshire Chamber's membership manager, said: "It was a fabulous morning of friendly, fun competition, as well as a wonderful opportunity for our patrons to enjoy a face-to-face catch-up.

"Our patrons were able to test their skills with what looks and feels like a real shotgun, but had been deactivated and turned into a high-tech version, firing invisible infrared beams."

The event, which was open to patrons and their guests, was won by Jennifer Richards of PCB Solicitors who collected the 'top shot' trophy.

Rachel said the event had been a big success, and was likely to be repeated very soon, alongside other 'have a go' activities for patrons.

Shropshire Chamber of Commerce's Patron Programme exists to give a select group of dynamic businesses in the county various opportunities to raise awareness of their organisations.

It is also a chance for them to formally express their commitment to the success of the Shropshire business community.

For more details about the Chamber's patron programme, see [www.shropshire-chamber.co.uk/about-us/shropshire-chamber-patron-programme/](http://www.shropshire-chamber.co.uk/about-us/shropshire-chamber-patron-programme/)

*Ready, aim, fire!*



*Each player was given the chance to use a modified shotgun which shot an infrared beam at real clays launched from a clay launcher*



## Paramedics inspire Adam's career change

A Shropshire health care worker was so inspired by county paramedics that he decided to change his life, with the help of Telford College.

Adam Amoo regularly met paramedics while he was working in health care and after learning more about how they began their careers, he made the decision to go back to college to follow the career of his dreams.

"I enjoyed my health care role, but I knew I had more to give, and so I attended an open event at Telford College to talk to tutors about where to start," said 36-year-old Adam, from Stirchley.

"I enrolled on GCSE maths and English courses, which are free to any adult who does not already have a pass grade, and I worked hard to complete my studies.

"The most memorable moment of my college journey was definitely receiving a grade six for English and a grade seven for maths."



Adam Amoo, from Stirchley

Adam said he owed a lot of credit to his Telford College tutors as they worked as hard as he did, and particularly through

lockdown, they were extremely supportive and helpful.

"I then enrolled on an Access to Higher Education science course, which is the course for adults who want to go on to university but who don't have the UCAS points from their GCSEs at school.

"I absolutely love the course, the content, and the tutors, and I'm really looking forward to the future."

Thanks to the path he has taken, Adam has not paid out any money for tuition fees so far, and won't have to pay anything at all if he achieves his full degree.

Adam will now move on to the University of Wolverhampton where he will be studying Paramedic Science, and he hopes to join the NHS as a junior paramedic once his studies are completed.

A new range of adult courses is due to start at Telford College in January. For more details visit [www.telfordcollege.ac.uk/new-year-new-start](http://www.telfordcollege.ac.uk/new-year-new-start)

## Fact-finding tour for LEP

**T**he new chief executive of the Marches Local Enterprise Partnership visited Telford College for a fact-finding tour.

Rachel Laver said she was keen to see some of the skills projects which have been funded by the partnership.

Construction students demonstrated software in the college's virtual and augmented reality suite, which is being used to help them identify potential hazards before going out on site.

"I am really keen to understand the skills challenges locally and see how the Investing in our Future Workforce projects, funded by the LEP, are benefitting students and meeting local employer needs," Rachel said.

"We have provided £4.97 million of Local Growth Funds to improve training facilities across the Marches, of which in excess of £500,000 went towards part-funding the new virtual and augmented reality training suite at Telford College which is a fantastic facility.

"It was good to meet up with Graham Guest, who joins our LEP board this month, and discuss how we can work together to address these challenges and develop a comprehensive Local Skills Improvement Plan, which works for students and for employers across the region."

The Telford College LEP funded project has delivered 152 apprenticeships and assisted 3,992 new learners by contract completion on 31 March 2021.

Rachel, who has succeeded Gill Hamer in the new role, was previously director of programmes at Cheshire and Warrington LEP where she managed more than £240 million of funding.

Telford College principal and chief executive Graham Guest will be officially joining the LEP board later this month as chair of its Skills Advisory Panel.

He said: "As a further education college,



Graham Guest with new Marches LEP chief executive Rachel Laver

we have a responsibility to respond quickly and effectively to the changing needs of the local business community.

"I'm looking forward to developing a closer than ever working relationship with Rachel and her colleagues at the LEP, as well as other local business support organisations.

"It is vital to ensure that our curriculum and facilities here at Telford College are closely aligned with the needs of local employers.

"The Government clearly wants to see further education more closely aligned with the needs of employers, playing a pivotal role in the local economy.

"Here at Telford College, we're already doing this. Not only have we aligned our curriculum to the needs of local employers, we've also set up a series of specialist skills hubs to encourage closer partnership working – with more on the way."



Level two construction student Joe Hindley, demonstrated safety software to Rachel Laver



# Zen proud to be first in UK to pledge support to domestic Abuse Covenant

**T**elford-based Zen Communications has become the first business in the UK to sign up to an Employer Covenant that aims to make a huge difference to victims of domestic abuse.

The Covenant has been launched by the team at PEGS – a fellow Shropshire-based organisation set up by Founder Michelle John to provide support to parents, carers, and professionals impacted by Child to Parent Abuse (CPA).

In partnership with the Department for Work and Pensions, the Covenant has been developed with the core objective of raising awareness of CPA within the workplace and encouraging employers to include it within their policies and practices.

Rhiannon Williams, Head of Agency at Zen Communications, said: "Child to Parent Abuse is a very serious issue, and covers a range of abusive behaviours displayed by a child of any age towards their parent, carer or guardian. It can include physical, financial, verbal and even sexual abuse – and staggeringly, between 3% and 10% of households in the UK could be affected by it right now.

"By signing the Covenant, we want to ensure that not only are we pledging support to our own team and encouraging them to gain more knowledge of CPA, but that we're helping to raise awareness amongst our clients, partners, and wider communities of this devastating form of domestic abuse.

"We'd love every business out there to join us in supporting this fantastic initiative, and the incredible work that the PEGS team is so passionate about.

"Signing up means that service users can approach you knowing that you're able (and willing) to respond appropriately to CPA disclosures. It means that you're demonstrating to your own teams that you're open to conversations. And that you're able to introduce policies that can genuinely make a huge difference.

"Any employer that signs up will receive access to a free webinar as well as a wealth of information and resources on how to effectively implement CPA-focused policies and practices into their workplace."

To sign up to the CPAC, simply visit [www.pegssupport.co.uk/CPAC](http://www.pegssupport.co.uk/CPAC)

## Charity to support women at the first event of its kind

A Wolverhampton based charity dedicated to supporting women and children has announced the launch of its first ever dedicated female empowerment convention to be held next year.

The Haven Wolverhampton provides support services to those across the West Midlands and even beyond who are experiencing domestic abuse and homelessness, and this inaugural virtual event taking place on the 8th February 2022 has been designed exclusively to celebrate women everywhere.

The team's mission through the one-day event is to support females across all communities to feel inspired, encouraged, and empowered, as well as to raise much-needed funds for the charity – who last year supported just under 2,000 women and children to get the help and support they needed and deserved across their emergency accommodation and community services.

The Female Empowerment Convention: Supporting Women to BE event is set to run from 9.30am -5pm and will welcome a rostrum of extraordinary motivational speakers from across the UK who will all share their insight and wisdom across a range of topics including resilience and leadership, mindfulness, and imposter syndrome and self-esteem.

Jade Secker, Fundraising Manager at The Haven, said: "It's well documented that women across all corners of the globe are the anchor and flex point across both family and business – the ones who are expected to adjust their schedules, compromise their careers, and sacrifice their own wants and desires to meet the needs of others. And, the recent pandemic has certainly done nothing to change this – in fact, it's only brought additional challenges to the lives of women of all ages.

"And this absolutely isn't sustainable. Many of us are experiencing burnout, dependency, and disempowerment – and this needs to stop. Right now. This convention is a wonderful opportunity for women to come together to inspire and celebrate one another, and we're so honoured to have such amazing ladies involved in this event – all true experts in their fields and all equally passionate about supporting and empowering women. What's more, proceeds from the event will be ensuring that many more vulnerable women and children can continue to access vital support to help them rebuild their lives following domestic abuse.

"We're hugely excited that tickets for

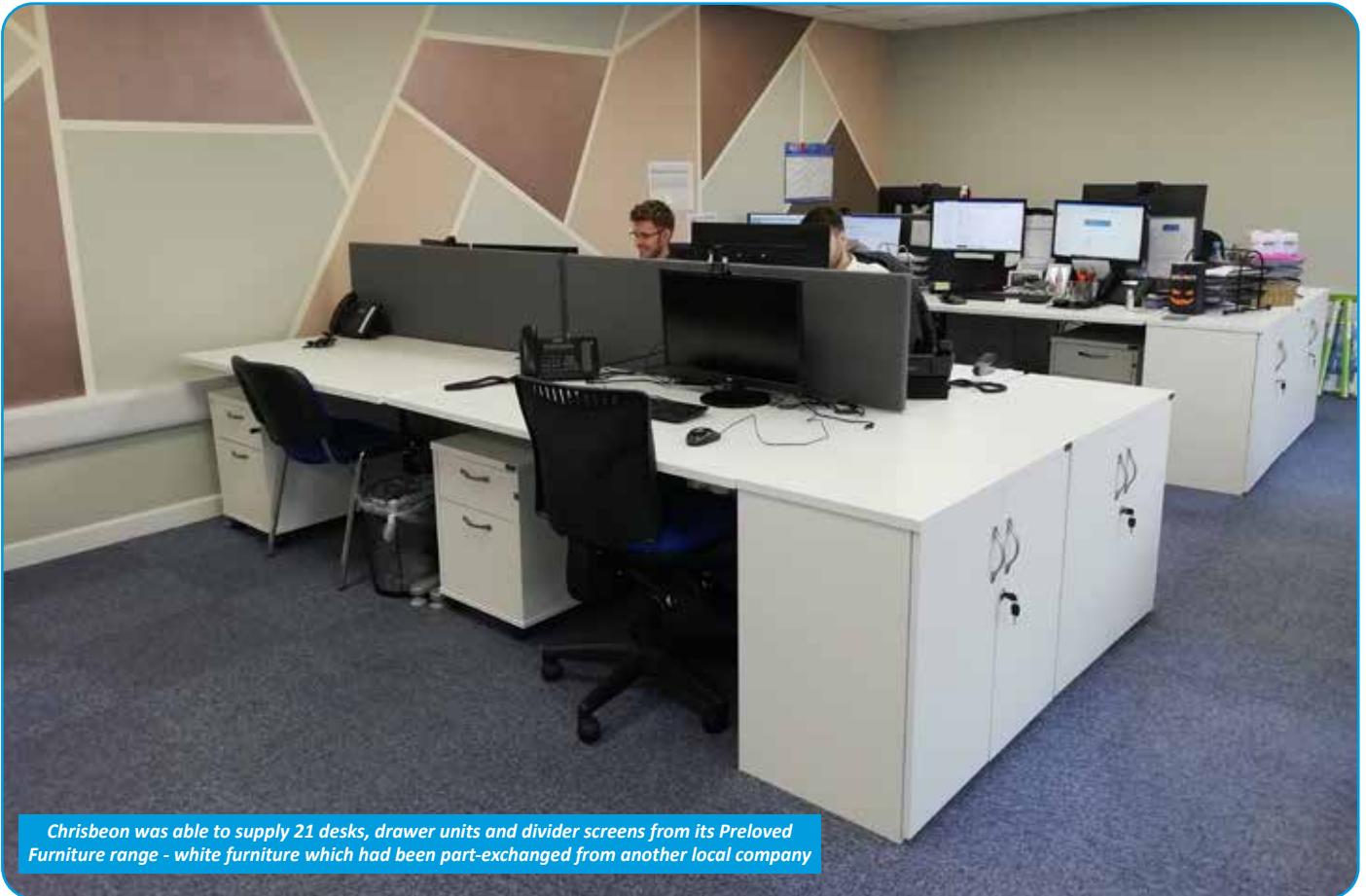


Jade Secker, Fundraising Manager

the convention are now available via our dedicated website [www.havenrefuge.org.uk/the-female-empowerment-convention](http://www.havenrefuge.org.uk/the-female-empowerment-convention) currently at an early bird rate of £35 per ticket."

The event is being supported completely pro bono by local business Zen Communications.

Early bird tickets are available until 10pm on 1st January 2022, after which the standard ticket price of £50 will apply. For further information on the convention and to book your place, please visit [www.havenrefuge.org.uk/the-female-empowerment-convention](http://www.havenrefuge.org.uk/the-female-empowerment-convention)



*Chrisbeon was able to supply 21 desks, drawer units and divider screens from its Preloved Furniture range - white furniture which had been part-exchanged from another local company*

# Cost-conscious refurbishment

**S**hropshire Chamber of Commerce has taken delivery of a supply of office furniture - thanks to the support of a local company.

The 21 desks, drawer units, matching cupboards and divider screens are helping to kit out the chamber's expanding team at its offices in Telford and have been supplied by Shropshire Chamber Patron Chrisbeon from its Preloved Furniture range - resulting in a substantial saving in cost.

Chrisbeon is a leading Telford-based office furniture and stationery supplier which has been serving the community, and employers across the country for almost 50 years.

Richard Hughes, Chrisbeon partner, said: "We have a long association with Shropshire Chamber, are proud to be a long-standing Patron and were happy to help when they were looking for office furniture to cater for an expanding team at their offices in Telford.

"We were able to supply 21 desks, drawer units and divider screens from our Preloved Furniture range - white furniture which we had

part-exchanged from another local company we had supplied a few years ago. It meant the chamber were able to freshen up their offices to accommodate a growing team without the need to buy anything new, making significant savings and not 'wasting' members' money, a cost-conscious approach which is obviously very important to them.

"We do offer clients a part-exchange and trade-in facility, a popular service for customers looking at changing furniture, but usually only on a new for old basis. On this occasion, and because of our close ties with the chamber, we were able to make an exception.

"It meant we were able to part-exchange the chamber's old beech furniture which reduced the cost of the white furniture we were able to supply from our Preloved Furniture range.

"The chamber were pleased to get money back for their old furniture, it avoided the furniture having to go to landfill and means we will be able to offer it as Preloved Furniture with a three-month warranty as a cost-effective option to someone else.

"Our Preloved Furniture is one of the ways

we are able to help businesses with their office requirements. It's proved extremely popular with customers and the team at Shropshire Chamber of Commerce are delighted with their 'new' office equipment. We were glad to help!"

Ruth Ross, Director of Business at Shropshire Chamber of Commerce, said: "We assembled a mix of large and small desks over the years as our team has grown with new Kicksta "We walked into Chrisbeon at just the right time as they had lots of white furniture, all preloved and looking hardly used. Chrisbeon has been very accommodating - from holding some furniture in storage while a wall was being built, to agreeing suitable times and dates to deliver and take away larger, older, but still usable desks.

"From planning the layout for us with great images of what it would look like, to setting up the desks and clearing the old ones away, Chrisbeon's level of service cannot be faulted - giving our happy and extremely productive team a great new-look office from which we can continue to serve the local business community in the best ways possible."



# Marches School Climate Solutions Fair

As part of their pledge to provide support for children, Aico recently attended the Marches School Climate Solutions Fair.

Held in the school's large sports hall, the fair coincided with the COP26 conference in Glasgow and aimed to bring together organisations to help educate and inform students on sustainable solutions.

Aico colleagues Ryan Evans, Operations Co-Ordinator, and Lily Ellis, Community Liaison, spoke to 1,600 students, from Year 7 to Year 13, about the importance of becoming carbon neutral by 2030 and what measures Aico are implementing to achieve this target. Students had the opportunity to learn more about Aico's sustainability initiative, including their environmentally sympathetic headquarters and their use of hybrid vehicles within their company fleet. Lily spoke of the fully electric car that the



Lily Ellis and Ryan Evans at the fair

company uses for their Corporate Social Responsibility programme, Aico in the Community, and the benefits of electric over fuel.

Ryan explained how Aico have made changes to their business operations to reduce their environmental impact, such as replacing their plastic packaging tape with a paper alternative, digitizing the instruction leaflet in their products to reduce the amount of paper used and the launch of their 'eco-fit range' of alarms,

providing a 100% reduction in plastic and 58% reduction in cardboard and paper. Students also tried their hand at using a rowing machine from Aico's gym to demonstrate that without change, sea levels will continue to rise and they will have to learn how to row!

Ryan Evans was delighted with how engaged the students were, commenting "It was great to attend the Marches School Climate Solutions Fair last week. The students were really inquisitive and seemed very keen to learn more about sustainable practices and how they can make a difference. I feel very proud to be able to use my knowledge to help the next generation learn about sustainable practices, and preserving their communities and the environment."

To find out more about the Marches School visit [www.marchesschool.co.uk](http://www.marchesschool.co.uk)

Please visit [www.aico.co.uk](http://www.aico.co.uk) for more information about Aico in the Community.

## Movement Centre supported

**O**swestry-based company, Aico, have recently hosted an abseiling challenge in aid of local charity, The Movement Centre. Alongside other businesses from across Shropshire, Aico and HomeLINK colleagues challenged themselves to scale the side of their 60-foot headquarters, raising over £2,200 for the charity.

With Aico's prominent headquarters becoming a well-known landmark in Oswestry, it provided the perfect setting to host the abseiling event. With 50 spaces available, Aico were joined by other local businesses who were keen to get involved with this amazing cause, including Pave Aways, Adrenaline Sporting Events, Willowdene Rehabilitation, Furrows Group, Shropshire Chamber of Commerce, Sol Distribution, Beaumont Wealth, Borders Physio, BBC Radio Shropshire and HSBC.

Deryn Ellis-Thomas, Marketing Executive for Aico, who completed the abseil comments "Corporate Social Responsibility is such a crucial part of the ethos at Aico, and to be part of such a large group of supporters from local businesses was fantastic. The Movement Centre are an incredible charity that change the lives of children with movement disabilities, and while dangling off our 60-foot building certainly isn't a typical Monday, it was definitely memorable and worthwhile to raise vital funds."

Everyone who took part had the support of their families, friends, and colleagues, cheering them on from the car park below; also amongst the spectators was five year-old Wilson and his family, who are currently receiving support from The Movement Centre and dropped by to support the abseilers before Wilson's therapy session.

Aico have a longstanding relationship



with The Movement Centre, and have shown continued support through fundraising activities and donations, organised as part of their Corporate Social Responsibility programme, Aico in the Community. Understanding the financial difficulties that all charities have faced during the pandemic, Aico recognise that the need to give back to their local communities is more important than ever.

Johnny Wilkes, CEO of The Movement Centre, says of the event "We were delighted to be invited to attend the Aico Charity Abseil today and meet the Aico staff who had volunteered as well as those from other organisations. The event was very well organised, and we were very impressed with the bravery of everyone who went outside of their comfort zone to complete the abseil - well done and a massive thank you for raising funds for our charity; it really does make a huge difference! Team Aico leading the way..."

The Movement Centre is a specialist treatment centre, dedicated to supporting children with movement disabilities and their families. The targeted training provided through the charity is bespoke to each child and is designed to improve movement control and independence. To find out more, visit: [www.the-movement-centre.co.uk/](http://www.the-movement-centre.co.uk/)

To find out more about Aico in the Community, please visit: <https://www.aico.co.uk/in-the-community/>

## Pyjamas on for a good cause

Aico, the European market leader in homelife safety are always up for a challenge, especially when it comes to raising money for charity.

On Friday 19th November, Aico colleagues attended work in their pyjamas, onesies and dressing gowns, and endeavored to raise money for Children In Need by baking cakes, pastries and strudels. Colleagues had the opportunity to give a donation to the charity for the crucial support that they provide to children and young people for these tasty treats!

Throughout 2021, Aico's CSR programme, 'Aico in the Community', have focused on helping young people to tackle prevalent issues such as deprivation, education and mental health. Aico have supported several local organisations, charities and schools through donations and volunteering.

Aico support Children In Need each year, Children In Need are the BBC's charity and their mission is to help ensure every child in the UK is safe, happy, secure and has the opportunities they need to reach their potential.

Clare Polden, Finance Clerk for Aico commented: "Aico have supported Children in need for many years, this year we came dressed in our PJ's and had a cake sale. It was amazing to see so many colleagues get involved and raise money for such a fantastic cause to support children in the UK. During the year, Aico colleagues get involved and raise money for many charities. These can be local or national charities by dressing down, fancy dress or just general craziness! It's just fantastic that we can come together as a company to raise money for such good causes and have fun."

To find out more about how Aico in the Community support charities, please visit: [www.aico.co.uk/in-the-community/charity/](http://www.aico.co.uk/in-the-community/charity/)

To find out more about Children In Need, please visit: <https://www.bbcchildreninneed.co.uk/>

# Team strengthened with promotion

A leading Shropshire commercial finance company has strengthened its team with the appointment of a new partner.

Q Commercial Finance, which has bases in Wellington and Shrewsbury, has promoted Josh Timbrell to the role just three years after he first joined the company.

Director Steve Parry said the promotion reflected the hugely important role Josh had played with Q and the company's ambition for the future.

"In three years Josh has established himself as a critical part of Q Commercial Finance and someone who will help shape the future of the company for years to come. He joined us from college and has quickly become both a highly-respected member of our team and someone our clients respect and trust.

"We are delighted to have been able to make Josh a partner and look forward to watching him develop and flourish for years to come."

Josh, aged 21, joined Q as a commercial executive in August 2018 before being promoted to senior commercial executive two years later, and also completed a qualification in business banking and conduct last year.

He said: "I am extremely grateful to Q for the chance they have given me. I was given a huge opportunity at a young age to learn from Steve, who has been working in the industry for 20 years, and progress in an industry where the majority of my peers have decades of banking experience.

"Q is a great place to work with great mentorship and career opportunities, but also a supportive team which takes a

pride in enjoying its work and supporting each other. I could not have achieved this promotion without that."

Away from work, Josh enjoys fitness training and has achieved his third

Dan blackbelt in kickboxing, in which he has competed at national championships.

Q Commercial Finance is part of the Q Financial Services group, one of the leading and fastest-growing companies in the sector across the Midlands.

For more information on Q visit <https://www.qfinancialservices.co.uk/>



Josh Timbrell

# Top award for travel agent

**T**his month Peakes Travel Elite picked up another prestigious award to add to their growing collection, which includes being listed as a top 50 travel agency in the UK and Ireland. They were awarded a 'Travel Weekly Agent Achievement Award' at a glittering awards ceremony in London, hosted by comedian Tom Allen and Travel Weekly editor-in-chief Lucy Huxley.

The Travel Weekly Agent Achievement Awards are the largest celebration of the travel trade in the UK and Ireland, and the highest accolade for travel agencies and agents. This year's awards were the first to be held since the start of the pandemic and were designed to honour those travel agencies who have represented the best of the industry over the past 18 months.

The award winners are selected based on voting by travel industry suppliers including tour operators, airlines, cruise lines and tourist boards, with the individual agent categories decided by panels of expert judges.

Claire Moore, managing director at Peakes Travel Elite, said, "It feels incredible to have won this award despite everything we've battled against over the last 18 months.

"The personal service we offer our customers has shone through. When something goes wrong, we're here to sort it. Thank you to my team for your sheer determination and hard work through the hardest period the travel sector has ever faced."

Peakes have reduced the number of tour operators they work with based on their treatment of customers during the pandemic. Claire continues, "We have stepped away from working with any operators who have acted irresponsibly and unfairly. We have a cautious and considered approach to make sure our customers are protected."

The award follows more good news for the business with the number of countries on the UK Covid travel red list being cut from 54 to 7 by the Government this month.

"It is fantastic that so many countries are off the red list and long-haul options are opening up," said Claire. "My advice to anyone wanting to book a holiday would be not to wait too long. I estimate that around 60% of our 2022 options are already booked due to the number of holidays that have been rolled over from 2020 and 2021, and due to people booking earlier for that very reason.

"Sadly, our team is half the size it was before the pandemic. There's still a long way to go for the travel industry to get back to what it was – and it'll only get there by people having the confidence to take holidays again.

"There's never been a better time to use a travel agent to guide you



Claire Moore, managing director at Peakes Travel Elite, with the award

through making a holiday booking. We are very proud to offer an award-winning service to our customers."

Peakes Travel Elite offer an appointment service Monday to Saturday from 10am to 2pm, and outside those hours via phone and email. Visit [www.peakestravelite.co.uk](http://www.peakestravelite.co.uk) for more information



# Best new caravan dealer for fourth time

**S**hropshire-based caravan and motorhome dealership Salop Leisure has named the best in the UK for the fourth time.

The company, which has been in business for 55 years and employs more than 200 people at sales centres in Shrewsbury, Machynlleth and Stourport-on-Severn, has been named the top supplying dealers of new touring caravans.

The Owner Satisfaction Awards 2022 are based on surveys undertaken by Camping and Caravanning Club members and Practical Caravan magazine readers. A total of 3,449 owners completed the survey this year - 200 more than in 2020.

"A truly satisfying ownership experience relies on a great product backed by superb sales and aftercare, so the best caravan dealerships also deserve to be recognised," said an awards spokesman.

"Standards among the top performers are high, and we don't want the industry's top performers to rest on their laurels, so we've increased the minimum score for a Gold Award from 80% to 85%.

"You're unlikely to be frowning if you buy from Salop Leisure in Shrewsbury, leaping up to first from eighth place in 2020. A 91% satisfaction rating easily achieves the Gold Award standard and leaves clear daylight between Salop and the best of the rest."

It's the fourth time in nine years that Salop Leisure has won the overall award which is accompanied by a Gold Award for Best New



Salop Leisure's managing director Mark Bebb and staff celebrate the award for being the UK's top supplying dealers of new touring caravans

Caravan Supplying Dealers. The company also collected Gold Awards for supplying pre-owned caravans and motorhomes.

Salop Leisure's managing director Mark Bebb said: "We are delighted to be named the Best New Caravan Supplying Dealers in the UK for the fourth time. We are very proud of the team at Salop Leisure who, despite the challenges caused by Covid-19, have continued to work hard to provide great customer service.

"As a business, we never rest on our laurels. We believe there is still room for improvement and that's why we shall continue to strive to provide an even better service to our customers."

Salop Leisure aims to be a one stop shop for customers, who can buy, service, repair and

store their touring caravans and motorhomes in Shrewsbury. The company also sells caravan holiday homes and luxury lodges, working with caravan parks across the Heart of England and Mid Wales.

The company's headquarters, located alongside Shrewsbury bypass at Emstrey, has become a tourism destination, as it houses Love Coffee restaurant and Love Plants, a specialist plants centre.

On site facilities also include award winning secure caravan and motorhome storage, which has won the CaSSOA (Caravan Storage Site Owners' Association) platinum award.

Adjoining Salop Leisure's headquarters is the company's multi-award-winning Love2Stay glamping and touring caravan resort.

## New firm gains ISO 9001:2015 & Great Place to Work after only 18 months since launch

Quality Medical Group Services (QMGS) paginates records (sorting and indexing a chronology of events) for lawyers in the clinical negligence field. These records are then used by solicitors, barristers and courts involved in resolving cases where there is alleged clinical negligence, the provision of clear records helps to smooth the process through the various stages of the legal procedure. In addition, if required, QMGS can provide first class expert opinion and reports in all medical disciplines.

The company has seen an increase in the number of firms working with them over the past 18 months with an associated rise in staffing from 8 in March 2020 to 28 by September 2021.

Chairman, Dr Roger Davies has worked in the Medico-legal arena for over 25 years, in addition to working as a respected GP in Ludlow and subsequently Clun. He was co-founder of Premier Medical Limited, which brought over 500 jobs to the area. He is absolutely delighted with the development of his new company QMGS and sees continued growth in the next 2 years. Roger commented –

"We are focused on delivering a responsive quality service to the firms who use us. Our staff are experienced and exceptional, I cannot overstate how much I appreciate them. We currently handle approx. 4% of all the UK pagination and reporting needs in our sector, so there is room for expansion. We have good relationships with our instructing firms and with major insurers e.g., Markel and ARAG who see us as being very competent and cost effective.

Taking the lead from the firms that instruct us, we are flexible in the way we set up their pagination, which is bespoke to them, which allows us to take the service to new markets. Occasionally allowing us to offer significant deferment terms to the teams with whom we work."



The team from Quality Medical Group Services (QMGS)

Whilst winning work across the UK They are also looking to diversify to other areas of work, using their team of doctors, nurses, midwives, and admin, over the next 12-18 months

The Company recently employed Dr. Joel Pittaway as Associate Medical Officer, Joel has many years' experience in the NHS and the DHSS. The company has also benefited from the input of Maisy Owen from MO Management Consultancy working in conjunction with Rob Granger (Operations Manager), to improve systems, communications etc. This has enabled the firm to recently obtain ISO 9001 accreditation and Great Place to work status.

QMGS believe in supporting charities, this year they have chosen The Spinal Injuries Association as their National charity for 2021, with Oak Farm, Ditton Priors as their local charity.

Their aim is to be one of the largest U.K. companies in their field by the end of 2023.

# Leadership Conference 2022

**The Leadership Conference returns to Shropshire on 3rd March 2022 at Shrewsbury's Theatre Severn.**

High-profile and influential keynote speakers will take to the stage to inspire, challenge, and evolve how you lead. The speakers are international speaker, customer service expert, best-selling author and coach - Michael Heppell; England's 2003 Rugby World Cup Winning Head Coach, former Director of Sport Team GB and renowned business speaker - Sir Clive Woodward OBE, and number one female keynote speaker, professional adventurer, entrepreneur, and celebrated author - Debra Searle MBE.

Shropshire Council have partnered with the award-winning events business, Shropshire Festivals, to host the event. From office chair races to VR headsets – expect a business event with a difference.

As well as thought-provoking keynote speeches and the opportunity to rub shoulders with Shropshire's business elite, the event will feature trade stands, hands-on workshops, and a Wellbeing Zone as a reminder to prioritise mental health in the workplace.

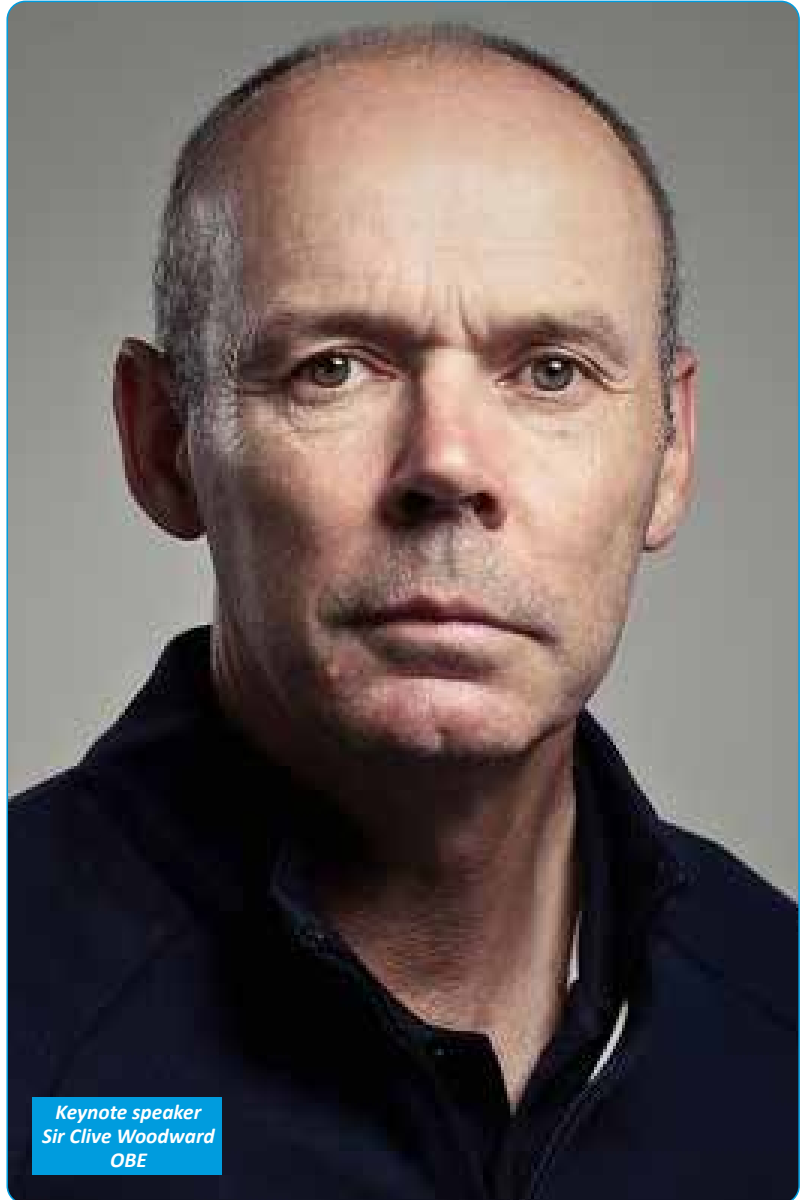
Beth Heath, Director of Fun at Shropshire Festivals, said, "We are thrilled to be involved in planning this event. Shropshire has never experienced anything on this scale for business leaders before, so it is a huge opportunity for the region's businesses to come together. As you would expect from Shropshire Festivals, we will be injecting our own brand of creativity into proceedings to create a relaxed atmosphere perfect for dynamic networking.

"No matter where you are in your leadership journey, there's always room to grow. The benefits of good leadership trickles down through the business – as does poor leadership – so it is important to get it right.

"So, join us to hone your leadership skills, network with an audience of leaders and represent your company at Shropshire's most high-level business event. You'll take home ideas and inspiration that you will carry with you throughout your career.

"Our aim is for you to come away from The Leadership Conference feeling inspired, engaged, and challenged to reach your full potential as a business leader."

The Leadership Conference 2022 takes place on Thursday, 3rd March 2022 at Theatre Severn in Shrewsbury. For more information about booking tickets or a stall, visit [www.shropshireleadership.co.uk](http://www.shropshireleadership.co.uk).



Keynote speaker  
Sir Clive Woodward  
OBE



Kirsty Murrell

## Kirsty's passed her Occupational Health and Safety examinations

The sales, project and delivery manager at Telford-based Seymour Manufacturing International (SMI), Kirsty Murrell, has passed her NEBOSH General Certificate in Occupational Health and Safety.

The certificate is described as the 'gold standard' in health and safety qualifications, and is one of the most respected qualifications of its kind.

It has been specifically shaped for managers, supervisors and anybody with health and safety management responsibilities.

It helps to minimise workplace injuries and illness, boosts employee wellbeing, and demonstrates a company's serious commitment to health and safety.

SMI director Jill Seymour said: "Kirsty studied hard during the stressful Covid period to achieve this important qualification which boosts the skill-set of our staff in such an important area for the business."

The certificate covers areas such as how to effectively manage health and safety, how to identify and control common workplace hazards, how to measure if you've been successful, and the UK's key legal requirements.

SMI is a thermal insulation specialist which invented Tempro, a lightweight thermal insulation material which has been scientifically proven to cut energy loss by as much as 60%.

The company's sales and manufacturing headquarters is on the Stafford Park industrial estate in Telford.





Ruth Ross takes a look at Hobsons



Nanny's Craft Bakery



The English Drinks Company

# Food and drink conference and expo is a big success

**A** food and drink conference and expo which was jointly organised by Shropshire Chamber of Commerce and the Department for International Trade has been declared a great success.

Businesses from all corners of the county showcased their products during the inaugural event at the Mercure Telford Centre Hotel.

There was also a busy programme of seminars running throughout the day on topics such as food labelling, e-commerce, taxation, customs regulations, and ways of gaining a competitive advantage.

Chamber events manager Kelly Roberts said: "The event was a real success, and we've had some fabulous feedback from those who attended the seminars.

"Visitors to the expo were able to see what's on offer from Shropshire producers, as well as hearing from key industry experts.

"It was a fantastic opportunity to understand first-hand how artisan food producers can gain access into some of the largest retailers and independent chains – giving them an advantage over their competition."

Exhibitors included Nanny's Craft Bakery from Wellington, The Ludlow Nut Company, Planet Doughnut of Shrewsbury, Hobson's Brewery from Cleobury Mortimer, Shropshire Festivals, Freshseal, and Hencote.

Also exhibiting were The Shropshire Gin Co Limited, The English Drinks Company, law firm Aaron & Partners, Lux Gallery, Levercliff Associates, Simply VAT, Caviar & Cocktails Limited, Corporate Carma, The Shed Hospitality, and Lambswick Drinks.

Shropshire Chamber, UK Centric Supply Chain Programme, and the Department of International Trade also had displays at the event.



One of the seminars, on food labelling law



Caviar & Cocktails



Beth Heath on the Shropshire Festivals stand



A selection of wines from Hencote

# Construction firm lands special award

Bosses at a construction firm say they are delighted after being handed an award for their innovative approach to tackling the industry's recruitment crisis.

SWG Group, which has offices in Shrewsbury and Welshpool, was presented with a Judge's Special Award at the Powys Business Awards in October.

Judges said they were particularly impressed with the company's efforts in establishing the SWG Construction Academy at Llanfyllin High School, which sees staff helping students working towards a GCSE in construction and the built environment.

SWG director, Jacqui Gough, said

everyone at the firm was proud to be recognised for their investment in future generations.

"We were thrilled to be shortlisted in the first place, so to actually win the award is a real delight," she said.

"Engaging with the next generation of construction workers, and encouraging our staff to reach their full potential, is absolutely ingrained throughout our business.

"When we launched the SWG Academy we did it because we want to make a difference to the lives of those studying and we want to share our expertise. It's all about encouraging and

developing the construction workers of the future.

"It was a big undertaking to launch but one we didn't think twice about doing - as many of our staff are former apprentices and knew this would have a big impact.

"To be recognised for that with this award is great and is a testament to the hard work and dedication of all our staff."

A specialist from SWG attends the school once a month to demonstrate practical skills in woodworking, plumbing, electrical, plastering, tiling and decoration, fix joinery and bricklaying - as well as vital health and safety training.

For more details, visit [www.swg.co.uk](http://www.swg.co.uk)

# New campaign aims to spot the signs of hidden harm

Wrekin staff with See Something Say Something prompt card. Jan Lycett, Executive Director of Business Solutions; Jenny Jackson, Anti-Social Behaviour Co-ordinator; Craig Bennett, Maintenance Supervisor; Karla Brown, Interim Head of Care and Support; Vicky Andrews Support and Enablement Services Manager



**T**he Wrekin Housing Group has launched a new safeguarding awareness campaign to help staff spot the signs of hidden harm.

The 'See Something, Say Something' campaign aims to highlight the important role Wrekin staff have in helping to protect those members of our communities who may be at risk of neglect, modern day slavery and financial, domestic or child abuse.

All Wrekin employees are receiving

safeguarding training to help them recognise the signs of abuse. Any concerns are immediately looked at by Wrekin's trained Safeguarding Leads and appropriate action is taken.

Employees from across the group have been getting involved and spreading the message. Staff have also been provided with resources to help them spot the signs of hidden harm.

Vicky Andrews Support and Enablement Services Manager for Wrekin explains; "The

beauty of the campaign is its simplicity. Everyone is asked to take responsibility and report anything which doesn't feel right through a simple concerns alert system. Colleagues carry a See Something Say Something card with them that highlights some common issues they may come across. However, there is also an impetus on trusting an instinct that something is wrong and acting on that. In the end what seems like a small observation may well be the missing piece in a bigger picture."



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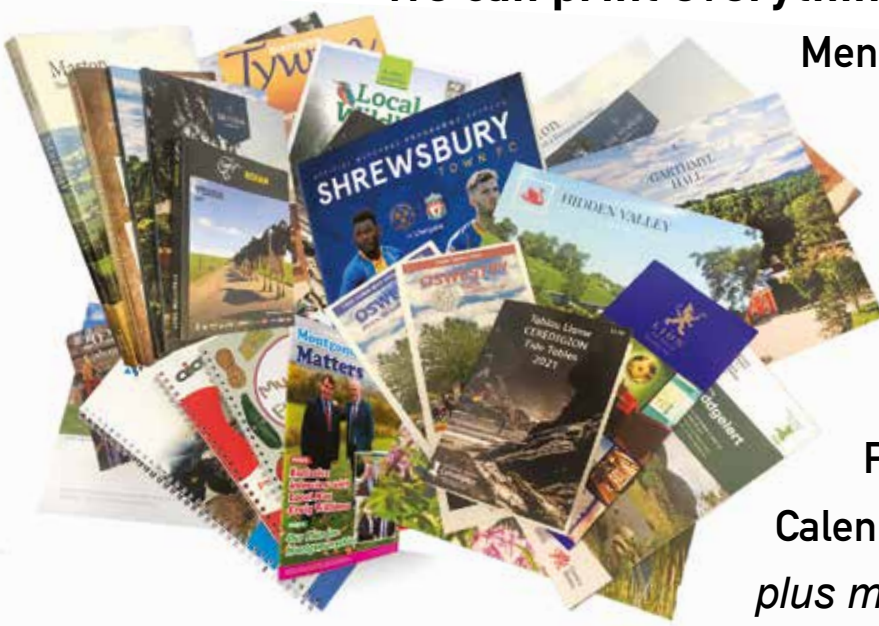
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WPG Ltd hold ISO 14001:2015 Certification for our environmental management system. We can arrange for your printing to have FSC Chain of Custody Certification and also to Carbon Balance it with The World Land Trust - *Talk to us about our Eco Friendly Printing*



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