

Your Chamber, Your VOICE





Here for you as the UK begins to unlock

I start by saying a huge thank you to our BCC Director General Dr Adam Marshall for his amazing contribution to ensuring the voice of Shropshire Business is heard loud and clear within the Westminster corridors of power.

Adam has moved on to a new challenge and we are delighted to welcome our first female Director General to the BCC, Shevaun Haviland, we look forward to welcoming Shevaun to Shropshire.

With the mass vaccination role out allowing the government road map to keep us on the right direction for the progressive easing of restrictions and a return to some semblance of the life we once knew, businesses across our county are getting ready to take advantage of the pent-up consumer demand that will inevitably manifest its self. However, it is right that we continue to lobby government to ensure that the financial support available to many businesses is not just switched off like a light bulb.

Opening a business does not mean instant profit or even income, marketing, staffing and stock acquisition all take time and most importantly money. We recognise that sadly once the funding support comes to an end, loan repayments kick in, some businesses inevitably are not going to survive.

We are committed to ensuring that the lessons learned in 2008/9 around the behaviour of the Banks and their contribution to destroying many businesses are not wasted.

Our Policy Officer Joshua Carpenter will be keen to hear in confidence from any business that feels they are being unjustly treated by their bank, whilst we cannot fix issues at a local level, we can and will make sure our national engagement can raise concerns at the highest level.

We are delighted to hear that rapid testing is being rolled out across the country as this will help improve consumer confidence and reduce outbreaks within the workplace.

Finally, a note on our recently launched Mental Health Charter, a massive thank you to all those businesses who have signed this and are already demonstrating commitment to the health and wellbeing of their work force.

Ending lock down will bring new challenges to mental health as changes in working practice, working environment, relationships with customers and suppliers are re-established. Our staff are our business, let's work together to support them.

Richard Sheehan
Chief Executive Officer,
Shropshire Chamber of Commerce

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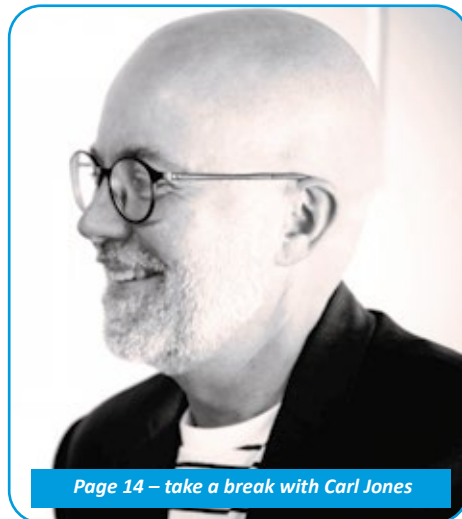
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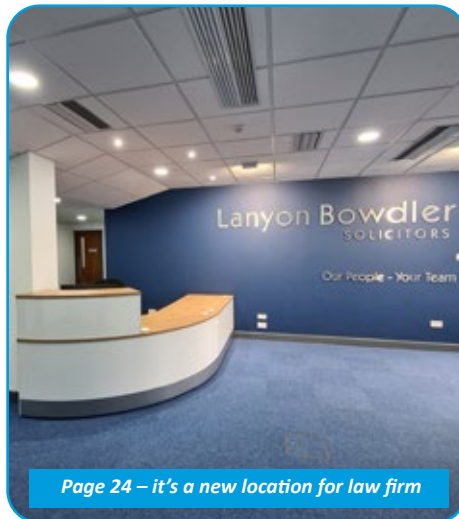
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The deadline for the July/August edition is Friday, May 28th. Publication date is Friday, June 25th. Please note: due to the ongoing situation and the effects of COVID-19 on our business community, some events and activities mentioned may no longer be going ahead. Please check on each businesses own website for further clarification. All photos were taken before the Covid-19 pandemic.

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What's in a name? Rebranding for design firm

For many years now Carl Jones Design have been helping companies, organisations, charities with their branding issues – naming, brand creation, brand & business strategy, brand awareness & brand communication.

Just recently they thought it was time to help themselves. Here's what they did.

Having traded as Carl Jones Design Ltd since 2003 (yes, they are 18 this year, a proper grown up business!) the Directors decided it was time for a slight change. Hence the new trading name – Branded by Jones. Their Limited Company name and details remain the same.

They followed the same process – asking questions, interviewing, researching competition, researching their market, understanding their requirements – as they do with their clients. They came up with several options for the name – including Heighway-Jones Creative, Studio Jones, Jones Associates, and one or two alternative names like Rated and BrandBook. And then a whole range of creative ideas and concepts. In effect, being both the client and the consultants.

So, why Branded by Jones?

It's simple. They wanted to get across what they do. They do 'Branding' and everything associated with it – including complete rebrands, creating brand awareness campaigns, marketing tools for both digital and traditional and product packaging design.

There are two people who head up the business creatively – Carl Jones & Clare Heighway-Jones, both founders and Joint Creative Directors. Sometimes it's assumed that it's just Carl. The new name should hopefully stop and change that assumption.

That's the reason for Branded by Jones.

Call 01694 72 49 49, or visit www.brandedbyjones.com to get in touch.



Carl and Clare Heighway-Jones

Cladding removal welcomed

Bosses at a Shropshire-based global firm has welcomed the £5billion investment to replace unsafe cladding on homes across England.

Tim Sharman, technical sales director of Jesmonite based in Bishop's Castle which exports their product across the world, said homeowners had worked desperately hard to see their views heard since the Grenfell Tower fire in 2017.

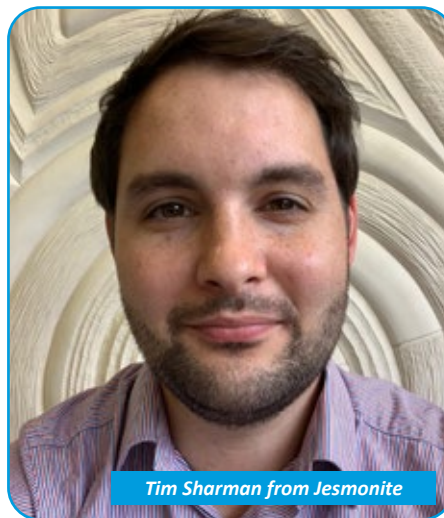
Mr Sharman said it should not have taken four years for the cladding removal programme and investment to be agreed but welcomed it and hoped work would commence immediately.

Jesmonite, which was founded in Bishop's Castle in 1984, has become the go-to material for designers looking for an environmentally conscious alternative to traditional building materials or resin-based products.

Jesmonite AC730 is a water based, micro-concrete material. It is non-solvent, contains zero VOCs and achieves an A2-s1-d0 EN13501-1 Non-Combustible Fire Classification and has been used for cladding panels across the UK.

The company's success has seen Jesmonite being used in Buckingham Palace, London Zoo, many projects abroad including the Far East and India and regeneration projects across the UK.

Mr Sharman said the Project Light, Canada Water multi-phased dockside regeneration scheme in Southwark was their largest Jesmonite cladding project to date and was a perfect example for the Government to follow and for homeowners to see to build their confidence that their homes could be safe again.



Tim Sharman from Jesmonite

The site, between London Bridge and Canary Wharf, includes approximately 9000m² of Jesmonite AC730 external cladding panels specified as a lightweight alternative to traditional heavyweight concrete cladding.

The award-winning technology behind Jesmonite AC730 allows manufacturers to create non-combustible large scale panels that offer major weight reductions whilst achieving high levels of impact resistance and flexibility.

Mr Sharman said: "We are delighted that at last the Government have announced this £5billion investment. Homeowners across the UK have been left in limbo since Grenfell and I don't think anyone can understand the true worry they have endured.

"We have seen how flats have had security guards checking for any fire risks and that is no way for people to live.

"Our non-combustible cladding solution has been available for 20 years but still developments have been built with cladding which we now know is unsafe.

"We are looking forward to supporting the Government with the solutions they need to ensure people are safe in their homes.

"We urge homeowners to keep the pressure on for the works to be carried out immediately. The announcement of the investment is not enough - we need to see cladding being removed and replaced as soon as possible."

Mr Sharman said the money was being invested in developments over 18-metres (6-storeys) high - however he said all buildings with unsafe cladding, regardless of the height, should be considered as part of the programme. The Government has offered a finance scheme for those in buildings between 11 and 18 metres high.

Home Office analysis of fire and rescue service statistics shows buildings between 18 and 30 metres are four times as likely to suffer a fire with fatalities or serious casualties than apartment buildings in general. Lower-rise buildings, with a lower risk to safety, will gain new protection from the costs of cladding removal with a generous

scheme offered to buildings between 11 and 18 metres. This will pay for cladding removal – where it is needed – through a long-term, low interest, government-backed financing arrangement.

The Jesmonite Project Light cladding project can be viewed here <https://jesmonite.com/case-study/project-light-canada-water/>

Further projects and any developers looking to find out more about Jesmonite can visit www.jesmonite.com

Exciting times for property market

Hudson Property Shropshire are among Telford's most dynamic estate agents, focused on our core values of integrity, flexibility and consistency.

We pride ourselves on offering a completely tailored service being both personal and professional. We understand that every landlord, seller, buyer and tenant has different needs which is why our directors, Ben Nicoll and Richard Davies, maintain personal contact with their clients throughout the process. This enables us to draw on their expertise and offer bespoke advice and care at every stage.

Having operated their own property portfolios in Telford for a combined 25 years Ben and Richard decided to offer their experience to clients all over Shropshire. Formally opening our first front facing office in February 2021, it's been a whirlwind first quarter taking on new landlords and beginning our sales process whilst maintaining strong business in our short-term accommodation division.

At Hudson we pride ourselves on offering a fantastic service, utilising modern platforms but maintaining traditional client focused practices.

Ben – "It's been an exciting first couple of months for myself and the team at Hudson, it's been a real pleasure to meet with new clients and begin to work with established local businesses. A particular area that has gathered

*Richard Davies and Ben Nicoll
from Hudson Property Shropshire*



a lot of interest is our Specialised Lettings offering, this sits alongside conventional residential lettings and gives landlords and investors the option to look into higher yield property strategies across Shropshire.

I look forward to continuing our work on

consistent client focused expansion."

If you are considering selling or letting a property in the near future, looking for a new investment or simply wanting a chat about your options please call 01952 200 580 or email info@hudsonpropertyshropshire.co.uk

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Zooming in

“Challenging times” are words we often hear nowadays. Due to the current pandemic, many of us have had to adjust our professional pattern of working and interpreters have been no exception to this. Luckily, platforms such as Zoom and Microsoft Teams have enabled this transition to be as smooth as possible. But just how dependable are they and how can these tools add value to our work and yours?

The environment in which we are working, can sometimes affect our performance in interpreting. Background noise is often an unavoidable distraction in a face-to-face assignment. However, with remote interpreting, no matter how many people we may have to interact with, we can easily choose who to mute and un-mute, allowing the interpreter to solely focus on the speaker. There are endless user-friendly options: one which we use regularly is an integrated file sharing option thus allowing other participants to actively engage with each other, without interfering with the main speaker.

In a face-to-face assignment, interpreters sometimes have to be somewhere for a specific time and often, it can be quite a distance away. Now, a 8.00 am assignment, is no longer arduous and travel time and expenditure is cut to zero! In addition, the health and safety of all parties involved is protected with a click of a button, no matter where they are in the world. These platforms have enabled us to continue offering our interpreting service and as a result, actually connecting with people more often and not less!

I have personally noticed that this way of working has brought about an unexpected, yet welcomed benefit: a greater sense of respect for me as an interpreter and what my job entails and at the same time, affording me the time to converse correctly. Each participant has to now wait for the highlighting to go from around my Zoom box, before they can speak, meaning, I can actually say everything I want to without interruption!

Whilst interpreters are essential to promote communication across cultures in business, it is our role to do it as discretely as possible, and to act as an intermediary between two parties. I have noticed, with remote interpreting, that I am now actually welcomed as an active participant in the conversation, and in turn, I feel more valued as an interpreter. As a Portuguese interpreter for the Wolverhampton Wanderers FC, I thoroughly enjoy interpreting for the players. The work is varied and both the interviewees and interviewers are an absolute pleasure to work with. What is also a bonus is the fact that I get to “meet” them all beforehand and go through what will be talked about during the call which is an opportunity to further prepare for the meeting. The light-hearted atmosphere Zoom has provided, adding to the “we are all in the same boat attitude” makes every assignment more enjoyable all the more so, since we are all trying to overcome the professional challenges of this pandemic.

Face-to-face interpreting is always something I will enjoy as I like to be out and about and meet people for real, so I look forward to getting back in the saddle in this respect, but remote interpreting should not be seen as just a means to an end or a poor substitute for the real thing, but as a fantastic opportunity which allows us to connect with people and continue to do our job. Both of which I love!... So...“Don’t stop me now... I’m having such a good time...!”

Inês Carmo
Translation Project Manager

Become a trustee for Citizens Advice

Could you help the community where you study, live or work?

Do you want to make sure that people with challenges in Telford get the advice they need?

You might run a business or have useful knowledge and skills gained from your work or personal life that you’d like to share.

We’re looking for people to get involved in helping to lead our charity and to help us develop our advice services for people in Telford and to secure the vital resources we need to go forward. This is a volunteer role, but all reasonable expenses are reimbursed.

The role will provide you with a great deal of experience and satisfaction, and the opportunity to develop your skills and utilise

your expertise and knowledge. People from all backgrounds are welcome and we aspire to have a diverse Trustee Board that reflects our clients and the Telford community. You do not need experience of working or volunteering with the Citizens Advice service. We are looking for people with a wide variety of skills and a diversity of experiences but particularly those in the fields of finance, income generation and HR.

If you’re looking for a rewarding and challenging volunteer role, please contact Sheila Kanda (sheilakanda@telfordcab.co.uk) Citizens Advice Telford and The Wrekin to request a Trustee Pack for more information.

Say hello to the new kid in town



Kids Planet Day Nurseries, which offers more than 8000 childcare places across the North West of England and Midlands will be landing in Shrewsbury this summer.

The new nursery, part of the award-winning childcare group, will be located in the former Chiquito’s restaurant on Battlefield Road, Harlescott and will open its doors following a complete refit in June 2021.

It marks the group’s second time outside of the North West and takes the total number of nurseries within the Kids Planet group to 59. The expansion into Shropshire demonstrates the group’s continued provision of exceptional early-years care.

Established in 2008 by Clare Roberts and her father John Hoban, the business has gone from strength to strength. As the third largest childcare group and rated number one for Quality in the UK, the group

aims to continue its focus on quality care and well-invested facilities in Shrewsbury. Its first-class support for parents and families have become synonymous to the group’s ongoing success.

Clare Roberts, Chief Executive of Kids Planet said: “We’re delighted to be taking the Kids Planet group to Shropshire.

“As always, we aim to offer the best possible start for children in a safe and nurturing environment where they can explore, discover and learn.

“We offer families the highest quality of care and look forward to welcoming our first children in June”.

The single-storey nursery which will open 7 am to 7 pm Monday to Friday and has 120 places for babies through to preschool, includes a sensory room, wrap-around outdoor play areas and age-specific rooms for 0-5-year-olds. It will create around 30-40 new jobs for the town.

For details about the group or to register a place at Kids Planet Shrewsbury, please contact headoffice@kidsplanetdaynurseries.

100th business to benefit from support

A free programme aimed at helping Shropshire and Telford business people to develop their skills and expertise to get their new business ideas off the ground has reached an important milestone.

Bridgnorth-based business consultancy Good2Great has signed up the 100th start up business since the launch of its Step Up programme in November 2020.

Telford-based Kelly Page and business partner Katie Evans have set up Twin Oaks HR, and are the 100th new business to benefit from the initiative, which helps existing companies to grow, as well as new start ups.

"It's a fantastic milestone to reach – helping 100 firms in five months has been challenging and rewarding. We look forward to seeing how they all flourish in the months and years to come," said Sally Themans of Good2Great.

The Step Up Business Programme is part-funded by the European Regional Development Fund and managed by Telford & Wrekin Council on behalf of partners Shropshire Council.

It is delivered by Good2Great and provides free help and mentoring to anyone starting or running a business.

"Because of the pandemic, our weekly sessions are delivered virtually over Zoom, with the meetings presented by business advisors who have all started and operated their own businesses so have real empathy and can help people avoid making common mistakes. The programme also presents opportunities for networking and sharing ideas through the use of breakout rooms."

Katie Evans and Kelly Page of Twin Oaks HR, who provide small to medium sized companies an all-round human resources service, said they are finding the course really helpful.

"We are using the literature provided to make our marketing more effective and we enjoy being part of the support network you get with Good2Great," explained Katie.

Kelly said she would definitely recommend the course as they had

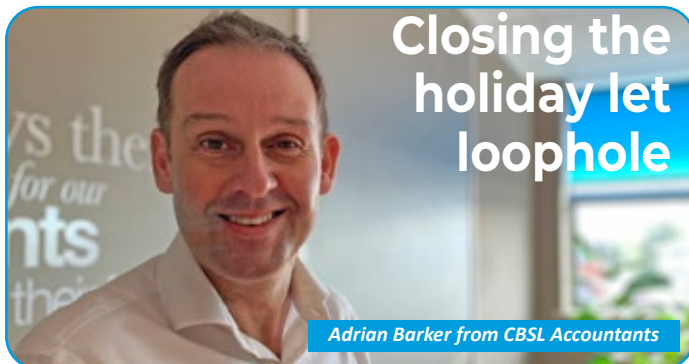


Kelly Page and Katie Evans of Twin Oaks HR

made great connections and the Good2Great team had been really supportive and welcoming.

The programme comprises eight master classes as well as individual coaching, structured support and added help where and when needed.

Sally Themans concluded: "If you have a burning desire to take control of your life and your career then this is a great place to start. We find that it gives people the confidence and encouragement they need to make a success of being in business."



Closing the holiday let loophole

Adrian Barker from CBSL Accountants

Local firm CBSL Accountants, reports that HMRC has announced that it will clampdown on holiday landlords, by requiring them to prove that they have made a genuine and realistic effort to rent out their property for at least 140 days per year. Their concern is that many are not making a true effort to do so, and that the properties are left empty, effectively being second homes.

The number of second homes registered as holiday lets has gone up by 27% to around 60,000 over the last three years.

Adrian Barker, Managing Director of CBSL Accountants said this increase in numbers as well as claims for COVID income support: grants of up to £9,000 to compensate for lost income, will have heightened HMRC's concern.

In reality, if many of the second homes were not genuine holiday lets, then the owners would not have an income to be compensated for.

A benefit of a second property being treated as a holiday let is exemption from Council Tax, with owners paying business rates instead. However, business rates only have to be paid if the rateable value is more than £12,000... and according to HMRC 57,600 of the 60,000 registered in this way do have a rateable value of less than £12,000. That means that less than 5% pay business rates.

Full details of the measures will be published in the next few weeks, but if you have any concerns in the meantime please get in touch with the team at CBSL Accountants who will be happy to talk through your specific circumstances.

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Such unique circumstances to fulfil the High Sheriff role

The past year has been a time when most business owners have learned a lot – including Dean Harris, who took a year out from the world of commerce to become High Sheriff of Shropshire 2020/21.

As she returns to co-running The Business Company with husband Mark and sitting in family and criminal courts as a magistrate, Dean shares the lessons she's taking from her time in office:

"I've been a director and a magistrate for many years, so taking on a new role was a learning curve for me. There are no set rules for what you should do during your year as High Sheriff, and I began the role just two weeks into the first national Coronavirus lockdown, so it's fair to say the curve was steep and I had definitely stepped outside of my comfort zone.

Being a self-confessed control freak, it didn't sit well with me to have so many restrictions placed upon my year, but I've surprised myself with just how adaptable and resilient I can be – and I'll definitely be saying yes to stepping outside my comfort zone more often from now on.

One of the situations when I've 'felt the fear and done it anyway' has been during the public speaking I've done this year. I took some professional training and adopted the mantra of 'practice, practice, practice' – and the result is I now quite enjoy stepping up on stage (either physically or virtually).

Of course, this year has often required not only a Plan B but also a Plan C, D, or E. But rather than cancelling everything in my diary, lots of projects and meetings have been able to go ahead – just in a different way than expected.

I definitely didn't expect to adopt the blended work approach – but spending time out in the county (when restrictions allowed) while combining this with virtual meetings has allowed me to get so much done. There are certain situations when a face-to-face meeting is definitely ideal, but there are multiple benefits of virtual meetings too, so I'll be adopting a 'blended approach' to my day job from now on.

I always knew social media, alongside traditional media outlets, would be vital to enable me spread the word about the role and my causes, but the reach during my year has been incredible. I now recommend making full use of social media to everyone I talk to!

Another recommendation of mine is networking – something I didn't particularly embrace before this year. But being able to build up a network of people who've been keen to support my key causes, and being able to link organisations together where they have commonalities, has been hugely rewarding – and so many people have said yes when I've made a request, which I'm very grateful for.

Networking has also opened my eyes to the range of organisations we have within the county, especially within the third sector. Voluntary, community and charitable organisations are absolutely not just a 'nice to have' - I really didn't realise just how crucial to the fabric of our society they are.

The number of vital services they provide within the county is staggering, and I want to continue shouting about them and the importance of meaningful CSR contributions. There are real opportunities for businesses to get creative and think beyond monetary donations, for example by considering skill-sharing.

It's been an honour to watch so many

individuals, groups, and businesses react so quickly and decisively to change and remain resilient no matter what life has thrown at them. I like to think I have shown the resilience I promised when I took office too! And that some 'shrieval stardust' has been sprinkled across Shropshire.

Some people have sympathised that it must have been a terrible year to be High Sheriff, but I see it that I was given an amazing opportunity and platform to help make a positive difference during a time that was a struggle for so many. I'm also grateful for the lessons it has taught me about myself, and the changes I can implement in The Business Company as a result. Just don't expect me to ditch my Filofax for an electronic diary just yet – some changes are a step too far!

My key learnings:

- Step outside your comfort zone – feel the fear and do it anyway!
- Plan for anything – and be prepared to adapt when something entirely unexpected happens
- Blended working is the way forward (digitisation!)
- Embrace traditional and social media
- Get out and network
- The third sector is vital, and so is meaningful CSR
- Resilience is key to success

Dean Harris pictured with husband Mark Harris



Next chapter for communications expert



Enreach UK CEO Duncan Ward

Network Telecom, leading business communications provider, has rebranded to Enreach.

An exciting next chapter in the provider's 25-year history, becoming Enreach is more than just a name change. The move is part of Enreach's larger growth strategy to create best-in-class products and services, made available at scale. Network Telecom already gained access to the group's cloud telephony solution in 2020 and is set to enhance this further as part of its rebranding.

Network Telecom's rebranding takes immediate effect and brings with it an ambitious product roadmap, with Enreach committed to delivering a comprehensive group-wide product portfolio to the UK market by the end 2021, including contact center solutions, Chat AI, EPOS and a greater focus on mobiles and broadband, as well as an upgrade to its proprietary cloud telephony solution, Enreach Contact.

With a big focus on the customer experience, the team now extends across 8 countries, supporting over 2 million users throughout Europe. Thus, ensuring businesses like yours can enjoy the tools and technology of a market-leader coupled with the personal touch of a local provider.

Duncan Ward, CEO, said "This rebranding symbolises Network Telecom's integration within Enreach, as part of our shared, synergised growth journey. As Enreach, we can further support our customers with access to new products and a dedication to our customer experience, as well as being associated with this stronger, unified brand."

If you'd like to learn more about how Enreach can help your teams to make magic, the team are ready and waiting to help you in a flash. You can visit their new look website at www.enreach.com/uk or give them a call on 0800 097 6543.



GOODBYE NETWORK TELECOM, HELLO ENREACH!

A new name and a new chapter, Network Telecom has rebranded to Enreach! Now part of one of the fastest growing unified communications providers in Europe, Enreach is here to help your business get ahead of the competition...and stay there.

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North West Relief Road should pave the way for many new jobs

Shropshire Chamber of Commerce has expressed its broad support for the proposed North West Relief Road in Shrewsbury, saying it could pave the way to job-creating inward investment.

The four-mile route, running from the Ellesmere Road roundabout at Battlefield in the north of the town, to the A5 at Churncote Island in the west, would complete the circular bypass around Shrewsbury.

Supporters say it can bring significant economic benefits to the town, but concerns have also been raised over the environmental impact of the project.

The road, which will include a viaduct over the river Severn, has been in the discussion stage for nearly 30 years, but a planning application has now been formally lodged.

Richard Sheehan, Shropshire Chamber of Commerce chief executive, said: "We

are broadly supportive of this important infrastructure investment.

"It will create jobs - both in the short term during the construction work, and longer term through the inward investment opportunities it is bound to create. It is important, though, that the use of local suppliers is made a priority, and that as sensitive an approach as possible is taken concerning the environmental impact of the route."

New ambassadors programme offers support to local charities



CHARITY MEMBERSHIP FUND

Making a **positive difference** to local charities and not-for-profit organisations

enterprise FLEX-E-RENT **aico** **McPHILLIPS**

Shropshire Chamber of Commerce is offering free membership packages to charities and not-for-profit organisations thanks to the support of a new 'Ambassadors' programme.

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

"The past year has 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 generated by our three ambassadors will give 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 charities and not-for-profit organisations must have a Shropshire postcode, and an annual turnover of less than £1 million.

All applications will be assessed and considered by the Ambassadors panel, who will make the final decision.

The Charity Membership Fund has a limit on the number of memberships that it can provide and once that limit is reached, the fund will close for applications for membership for the current year.

Neal Hooper, managing director of Aico - the current Shropshire Company of the Year - said: "As a patron of the Shropshire Chamber of Commerce we are always seeking ways to support them, and of course Shropshire business in general.

"Aico in the Community was launched a few years ago to bring a great focus on our CSR initiatives. By becoming a Chamber Ambassador we are able to be involved with a number of causes that are important to us."

David Wauchope of McPhillips said: "We are a Shropshire-based company with the vast majority of employees based within the

county. This is an opportunity for us to support local causes within our own community, and hopefully give a little bit back where we can.

"Quite often people in need don't know where to start looking for support; if we can put a platform out there where people can approach us for support, then that has to be a good thing for our county as a whole, and means we can direct support where it is needed and can be effective."

Tom Macdonald of Enterprise Flex-E-Rent added: "Enterprise has a proud history of supporting our local communities, and the opportunity to partner with the Shropshire Chamber of Commerce aligned perfectly with our ongoing commitment to support good causes in the Shropshire region.

"We know that many of our employees have benefited from the fantastic work that local community groups do, and in recent years we have built strong relationships with many charities in the local area. We are looking forward to continuing this as an Ambassador in 2021."

Any charity or not-for-profit organisations that would like to apply for a membership through this fund, can find further details, criteria and how to apply by visiting www.shropshire-chamber.co.uk/membership/join-us/charity-membership-fund/



Chamber Mental Health Charter – David Sidaway (Chief Executive) and Cllr Shaun Davies (Leader) of Telford & Wrekin Council

Mental Health Charter launched by Chamber

Shropshire Chamber of Commerce has today launched a new Mental Health Charter to recognise employers who are going the extra mile to look after the welfare of their staff.

It is part of the Chamber's campaign to keep the mental health debate at the very top of the agenda as companies tentatively emerge from lockdown.

Every company which signs up to the free charter receives a certificate of recognition. In return, all they have to do is pledge to adopt three key principles:

- Engaging with and embracing the mental health agenda
- Reducing the stigma surrounding mental health in the workplace
- Identifying and providing sources of information and support regarding mental health

Among the first to sign up are the county's two local authorities, Shropshire Council and Telford & Wrekin Council.

Chief executive of Shropshire Council, Andy Begley, said: "After a particularly difficult year, it's no surprise that mental health is high on everyone's agenda.

"As a council we have always promoted open conversations around mental health, and have lots of support in place to help people when they need it, including a newly-appointed wellbeing officer.

"However, we can and should do more. This is why I was eager to sign Shropshire Chamber of Commerce's new Mental Health Charter."

David Sidaway, chief executive of Telford & Wrekin Council, said: "We already have a number of initiatives in place to support employee wellbeing relating to mental health, with further projects in the pipeline.

"This in an agenda we are eager to develop and so we are delighted to sign up to the Mental Health Charter as a sign of our commitment."

To follow in their footsteps and sign up to the charter, companies simply have to go to www.shropshire-chamber.co.uk/policy-representation/mental-health-charter-2021/

Richard Sheehan, Shropshire Chamber of Commerce's chief executive, said: "Looking after the mental health of staff is more crucial than ever as people gradually return to the workplace.

"Some people have had virtually all social contact removed during lockdown, and may be filled with trepidation at the thought of going back into the office, or nervous about jumping into the world of networking again.

"Shropshire Chamber's cross-sector connectivity allows us to play a serious and constructive part in this debate – and we're determined to



Shropshire Council chief executive Andy Begley signs the charter

keep mental health right at the top of the agenda. We would urge every single employer in the county to sign up to this charter to help achieve these goals."

The charter has been developed in conjunction with Merulae, the bespoke training and counselling services, based in Shrewsbury.

Founder and counsellor Wendy Brook said: "Signing the charter is an important first step in starting the conversation around mental health, and in doing so reducing the stigma and discrimination which is a barrier for many in accessing the support or help they need.

"It is the beginning of a vital journey which has the potential to reduce sickness, absence and presenteeism, and reduce the hefty costs to the business and the person."

By making the pledge, businesses will be promising to open up the mental health debate, and provide a structure which promotes awareness, and access to training and support.

Mr Sheehan said: "Everyone in the workplace has a right to an environment which promotes good mental health and wellbeing.

"And from an employer's point of view, it's a win-win situation, because a happy employee is a more loyal and productive employee.

"We are not expecting Shropshire employers to suddenly become mental health professionals; often, it's simply a case of creating an environment in which staff feel confident and comfortable enough to talk through their issues, with suitable training and support available."

Supporting local skills and talent

Leading green energy pioneer AceOn has received a boost to its workforce with two new work experience students joining its manufacturing team, further demonstrating the organisation's commitment to supporting the development of local skills and talent.

Molly Clinton and Aidan Guy, who are both studying towards the Engineering Level 2 T-Level course at Telford College, will join the team on a weekly basis as part of the work experience programme towards their college studies.

Both Molly and Aidan secured the opportunity by demonstrating their commitment to their studies and enthusiasm for engineering. The pair will be working on the shop floor, supporting the manufacturing team in producing a variety of AceOn products.

Following the students' first day, AceOn managing director, Mark Thompson said: "We're delighted to be welcoming the students into the AceOn team, and we know how important it is to capture and strengthen any student's interest in the engineering sector, particularly during their education.

"With reports showing that upwards of 90 per cent of organisations are struggling to find workers with the right skills and the recruitment process taking longer and costing more, we're keen to welcome in the next generation of engineering students early in their career to harness their potential."

Lora Rogers, recruitment specialist for apprenticeships at Telford College, added: "Molly and Aidan will now have the opportunity to apply their classroom knowledge in a real work environment, which will make them more employable and experienced."

The students will cover topics including principles of engineering, milling, turning and welding during their T-Level programme, which



Molly Clinton and Aidan Guy have joined the AceOn team

can then be progressed into a certificate in Engineering Level 3.

The new recruits at AceOn follow swiftly on from the recent welcome of two additions to the team through the Kickstart scheme, with more roles currently being hired for.

To find out more about the vacancies available at AceOn, visit <https://www.aceongroup.com/>

Two new faces join the insurance team

A Shropshire insurance broker has welcomed two new team members after demand for its services grew during lockdown.

Henshalls Insurance Brokers, in Newport and Shrewsbury, has continued to provide support and advice throughout the pandemic with all of its employees adapting to remote working from home. And now, with lockdown easing and an increase in enquiries, the team has welcomed two new colleagues.

Tess Wauchope is joining the Business insurance team as a commercial account handler and she brings with her a wealth of industry experience. She has worked with a wide range of SMEs and has also previously worked for the National Farmers' Union.

"I was looking for a new challenge after five years of working in personal insurance and on small commercial accounts, and I was fully aware of Henshalls' excellent reputation so decided to apply for the role.

"The opportunity will allow me to continue to develop my commercial insurance skills, and I can't wait to finally meet the clients I'll be working with in person."

Shannon Summers is the second new face to join the Henshalls team, and she has started an apprenticeship in accounts. She left college with impressive business qualifications and decided on a career in the finance industry.

"I am delighted to have secured my apprenticeship role with Henshalls which will enable me to work towards my formal AAT accounting qualification while gaining day-to-day experience in the finance department.

"My new role is the first step hopefully towards a successful career in finance and I'm ready to start my journey with the support of my colleagues at Henshalls."

Henshalls Director Mark Freeman said: "We're very pleased to welcome Tess and Shannon to the Henshalls family, and we're sure they will be invaluable additions to our ever-growing team.

"We have maintained our renowned standards of customer service throughout one of the most difficult years we've all faced, and it's a



Tess Wauchope and Shannon Summers

real testimony to the dedication and commitment our employees have shown that demand for our expertise has actually increased. We're working hard to ensure we surpass our clients' expectations at all times, and our two new team members are already measuring up to our demanding standards incredibly well."

How to take the next steps

Team4You, a local recruitment firm, lent a hand to anxious year 11 students who were preparing to take the next steps in their careers in the middle of a global pandemic.

Students in their final year of secondary school have been feeling unmotivated ever since their GCSE exams were cancelled. As they reached the end of their five-year school journey, many of them were left wondering what the point of working hard was if their future grades were already decided on.

That's where Team4You's Branch Manager, Jess Bailey, came in.

Jess delivered a virtual talk to a group of year 11 students and gave them advice on how to build their confidence as they prepare to leave school and jump into college and apprenticeships.

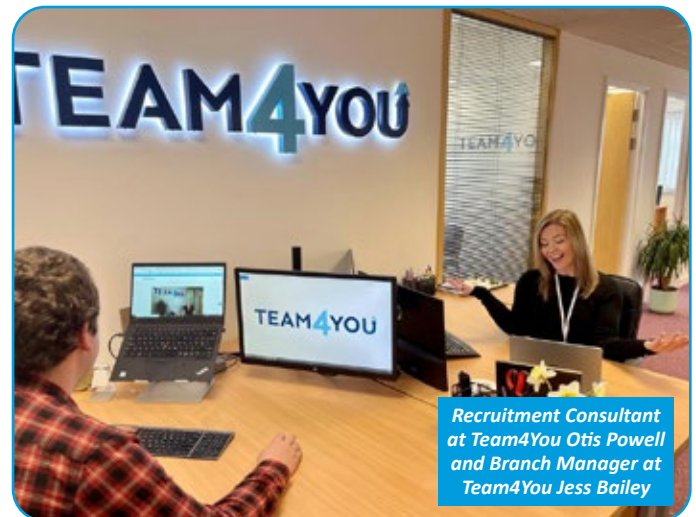
It can be difficult to go through such a formative time period in your teens but dealing with all of those changes during the middle of a pandemic is even more difficult. That's why Jess kept the Team4You values at the core of her talk and put a special emphasis on discussing mental health and welfare with the students.

Having missed out on so much teaching over the last year, Jess knew the pupils were feeling neglected and that their mental health had likely taken a hit.

Branch Manager, Jess Bailey, said: "At Team4You we understand the importance of engaging and motivating the next generation to empower them to take control of their careers from an early age, by preparing themselves for the working world through building their CV and profile."

One of Team4You's core ethos principles is to be open and honest. Knowing that students had felt led on over the course of the last two academic years, with promises of in-person teaching followed by mock tests for exams that weren't ever going to happen, the team felt it was crucial to be realistic with the students about what was awaiting them in the world of work.

Making the leap from school to employment, or even just to further education, is an extremely daunting experience. Jess' masterclass gave



Recruitment Consultant at Team4You Otis Powell and Branch Manager at Team4You Jess Bailey

the students the facts they needed to know to succeed in their future careers. Her morale boost inspired the students to take back control of their learning experiences and strive to work hard and achieve their goals.

Jess went on to say, "I enjoyed my time with the students who seemed happier and more confident after the session. It's nice to give something back and know we're helping the next generation feel excited about their next step"

Now that the year 11s have a clear idea about what to expect in the next few years, they can move forwards confidently with skills that will help them attract employers and secure their career aspirations.

To keep up to date with the support and business opportunities Team4You is providing, visit their website at <https://www.team4you.today/> and follow them across social media.



Remember, you'll never walk alone

Carl Jones is a Graphic Designer and Brand Consultant with almost 30 years of experience, working with clients in a wide range of sectors, including Food & Drink, Hospitality & Leisure, Professional Services, Manufacturing and Not for Profit. For the past 18 years he has been running Carl Jones Design, now called Branded by Jones with Clare Heighway-Jones, who he is also married to. Taking a strategic approach to branding, Carl works closely with business owners and senior managers to plan, create and implement – in order to help achieve their goals. Most of these clients then retain Branded by Jones on a monthly basis in order to oversee brand awareness, including mentoring staff and working with external suppliers on their behalf.

Who is someone you admire, and why?

My Grandfather died in September last year age 95, he was a person who I always admired and looked up to; he taught me to always stand up for what I believe in and to treat others with respect and love; he worked tirelessly for charity and good causes and was awarded a BEM medal in 2012 for his charity work.

Tell me three pet hates?

Bad grammar; aggressive drivers; and running!

What's a typical day like for you?

Always start with family breakfast; then I like to cycle 15 to 20 miles every morning before I start work. After that, no two days are the same. Especially during the past year...

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

I can walk on stilts.

If you could be anywhere, where would you be?

My favourite city is New York; I love the Welsh coast where I grew up; and I am privileged to live in the Shropshire hills. So any of those.

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

I wanted to play on the right wing for Liverpool FC and Wales!

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

These days it would be a sparkling water.

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

Cycling – either on my road bike or with my daughters, age 10 and 12.

How do you want people to remember you?

I think being remembered is enough.

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

The ability to simplify things; I ask questions; I listen; and I understand kerning.

Name three words that best describe you.

Decisive; caring; optimistic.

How do you think your colleagues would describe you?

I only have one actual colleague and I'm married to her – perhaps you should ask Clare that question!.

Carl Jones



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

Keep breathing. And finish the three books I've started writing.

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

We bought an old campervan during the lockdown last year so I'd like to actually get to use it this year. And there are a couple of business ideas which I'd like to test the waters on.

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

Something that I'll always remember is when I presented design concepts to a client on a beach in Abu Dhabi. A lowlight was the same meeting, seeing all the warships on the horizon with Gulf War 2 about to start.

What publications do you regularly read?

The Guardian on Saturdays; The Sunday Times; and plenty of contemporary fiction.

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

Spending time with my family; cycling; reading; drawing; cooking; listening to music.

What are some causes you care about?

Equality. Ensuring that all young people get an equal chance in life. There are several charities that Clare and I regularly donate to.

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

Laugh. Well, I try to.

What would be your personal motto?

Always remember that you'll never walk alone.

£1.5million business support to create more than 100 jobs

A grants programme supported by the Marches Local Enterprise Partnership has delivered more than £1.5million of funding to businesses across the region in the last year – and will lead to more than 100 new jobs being created.

New figures show the Marches Building Investment Grant (MBIG) and Small Equipment Grant (SEG) have supported more than 50 projects across Herefordshire, Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin over the past 12 months.

Programme manager Caroline Cattle said support was still available through the schemes – which have a combined budget of £3.4 million - for another two years and urged companies to consider applying.

She said the SEG programme - launched only last May to help companies invest in new machinery or equipment - had been approved for 40 separate projects with a total value of £316,840.86.

“These projects aim to create 36.75 jobs and develop or offer 41 new products or services as a result of the investment.”

The MBIG programme – launched in January 2020 – has offered grants to 16 projects with a total value of £1,291,411.60. These projects aim to create 85.5 jobs and develop or offer 24 new products or services.

Marches LEP chief executive Gill Hamer said the figures demonstrated the work the partnership and Marches Growth Hub were doing to ensure businesses had access to vital funding to help them recover and grow in the wake of the pandemic.

MBIG offers grants of up to £150,000 to help meet the cost of building new premises or extending and reconfiguring existing ones. It meets up to half the cost of successful applications and covers B2B businesses but does not include retail, social welfare or agricultural



MBIG programme manager Caroline Cattle is pictured with Paul Beirne of Midland Alloy

companies. Grants of between £1,000 and £10,000 – again to meet up to half the cost - are available through SEG, which is open to small and medium-sized companies and primarily covers B2B companies.

Both schemes are part-funded by the European Regional Development Fund and delivered by Herefordshire Council.

Companies which have benefitted in the last year include Golden Bear and Midland Alloy in Telford and Cleobury Mortimer-based Kudos Blends and the 3D Measurement Company in Bridgnorth.

Details of the schemes are available through the Marches Growth Hub at www.marchesgrowthhub.co.uk. The scheme can be contacted on 01432 261511.



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 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 • Email: seg@herefordshire.gov.uk • Call: 01432 261511

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



Healthcare providers helping firms to unlock

Two local private healthcare providers are working closely to support businesses as firms look to a safe return of staff to the workplace.

Sister companies Summerfield Healthcare and My Occ Health, based in Shrewsbury and Wolverhampton and working with companies across the country, are linking up to provide continued antigen testing, mental health support and GP appointments to ensure businesses have a smooth transition on the road back to normality.

My Occ Health supports firms in meeting obligations to safeguard the health and wellbeing of employees with expert occupational health services for employers and HR through an experienced team of GPs specialising in occupational health assessments.

Summerfield Healthcare offers a complete package of healthcare services, including easy access to GPs, consultants, healthchecks, minor surgery and extensive COVID and antibody testing.

David Edwards, of Summerfield Healthcare, said: "The road out of the pandemic has been identified and a plan put in place by the Prime Minister to hopefully see a lifting of all restrictions towards the end of June.

"It means firms can now start thinking positively about a return to normality, staff returning to the workplace and getting on with the business of restarting the economy.

"Unfortunately, Covid will be with us for some time and while a return to some level of normality is going to be most welcome, we still have to ensure we do everything we can to limit the spread of infections and case numbers in future.

"With this very firmly in mind, Summerfield Healthcare and My



Occ Health are working together to support businesses through a range of healthcare packages to ensure businesses and their staff can unlock safely moving forward.

"This includes continued antigen testing, access to quick, easily arranged, GP appointments, Long Covid support, mental health support for employees and a test to release service which will provide all the necessary clearances for people needing to travel abroad on business.

"Mental health and wellbeing has been severely affected during the last 12 months and is a top priority for businesses moving forward. Our fully qualified team of GPs and consultants are committed to working with employers on this.

"Antigen testing will continue to be part of a safe working environment and we can help companies stay on top of this commitment through rapid, cost-effective, testing regularly on-site with results known in just 15 minutes."

Expanding business

A Newport skin clinic is set to re-open following a £70,000 expansion and renovation.

Elite Skin Studio on Newport High Street was forced to close in March last year due to the pandemic, but mother and daughter duo who operate the business took the time to reinvest and expand into new premises.

Floss Ashton and her mother, Anne Ashton, who founded the specialist skin business working from home in 2001, had to close the doors on their business just as they were about to sign a new lease on neighbouring premises to double their capacity.

Miss Ashton said: "We were faced with a stark choice to either hunker down and wait for the storm to hopefully pass or to grasp the exciting opportunity we saw opening up in front of us."

They decided it was the perfect time to knock two premises into one and expand the business as well as launch their re-brand, which was already in the pipeline.

"Having made the commitment, we are now absolutely delighted with the outcome," Miss Ashton said.

"We see our experience as a testament to Government policy for the SME sector - we were fortunate in that we could embrace it - otherwise it could have been a long wait."

The skin experts are now eagerly awaiting the roll-out of the Government's successful roadmap so they can re-open their doors on April 12th.

Having opened briefly at the end of 2020, to then be closed again at the end of December, Floss, 28 said they were very excited to reveal the new premises of their skin clinic and looked forward to seeing their clients old and new.



Elite Skin Studio now operates across 30A and 30B on the High Street next to Costa, with parking at the rear of the premises, and boasts six treatment rooms, with industry-leading equipment, offering an array of specialist skin and laser treatments and a range of cosmeceutical homecare products.

The investment was made in the new premise's refurbishment, a new brand and website, and equipment including a £10,000 skin analysis machine.

During lockdown they have also been running online skin consultations, live advice sessions on social media called "Skin & Tonic", and webinars for their clients to help those at home concerned about their skin conditions,

which they will continue even when they reopen.

"We have three new team members who have joined us during lock down and we cannot wait to welcome those talented skin specialists to our business.

"We have already had people contacting us desperate to invest in their skin after being at home and inside during the last few months, it is really having a knock-on effect on peoples mental health and wellbeing.

"Our clients have told us they want to focus on feeling good and feeling their best - especially as their planned abroad holidays are currently off the agenda."

Anne, celebrating 21 years in business this year, said she had been on Newport High Street since 2016 and the expansion into the neighbouring premises showed her commitment to the high street and peoples increasing awareness of wellbeing and appearance.

"We love the high street and have missed it so much. Newport is very special to us and offers so much right here on our doorstep - we don't need to go anywhere else.

"We cannot wait to see everyone's doors open again and the street scene of amazing independent retailers and businesses become bustling again.

"Personally, I would like to thank the Newport businesses who have remained open throughout and offered such an incredible service to us and our clients.

"We hope the investment and relaunch in our business proves we will come back stronger from the pandemic and will still be here in another 21 years."

Email hello@eliteskinstudio.co.uk or call 01952 814200 or see www.eliteskinstudio.co.uk for full details on treatments and services.

Traffic light solutions for a safe re-opening

With COVID restrictions beginning to ease, people are slowly returning to the workplace and essential shops are finally re-opening. It is important for businesses to re-assess how prepared they are to operate in a COVID-secure way.

Derek Foreman, Director of Sales and Marketing at Oswestry-based IN2 Access & Control Ltd. says "the simplest solutions involve signage reminding people to keep their distance, wear a mask, or use hand sanitiser. However these past few months we have seen an increase in customers asking about a way to control the flow of people in and out of confined spaces. In these instances, traffic light systems can be the ideal solution."

There are many traffic light options available ranging from manually controlled to fully automated, but they all work on the same principal: green indicates safe to come in, red to wait. IN2 Access offers the case study of a gift shop in Buckinghamshire called No.1 Wendover who contacted IN2 Access just before Christmas. Owner Claire Randall wanted a cost-effective solution to allow only a certain number of customers into the shop at any given time. As the shop was in a grade listed building, they couldn't mount the light externally. There are windows on either side of the entrance, but

as customers come from both directions, a single light wouldn't do the trick.

"Since mounting the traffic light in a window or outside on the building was not an option, a bespoke portable stand was the way to go," Derek said. "We do UV printing as well, so we thought a customised sign around the traffic light with the No 1 logo and message for customers to wait for green added a nice touch."

The traffic light was controlled via wireless switch from inside with the stand placed just outside the door. The system proved successful over the holiday period when the second lockdown ended.

Claire was pleased with the final product. "It is brilliant!" she says. "The traffic light system was an excellent way of making it really clear for our customers as to whether or not it is safe to enter the shop; everyone commented on what a good idea it is! Thank you very much... I'm one happy customer."

The shop is in a great position when restrictions are eased on 12 April, with social distancing rules still in place for the foreseeable future.

"I'm glad we were able to find a solution that suited Claire's specific layout and budget," Derek concludes. "We all hope for a return to normality but it seems as though restrictions will be eased gradually, so these types of solutions will continue to be popular."

For more details, see No 1 Wendover: www.numberonewendover.com and IN2 Access & Control: www.in2access.co.uk/covidsecuresolutions



Mix and match: pick the right light, switch and opt to operate manual or automatic, wired or wireless



Traffic light solution: No.1 Wendover, Buckinghamshire



Claire Randall of No.1 Wendover with her traffic light solution

We can help you stay COVID-SECURE

Promo Code: IN2SHROP

10% OFF

More light and switch options online

All signage customisable

Visit our website to see a collection of **safety signage** and **traffic control solutions**

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+44 1691 655150

Praise for team as ISO certification is maintained

Telford-based thermal insulation specialist Seymour Manufacturing International (SMI) has passed its latest ISO quality audit with flying colours, with assessors describing the company's management systems as being 'in very good order'.

It means the company is once again recommended for continued certification to the ISO 9001:2015 standard.

The audit, carried out by QAS International, said SMI was 'forward thinking, with a strategic approach being applied to the businesses.' Recent improvements at the Telford headquarters were seen to have come to fruition, it added.

"A good level of commitment and compliance was evident during the remote audit, and no non-conformances were identified," the report said.

SMI has been ISO accredited since 2008 for the design, development, manufacture of bespoke a range of thermally insulated doors, roll cage covers and liners, plus a variety of bags and stainless steel food equipment.

The company supplies to a wide range of industries including logistics, food manufacturers, the military and NHS, as well as supporting the heavy demand on the funeral business during these unprecedented times.

The latest audit noted that 'leadership and commitment was evident' under director



Jill Seymour, through a commitment to the business and management system, and promoting and communicating the importance of quality monitoring systems.

It said SMI was seen to monitor customer satisfaction, with evidence of repeat business and business growth, adding: "Customer satisfaction was deemed to be very good."

Jill said: "With the guidance of my husband Brian Seymour, the SMI chairman, we recognise the pressure we are under in

these difficult times, like many companies.

"But we are truly proud of our staff - their loyalty and commitment has been proven to be delivering the ISO expectations. It has been a great team effort, and we want to thank everyone for their many hours of hard work.

"We are proud to deliver a bespoke product from design concept using our energy saving Tempro® material to the finished item, while working side by side with our customers."

'Senior School of the Year' award

Adcote School, near Shrewsbury, has been named 'Senior School of the Year 2020' in prestigious national awards after undergoing a "remarkable journey" of transformation.

Senior School of the Year is one of the top accolades handed out at the Independent Schools Association (ISA) annual awards which this year were announced in a virtual ceremony.

It is also the "icing on the cake" for the non-selective all-girls' school, at Little Ness, which has won or been shortlisted for a clutch of national awards in recent years. Last year its Prep School won the ISA award for academic excellence and innovation.

Adcote, which caters for day and boarding students from prep school to sixth form, has undergone a radical re-organisation over the past four years under the stewardship of Headmistress Diane Browne who joined the school in September 2016.

"At Adcote we have completed a remarkable journey of self-improvement and this national award is the icing on the cake," said Mrs Browne.

"We are beyond ecstatic that our determined march to exemplary standards has been endorsed in this way. Everyone in education knows what it is to be named as Senior School of the Year. We could not be more proud."

The school has introduced new systems to improve both academic performance and the personal development of students. These include new methods for tracking, assessing



and measuring individual student progress and greater personalised learning. Since then Adcote has seen exam results soar.

Changes include a new tutoring system in the senior school. The old form tutor role has been disbanded and, instead, students are assigned a personal tutor to nurture their individual progress.

An enhanced programme of personal development has also been put in place to equip students with the life skills they need not only to tackle their exams successfully, but to face the challenges and opportunities of life. The programme has attracted awards success in its own right.

Last year more than 70% of the school's A-Level results were A/A grades with 86% of

all grades being A* to B. All A-level students accessed their university choices. In GCSEs more than 50% of the grades were at the highest levels of 7, 8 and 9 (A/A*).

Published performance tables measuring the academic progress of individual students between GCSEs and A-Level, also put Adcote at the top of schools in Shropshire and in the top 50 independent schools in England.

Throughout lockdown Adcote students have continued their normal timetable of lessons through virtual classes led by teachers online. Adcote is one of the first schools in Shropshire to become a Google For Education School, giving students and teachers access to innovative digital teaching and learning support tools.



“
More than just a chemical company: our mission is to provide a wide range of products and services together with expert advice to all clients who need clean and safe environments.
 ”

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More than just a chemical company.

1981



2021



Serchem Ltd was established in Telford in 1981 by Clive Arnold and 40 years later has the next generation at the helm.

The aim was simple – to offer a comprehensive range of cleaning materials and associated items, whilst offering market leading customer service at a reasonable price.

Our scientifically designed, bespoke formulations are manufactured at our original production plant, allowing us flexibility to provide a range of products that accommodate customer needs. We have now expanded and have a separate packing facility and distribution centre.

Serchem caters to a diverse clientele. We initially launched our products in the catering and hospitality sector, progressing into the manufacture of specialist chemicals for the health sector, both in the UK and internationally. We are now widely recognised as a market leader in the fields of decontamination and endoscopy, working with both NHS and private health providers. Sales to our international customers have also

seen a steady growth and our products are exported to both EU and non-EU countries.

Our range of specialist detergents covers all areas of healthcare and hospitality. These include:

- Washer disinfectors and AER machines
- Residual chemical testing and correct detergent dosage investigations
- Manual cleaning for re-useable instruments/flushing devices
- Manual cleaning for flexible endoscopes
- Bed side first response kits
- Surface cleaning and disinfectants
- Hand sanitisers
- Catering detergents
- Laundry hygiene
- Handcare
- PPE and ancillary products

Customer satisfaction has always been our main focus. We aim to offer our customers quality, high performance products at maximum value. We can install state of the art pump systems, ensuring correct dosing of

the chemical products, offering an economical cleaning solution while maintaining high cleaning performance.

The Sales team can identify customer needs, due to their knowledge and experience. Customers have a nominated Sales Representative to promote an individual relationship and ensure appropriate technical support.

Serchem is a forward-thinking company that understands the importance of the environment. We continue to evolve and strategise, ensuring that the environment is at the forefront of our thought process. In 2020, Serchem launched our zero-plastic to landfill central dosing plant, offering customers a cost-effective option to use chemicals in bulk. The containers are fully recyclable and used on a "Return to Supplier" basis. We continue to work towards our company pledge to remove over 500,000 single use plastic containers from our product range by the end of this year.

More than just a chemical company; our mission is to provide a wide range of products and services together with expert advice to all clients who need clean and safe environments.



As well as supplying manufacture of specialist chemicals for the health sector, both in the UK and internationally, Serchem continue to supply to the facilities and hospitality sector.

We meet our customer expectations by providing systems designed to meet individual requirements.

The aim is to swiftly deliver the total package.

Customer Support

Following the opening of a new account, you will have a designated area sales representative. They will be able to use their extensive industry knowledge to discuss your requirements and ensure that you receive a tailor made package.

Building relationships with our customers we carry out routine visits to ensure that everything is to your satisfaction.

There is also full office support, general queries can be easily discussed with our knowledgeable office and production staff.

Serchem is ISO 9001 accredited to ensure that a high standard of quality is maintained, and all manufactured medical products are CE registered. This certification can be found and is available to download from our website: www.serchem.com

Dosing Equipment

We can install state of the art pump systems that will promote economy, whilst maintaining a high cleaning performance. This will also minimise chemical handling for staff creating a safer cleaning environment.

Personalised Wall Signage & COSHH Booklets

Serchem understand the importance of Health & Safety in all cleaning environments. We can provide a bespoke tailor made COSHH information package including: personalised wall charts and MSDS booklet for the products used on customer sites.

Quality and Accreditations

Serchem is ISO 9001 accredited to ensure that a high standard of quality is maintained, and all manufactured medical products are CE registered. This certification can be found and is available to download from our website: www.serchem.com

If you would like to discuss your requirements with an area sales representative, please contact the office at: support@serchem.co.uk or call 01952 223130.



**Supplying high quality cleaning solutions
to the facility and hospitality sectors.**

More than just a chemical company.

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Celebrating first decade in business

Shrewsbury based distributor, Pipekit are proudly celebrating 10 years in business and spearheading plans and ambitions for growth and development.

Pipekit, a leading independent specialist distributor of pipework systems and drainage solutions, was formed from the dining room table in March 2011 by Martyn Rowlands, MD, alongside Jamie McQueen, Head of Sales. There was one goal. To offer excellence in customer service and technical support, alongside quality products. Something that despite the constantly changing backdrop of technology and purchasing patterns, Brexit and of course Covid, remains at the core of this thriving business.

Over the last 10 years, Pipekit has worked closely with a core number of manufacturers to offer a choice of quality products and strong reliable distribution channels to support its customers.

The website and online provision has continuously been developed to improve the customer user experience and is a key tool for driving sales and engaging with customers. With increased functionality, customers can easily source information, enquire and purchase remotely. A factor that has of course allowed Pipekit's shop window to open to the world and its export business, from Iceland to New Zealand, to flourish year on year.

Commenting on the 10 year milestone, Martyn Rowlands said: "When I started this business the UK and the world were just coming out of the banking crash of 2008. We had a vision to create a team that put customer service at the heart of the business and we haven't looked back since. From the two of us who sat round that dining room table in 2011 to our dedicated team of people today, offering our customers the best service and support is a given. I am very proud of all of them and they make Pipekit what it is today; a people's business".

To future proof the business, Pipekit moved into larger premises in December 2019. Three months later, the pandemic hit, some staff were furloughed and challenges were faced. Like many businesses, Pipekit had to adapt and reevaluate and Martyn now feels the business is in good shape to go forward.



The team at Pipekit celebrating the past and looking to the future

He adds: "We are beginning our tenth year in the same spirit as we have started every year; with plans and ambitions for growth, including new products and services to offer our customers. The way 2020 evolved took everyone by surprise. But as I look ahead now I see plenty of scope to move forward.

"We have our larger premises tailored to our needs, offering improved working facilities for staff, a better customer experience and essentially more warehouse space to cater for increased stock provision. We will use this to build on our offering in 2021 and are hopeful that the start of our second decade in business will have positives on which to secure future growth".

For further information on Pipekit log onto: www.pipekit.co.uk email: enquiries@pipekit.co.uk telephone: 01743 860088 or follow on Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn or Instagram.

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It's a new location for law firm

Lanyon Bowdler has moved offices in Telford - making the law firm even more accessible to clients.

The award-winning firm has made the short journey from its previous home in Hazledine House, part of Telford Shopping Centre, to the landmark Kendal Court in Ironmasters Way.

The newly-refurbished building provides onsite parking for staff and clients, high-quality office space, and extended ground floor meeting and event space.

Brian Evans, managing partner at Lanyon Bowdler, said the new office was an ideal location for the firm's growing team in Telford.

"We are delighted to have secured the move to Kendal Court - an excellent location which will prove hugely beneficial for our team and clients," he said.

"Kendal Court is a highly-recognisable feature of the Telford landscape, and offers easy access to the Eastern Primary, M54 and Telford Railway Station.

"Hazledine House has been our home for the last few years, but the time has come to move on, and the new premises will better suit our needs going forward.

"At Kendal Court we can offer onsite parking and be more easily accessible to clients, as well as providing improved, expanded, working and meeting space.



Lanyon Bowdler has moved premises to Kendal Court in Ironmasters Way

"All of this means we can optimise team-working and provide a better client experience in the office once Covid restrictions end."

Brian added: "In the meantime, we continue to offer appointments over the phone or via video - and where necessary we are still able to see clients face to face, subject to Covid-safe measures.

"We are currently asking clients to use our letterboxes for dropping off documents, and not to enter any of our offices unless they have a pre-arranged appointment."

For more information, call 0800 652 3371 or visit the website at www.lblaw.co.uk

Here's to the future

As if a devastating global pandemic was not enough in 2020, we had Brexit to contend with as well.

The trailer for 2021 is not looking much better and it does not look like we are going to be back to "normal" for a little while yet, as much as we are impatient to do so (especially with coping with online schooling - TEACHERS..... you do an amazing job and we, as parents, are very much looking forward to handing the reins back to you!).

We are very aware that many people are struggling financially and are not able to or are not coping well with the new way of working, but here, at Dixon Associates, we have noted a few positives with regard to remote working.

We used to have to travel for our meetings and interpreting work; now, making a meeting at 8.00 am is no issue at all, without the commute, saving both travel time and expenses.

In fact, we are actually spending more and not less time translating as well.

Since working from home, we can access our emails during the evenings as well, to deal with any enquiries as and when they come in, just because we can! Meaning our response time is quicker and our turn-around times even faster than before!

So, as much as we dread the delay on video platforms such as Zoom, it is a really useful and essential tool at present, for communicating and completing our interpreting assignments.

As such, we have seen a rise in demand for this type of remote interpreting using Zoom and other platforms, such as Microsoft Teams and Skype. Inês, our in-house interpreter, who regularly interprets in Portuguese and English, has written in more detail about the benefits of these apps. See her blog "Zooming in".

Human contact

In respect of Zoom, in April 2020, the company, surpassed 300 million daily meeting participants! But working from home was not the only cause. We were all craving contact. Turning to family for quizzes and contact on a weekly basis has kept us all going and stopped us baking even more banana bread.

We do miss human contact though and the small connections we had before in the office and have come to realise, that these small interactions were so important to our mental health.

They got us out and about (even if it was posting a document in reception, grabbing a coffee in the café).

After all, we are social beings and miss humans. We are looking forward to getting back to "real" meetings, networking in person and seeing our work colleagues again in the flesh.

Shropshire business beats

A brand-new, independent online radio station has just been launched here in Shropshire and it's set to be a game-changer for businesses, charities and the community sector.

INTune Radio CIC features interviews with inspiring local people and showcases local bands to create its dynamic mix of beats and discussion. The brainchild of branding and web designer Wayne Flynn of Mr Flynn Creative Limited, the radio station will move to 24/7 commercial broadcasting from the summer.

A former club DJ for almost 20 years, Wayne was inspired just before the first lockdown in February 2020 and by September 2020 he'd fully developed the idea and was ready to launch a trial.

"I decided to do two shows to see how they were received" explained Wayne, "one in November, and then the three-hour Christmas Show the 12 Bands of Christmas which featured the awesome Shrewsbury Rock Choir. All 12 local bands went down an absolute storm and the Christmas show is now in the top 50% of podcasts of all time in terms of downloads, which is just staggering."

The station has now formally launched and is eager to connect with businesses and the wider Shropshire community. But it needs help. "We're a community interest company and we're eager to establish even firmer ties to our community" explained Wayne. "We'd love more INTunerz, so if you have a few hours per week available and you'd like to get involved we're always looking for support across areas like social media, research to support interviews and community projects, and wider professional services support such as solicitors and finance. We're also firming up a small number of businesses to be formal partners as we grow, and we have some exciting sponsorship opportunities which involve a whole heap of exposure - broadcast, social, digital, and hard copy - plus some real exclusivity and the chance to get some dynamic messaging out there. We're naturally limiting the top package to just six businesses, with a few already committed but I'd love to chat to anyone interested in raising their profile locally" he concluded.

For more information contact Wayne at info@intune-radio.co.uk - listen to the shows at www.intune-radio.co.uk.



Wayne Flynn

INTuneRadio
SHROPSHIRE BUSINESS WITH BEATS

Do 100 things inspired by Captain Tom

Following the outpouring of heartfelt messages since the death of Captain Sir Tom Moore on 2 February, his family pledged to celebrate his life with an event that everyone, in the UK and around the world, could be involved in. That event is the **Captain Tom 100 and Lingen Davies Cancer Fund are proud to be inviting supporters to take part.**

Lingen Davies, like many other charities, has been hugely impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic, reporting a 37% drop in their income last year. The pandemic has had a catastrophic effect, with the cancellation of thousands of fundraising events and the loss of billions.

Captain Tom 100 offers Lingen Davies supporters, of all ages and abilities, the opportunity to raise crucial funds for our charity, while at the same time celebrating Captain Tom's generosity of spirit, the hope and joy he brought to millions, and his sense of fun.

How it works

It's so simple. All participants need to do is dream up a Captain Tom 100 challenge based around the number 100 and do it at anytime and anywhere over Captain Tom's birthday weekend – starting on Friday 30 April through to Bank Holiday Monday 3 May.

The challenge could be potting 100 holes of golf, baking 100 cakes, climbing 100 stairs, walking 100 miles (perhaps that's a team goal!) building 100 sandcastles, writing a 100-word poem, flipping 100 pancakes – anything at all, inside or out. Why not get your staff doing a 100 challenge? It could be the perfect way to reconnect your team, as restrictions begin to ease.

Lizzy Coleman, Events and Fundraising Officer at Lingen Davies Cancer Fund, said "The Captain Tom 100 is such a lovely fundraising initiative, to honour the achievements of Sir Tom, and enable charities from all over the country to raise much-needed funds – we're really excited to be involved!

"Lockdown restrictions and the uncertainty of the pandemic has meant we haven't been able to host our usual fundraising events, so this is a great opportunity for our wonderful community to get behind



us and help to raise vital funds for local cancer services. Cancer patients have continued to be treated, throughout the pandemic, and we are expecting to see a backlog of cases in the coming months and years – we need to ensure that our local cancer services provide the best possible care.

We are continually amazed by the wonderful support we receive; we'd love to see people getting involved with the Captain Tom 100 and taking on their own 100 challenge!"

Once supporters have chosen their challenge, they can fundraise or donate to Lingen Davies by heading to their website www.lingendavies.co.uk/events and share their 100 on social media, using #CaptainTom100

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Tax super-deduction to encourage UK investment

Shropshire Chamber Patrons Barringtons Chartered Accountants take a look at the new tax super-deduction policy which is coming into force in a bid to encourage investment across the UK and boost the British economy's recovery in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic.

Most company business owners understand that if you incur a cost that is wholly and exclusively for the purpose of your trade, then it can be deducted from your taxable profits or added to tax losses.

Likewise, if companies invest in plant or other equipment that qualifies for tax relief, even though the expenditure is the acquisition of an asset – something that will be working in your business for years – it can be partly or wholly written off for tax purposes in the year it was acquired.

The facility that allows assets to be written off are called capital allowances and currently, they range from just a few percent per annum to a 100% write down. That was the case until Mr Sunak delivered his Budget.

The Chancellor surprised us all by saying that companies investing in brand new plant and machinery in the period from 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2023 will be able to benefit from enhanced capital allowances. Where the investment is in new assets that qualify for the main rate



"Don't let the tax tail wag the commercial dog – get advice before committing to major expenditure" – Andy Bridge, Barringtons

of capital allowances of 18%, they will benefit from a 130% first-year allowance. For example, if a company bought a new machine for its factory for £10,000 during April 2021, it could deduct £13,000 from its profits which at the present 19% rate of corporation tax this would save £2,470 in corporation tax, effectively achieving 24.7% tax relief.

In a further twist, investments in new assets qualifying for special rate capital allowances will benefit from a 50% first year allowance (although claiming the 100% annual investment allowance instead where this is available will be more beneficial).

Barringtons Technical Director Andy Bridge says: "New temporary tax reliefs on qualifying capital asset investments are available from April 2021. This measure introduces a temporary 130% super-deduction for main rate new assets, and a temporary 50% first-year allowance for special rate new assets.

But Andy also raises a note of caution - "Please take advice BEFORE committing to major expenditure though and don't let the tax tail wag the commercial dog. Bringing forward expenditure to take advantage of the so-called "Super Deduction" may make sense but the tax affect might not be quite what you think - 130% allowances relieved at 19% Corporation Tax is a reduction of £24,700 in your tax bill for every £100,000 invested, but 100% allowances relieved at 25% Corporation Tax (post 1/4/23) is a reduction of £25,000."

For more information contact Barringtons in Market Drayton on 01630 698017 or Newport 01952 811745 or email advice@barringtons.co.uk

Keep up with business online

Shropshire Business Live TV, the monthly business-to-business streaming service for the county, is continuing to grow its audience.

The show is a joint venture between the teams at Shropshire Business, Yarrington, and Shropshire Live, and is broadcast from the Yarrington studios at Frankwell in Shrewsbury.

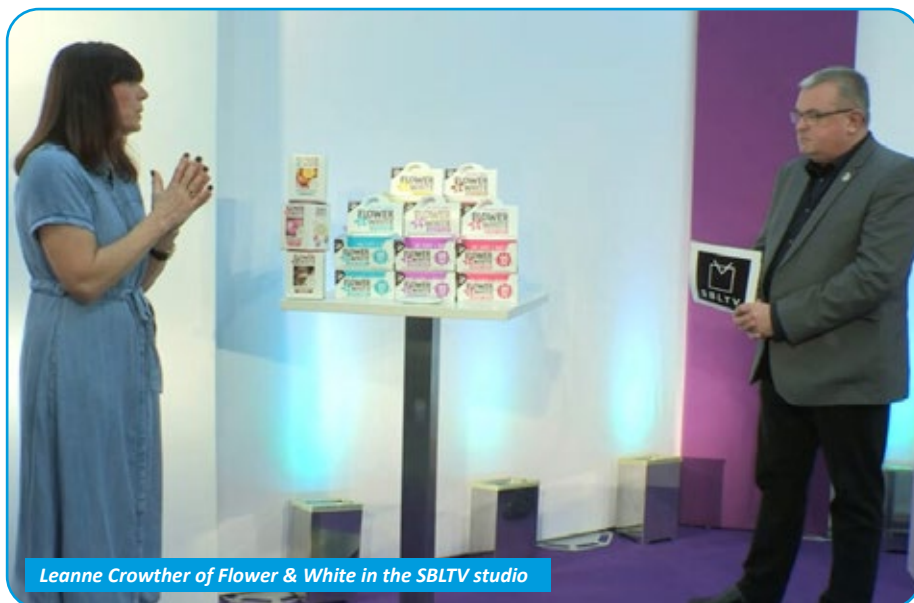
Already this year it has spotlighted some of the county's big business talking points, including hosting a studio debate about the future of Shrewsbury and its 'Big Town Plan', with MP Daniel Kawczynski and Shropshire Council leader Peter Nutting.

Confectionery company Flower & White, from Telford, exclusively revealed its new rebrand on the show during an interview with co-founder Leanne Crowther, and the Chamber's new policy officer Josh Carpenter has also made an appearance to talk about his new role.

Among the Shropshire business people offering top tips and advice in 'Ask The Expert' spots have been Charlotte Nutting of law firm Lanyon Bowdler, and Nick Jones of Nick Jones Wealth Planning.

The show has also taken a look behind the scenes at the community work being done by Shropshire's reigning Company of the Year, Aico of Oswestry, and explored the post-Brexit international trade situation with insight from Anton Gunter of Global Freight Services.

Carl Jones, editor of Shropshire Business and co-host of SBLTV, said: "We're delighted with the feedback we've had for the show



Leanne Crowther of Flower & White in the SBLTV studio

since our launch in August, which is gaining a growing following.

"Our aim is to serve up a mix of news, views, advice and debate which is directly relevant to the Shropshire business community – and we'd love to hear from anyone else who fancies joining our 'Ask The Expert' group, or is seeking creative ways to showcase their products or services."

For more information, email info@sbltv.co.uk, or see the website sbltv.co.uk – where you can watch all the previous episodes on catch-up.



A studio debate about the Shrewsbury Big Town Plan, with Peter Nutting and Daniel Kawczynski

Staff praised for commitment during unprecedented times

Telford College staff have been praised for their commitment and ability to embrace new ways of delivering the curriculum throughout the challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The college has remained open over the past year, delivering live lessons through a series of multimedia platforms, including Microsoft Teams, and creating a new flexible, blended learning timetable.

The achievements – which principal Graham Guest said had been hugely helped by very positive and productive industrial relations – have been recognised and praised by governors, managers, and students.

Assistant principal Rachael Wilson said: “Our tutors have done a fabulous job to embrace, understand and make such creative use of technology.

“It’s enabled us to deliver the vast majority of our sessions live, as if the students were in the classroom, and the ongoing staff training means we’re now able to do some pretty amazing things.

“Learning how to use platforms such as Microsoft Teams to develop engaging sessions was a big learning curve in a short space of time, and that’s where the majority of our staff CPD work has focused.”

Helen Swinnerton, from the foundation learning team, said the training and support provided by the college had helped staff to discover new ways of teaching, and keep disruption to a minimum.

“We had a full initial training session on Microsoft Teams and One Note when the first lockdown began, and this has been followed up with regular sessions to expand and maintain skills. Staff are also working closely together to share best practice.”

Teresa Hughes, learner manager for business, professional studies and digital, said: “The college has given us all the tools we’ve needed to adapt to these changing times, from training and support to practical things like extra headsets or microphones.

“In some respects, I actually think online learning has been of benefit to our delivery – we’ve all been learning as we go, about the best ways to engage with students.”

Accounting tutor Slav Sutton added: “One of the most important things from my perspective over the past year has been the fact that everyone – staff and students – have shown a real desire to learn.

“In our department, we have students from age 16 all the way up to 50-plus, with varying levels of IT knowledge. There has been a real camaraderie among everyone to make things work.

“We have tried very hard with our remote lessons to give a feeling that we



Helen Swinnerton



Stuart Gregory

are still delivering some sort of face-to-face experience, and judging by the exam results so far this year, it seems to have paid dividends.”

Stuart Gregory, from the college’s A level centre, the 7th Form, said: “We have made changes to teaching methods which, under normal circumstances, would probably have taken a decade to evolve.

“It’s all been done in a structured way, educating staff on different elements of platforms such as Teams in a gradual way, and the support has been a mixture of structured CPD sessions and peer-to-peer learning with staff sharing top tips and best practice.”

Anne O’Sullivan, West Midlands regional official of the University and College Union, said: “We have worked closely with the college in weekly meetings throughout the pandemic.

“The effective ways of working we have developed have benefited both students and staff in dealing with the educational

challenges of Covid. The weekly meetings have allowed us to successfully iron out any issues quickly and efficiently on behalf of our members and the wider college community, so it is great to see staff being recognised now for their dedication and commitment to their students.”

Paul Hinkins, who chairs the college’s corporation, added: “I am truly inspired by the staff commitment to making a difference in these unprecedented and challenging pandemic times.

“Our college has found ways to address issues, to do things differently, and make continuous improvement.

“This includes coming up with practical tools and techniques to make things work better for the college – and most importantly for the staff and students.

“I have no doubt in my mind that the team has set the standard in being a leading example in our sector. I want to say a massive thank you to them all.”

Fresh recruits for a film and animation company

Award-winning media production company 7video has two new recruits – and they are both called Adam.

The business, based on the Shrewsbury Business Park, has welcomed them to their ever-expanding team.

Adam Chamberlain joins as a filmmaker and Adam Corbett as their digital marketing apprentice.

Last year, 7video won the Shropshire Chamber of Commerce Best Small Business Award, and the pair are looking forward to building on this success.

After completing a foundation degree in creative media at Telford College of Arts and Technology, then going on to specialise in video production at degree level at University of East Anglia, Adam Chamberlain worked on short films that won cinematography awards as well as freelance video work.

"I have been balancing freelance videography with other part-time work over the years," he said. "Now I'm really enjoying working for one of the best video team's in the country."

Fresh from his experience as a runner on ITV's The Voice, Adam Corbett says he's always loved creating content. After attending Shrewsbury College, studying creative media production, he graduated from The University of Salford where he presented and produced his own weekly radio show.



7video – Digital marketing apprentice Adam Corbett



7video – Filmmaker Adam Chamberlain



During the last three years, he's supported The Royal Horticultural Society with a campaign for 'Green Spaces in the City' and worked to help restore a community centre in Salford by raising awareness on social media

"All the skills I've learned so far have really set me up for working life, and I'm committed to keep moving forward by beginning my

exciting journey with the team at 7video," he explained.

7video director Peter Sims said he was delighted to welcome the new recruits to further enhance their reputation across the UK for providing exceptional film, animation, drone and timelapse services.

"It's been a very difficult year for all businesses but our fab team and all our amazing clients have really helped keep us strong," he said. "Hopefully now we can all look to a more positive future and I know the two Adams will take us to even greater heights."

To read more about the 7video team and their work visit www.7video.co.uk

Looking for a greener option

Company car drivers and their employers in Shropshire and Mid Wales are increasingly turning to electric vehicles to maximise their tax benefits and save thousands of pounds.

The Government plans to ban the sale of new cars powered only by petrol or diesel engines by 2030, and according to Elwyn Turner, a director at Dyke Yaxley Chartered Accountants in Shrewsbury, businesses are already seeking out electric alternatives.

"There is now a real wave of companies considering electric vehicles as they have now become a commercially viable option thanks to the increase in range and the models available.

"Lately the number of employees taking up the offer of a company car had been declining due to the increasing taxation on them as a benefit.

"But now, thanks to the rules on electric vehicles and the significant reduction in taxable benefit in kind for the employee switching from a petrol or diesel-fuelled company car to outright electric, they are once again being regarded as a realistic perk."

Elwyn said the Government offered



Elwyn Turner

grants against the cost of new electric vehicles, but this week had reduced the amount available from £3,000 to £2,500, and the payment was now restricted to cars costing under £35,000.

"With the rapidly rising number of charge-points across the UK, and the growing interest in electric powered vehicles, the Government said they wanted to re-focus the grants on the more affordable zero emission vehicles.

"They believe that higher-priced

vehicles are typically bought by drivers who can afford to switch to electric vehicles without a subsidy, and that the changes will allow the funding to go further."

Elwyn said employers could also benefit from switching to more eco-friendly vehicles, particularly as charge-points at work qualify for accelerated capital allowances as well as the new "super capital allowance deduction" announced in the latest Budget – and the accelerated tax reliefs for the purchase of the cars were also of significant interest.

"If your employees do plug in and charge their company-provided vehicles at your company premises, they will not be liable for benefit-in-kind payments either. And if you provide charge-points at your employees' homes, they are also free of a taxable benefit if they are provided alongside the company car.

"So if you're already running a company car scheme through your business, now is the perfect time to review and update the list of vehicles offered to your employees so that you can make sure you're maximising the allowances available."



Matthew Home, Dean Harris and Neal Hooper



The new Family Assessment Centre at Willowdene Rehabilitation

Assessment centre opens

Aico were delighted to formally open the brand-new Family Assessment Centre at Willowdene Rehabilitation on Thursday 25th March.

Managing Director for Aico, Neal Hooper, who sponsored the construction of the new centre, declared it open alongside Willowdene Rehabilitation Director Dr Matthew Home and High Sheriff of Shropshire Mrs Dean Harris, in an event streamed live through Aico TV.

Aico are proud to have supported Willowdene through their sponsorship of the development of the Family Assessment Centre, which features an activity area for families to spend time together, an assessment hub, meeting room and conference room, as well as a kitchen area. Neal comments "To be able to support such an inspiring organisation such as Willowdene in this way is a real privilege. It is vitally important to be giving back and doing good in the community, this centre will give mothers the opportunity to recommence relationships with their children."

Dean Harris, High Sheriff of Shropshire, has been Aico's Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) partner throughout the last year and introduced Aico to Willowdene. She said "The work undertaken at Willowdene is simply exceptional, so to have an outstanding corporate partner like Aico working with them is really a win/win. The brilliant professional relationship which has blossomed has resulted in the building of this amazing facility, which will no doubt provide the ideal environment for positive family relationships to be nurtured. Attending the opening was definitely one of the highlights of my time as High Sheriff of Shropshire - I am very proud to be a part of it."

Situated in the heart of West Mercia, Willowdene Rehabilitation provides an opportunity for lasting life transformation through a proven approach to rehabilitation that includes trauma-informed therapy, training, work experience and resettlement. At the heart of Willowdene's mission is a commitment to ensure that students have access to interventions that will enable them to step into the life they were made for.

The Family Assessment Centre comes as the culmination of a number of years' work for Willowdene; a high proportion of the women at Willowdene have children, but less than 2% have their children in their care, meaning most are in the social care system. With recognising how traumatic and painful this is for both mothers and children, the aim of the Family Assessment Centre is intervention and preventing generational cycles, to enable the cultivation and support of family relationships with the students of Willowdene. The new Family Assessment Centre will provide a warm, nurturing environment for contact visits, family

therapy and help relationships to flourish.

Dr Matthew Home, Director of Willowdene Rehabilitation comments: "Aico's commitment to Willowdene has developed the organisation and enabled us to focus on delivering the much-needed interventions across the region. I believe Aico has been the springboard for Willowdene not only bringing it into the 21st century but strengthening the foundations for the future. The assessment centre will enable us to provide family and relationship programmes that provide solutions in the here

and now and more importantly will enable us to break the generational effects associated with trauma, substance misuse and the criminal justice system."

Aico pledged their support to Willowdene through their Corporate Social Responsibility programme and colleagues from across the UK have undertaken multiple volunteering days at Willowdene, assisting with a range of social enterprise activities including, landscaping, outdoor maintenance, resurfacing and painting and decorating at the 200-acre site.

Supplier to Fire and Rescue Service

Aico are delighted to have been selected as a supplier on all categories of the West Midlands Fire Service Framework, which will shortly be available to all UK Fire & Rescue Services (subject to contract).

The West Midlands Fire Service Framework will facilitate the procurement of Fire and Carbon Monoxide (CO) alarms for all UK Fire and Rescue Services (FRS), in a move towards the standardisation of requirements as outlined in regulations. As part of the supplier status, market-leading Aico will provide Smoke, Heat and CO alarms, including their technologically advanced, award-winning alarms for total protection.

Paul Cartwright, Aico National Accounts Manager says "As the UK market-leading supplier of domestic smoke and CO alarms it is fantastic that we can now offer the same level of support and the same quality product to our FRS for their safety work with the general public. We aim to be the number one supplier to the FRS moving forward and intend to bring a level of support to the contract that has never been seen before.

When safe to do so, we will be making our team of 23 supportive Regional Specification Managers and our four mobile training units available for use by the FRS, offering free FIA CPD training to any service employees. The mobile units can also be used for awareness and engagement events where needed.

Every product Aico will supply to the contract will be individually tested at least four times before leaving our factory in Ireland, ensuring every alarm works as designed, to sit on the ceiling silently protecting occupants for a full 10 years.

Our innovative SmartLINK system has been adopted by over a hundred social landlords across the UK and we are very

pleased that West Midlands Fire & Rescue Service have extended the Framework to provide for future technology. SmartLINK is now available through the Framework for the FRS to deliver additional protection for the most vulnerable in society, providing a simple GSM Gateway connected system for occupants and their families and carers."

This opportunity comes in the wake of a new campaign by Aico to increase support to the Fire and Rescue Service across the UK. The campaign launched in September 2020 with the focus of offering increased support to each of the 52 Fire and Rescue Brigades in the UK, through the provision of Aico's FIA approved CPD training based on BS 5839-6:2019, use of Aico's mobile training and demonstration units and access to office space at their Centre of Excellence, as well as homeowner and tenant safety packs.

Neal Hooper, Managing Director of Aico commented "For us, it is not just about alarms. One of our core values is creating safer communities and we have decided to increase our support for the Fire and Rescue Service. We already have strong partnerships with several Fire and Rescue Services around the UK but feel we could be doing more."

Aico has rapidly grown over 31 years to become the recognised UK market leader in domestic Fire and Carbon Monoxide protection that they are today, with education, quality, service and innovation at the core of everything they do. With life safety products, quality is paramount. Aico are always looking towards the future and will continue to pioneer in the latest technological advancements in sensor technology and advance the connected home, maintaining their position as the leader in home life safety, promoting best practice and engaging with their communities to deliver safer homes.

Network Telecom now under Enreach brand



Enreach, the fast-growing European unified communications group, has solidified its growth plans by bringing UK-based Network Telecom under the group brand.

Building on Network Telecom's growing position in the UK market, the rebrand to Enreach will give customers access to a broad product offering, including fixed-mobile convergence (FMC) and flexible ICT services, and underlines the company's ambition to be Europe's Unified Communications as a Service (UCaaS) leader.

The move is part of Enreach's larger growth strategy to create best-in-class products and services made easily available to its channels at scale. Network Telecom already successfully launched the group's cloud telephony solution in 2020, seeing great traction in the market with 700 cloud seats sold in March, and is set to enhance this further as part of its rebranding.

Network Telecom's rebranding takes immediate effect and brings with it an ambitious product roadmap, with Enreach committed to delivering a comprehensive group-wide product portfolio to the UK market by the end 2021, including CCaaS, Chat AI, EPOS and multi-channel sales solutions, as well as an upgrade to its proprietary cloud telephony solution, Enreach Contact.

Stijn Nijhuis, CEO Enreach said, "Today we celebrate Network Telecom rebranding to Enreach, another milestone in our journey to become Europe's UCaaS leader. Network Telecom has established itself as a key player in the UK market, providing businesses across the country with the support and products they need to work smarter, from anywhere and from any device, at home as easily as in the office. As the UK direct business of Enreach, the team will be working directly with users to deliver the latest technology and innovations, from which existing customers and partners will benefit."

Duncan Ward, CEO Enreach UK, said: "This rebranding symbolises Network Telecom's integration within Enreach, as part of our shared, synergised growth journey. As Enreach, we can further support our customers with access to new products and a dedication to our customer experience, as well as being associated with this stronger, unified brand."

Background

Based in Telford, UK, Network Telecom is a market leader in providing SMEs with the communications solutions they need to work smarter. Having helped over 5,000 businesses across the UK, Network Telecom offers a suite of unified communications solutions, from cloud phone systems and mobiles, to broadband and IT services.

About Enreach

Enreach is a European UCaaS leader with a strong presence in the UK, the Netherlands, Germany, Spain and Denmark providing collaboration technology and telecoms services via its resellers, service provider partners and direct brands. All businesses contribute to intelligent, integrated IT and communication solutions that ensure optimal communication and workflow between organisations. Enreach's mission is to give businesses access to the best communication and collaboration tools with an easy, user-centric interface built around their specific needs and systems. The group's products put powerful features in reach of every business, no matter the industry or size, so their employees can focus on getting amazing things done. Enreach is active in 25 countries and has 950 employees working across 20 different European offices.

For more information about Enreach, please visit: <https://enreach.com/> or about Enreach UK, please visit: www.enreach.com/uk

A new Director of Sales is welcomed



Roan Pratt, Director of Sales

Network Telecom, part of Enreach, has welcomed Roan Pratt as its new Director of Sales.

Roan joins the business communications provider from Gamma and brings a substantial understanding of the UK market in UCAAS, CCAAS, MSDR Connectivity, SIP & Mobile that will allow Network Telecom to continue its strong growth in 2021 and beyond.

Roan led award-winning sales teams and product sales specialists in his 12 years at Gamma, and said it was an exciting time to be joining Network Telecom.

He said: "The product set, people and ambition of Network Telecom really stand out from the crowd and, as part of Enreach, we have the foundations to be one of the market leaders in UCAAS, Collaboration & CCAAS in the UK".

Duncan Ward, CEO of Network Telecom said: "Roan's arrival is another signal of our intentions to grow Network Telecom further and increase its capabilities, service offering and sales presence across the UK. We are delighted to have Roan on board and look forward to continuing our journey together."

Roan joined the business on the 1st of February, assuming responsibility for its field sales and account management teams.

Plan your working space with office supplies specialist

Whether employees are now back in the office or continue to work from home, the furniture and supplies around them are extremely important – affecting both safety and health as well as productivity.

Furniture is designed to meet the needs of the workplace and employees, so choosing the right office furniture will mean you tick all the boxes - but with employers under pressure, it is not often at the top of the COVID-safe list.

Office supplies firm and Chamber Patrons Chrisbeon use CAD planning software to plan out the office space for their clients - but it is not only to ensure the furniture fits in the space, it is also to increase safety and meet the needs of the workforce.

Partner Richard Hughes said:

“Employers are under a lot of pressure as it has been an extremely hard 12 months, and the upheaval continues for many.

“We have been working with businesses to try and make it easier for everyone. To create a comfortable and safe working environment for employees.

“We know that employers are doing their best to move office furniture to ensure distance and reduce fears - but if cables from IT equipment end up laying across the floor it can become a health and safety issue!

“From the offices to the boardroom to lighting in a home office and antimicrobial stationery items such as staplers and hole-punches, there is a lot to think about, and we are here if you need us.”

The Chrisbeon team has been selling and planning home offices for a number of customers working from home, from a simple entry-level desk and basic chair to larger home offices that can be made to measure with desk, storage and filing space.

Their work has also continued throughout lockdown supplying clear COVID screens for those returning to the office as well as wipeable chairs rather than fabric so they can be easily cleaned in multi-use high traffic areas like waiting rooms and canteens.

The Chrisbeon new and pre-loved showrooms are set to open on April 12th with a number of new furniture ranges going on display.

Hygiene and safety have never been more important and the team at Chrisbeon have had to adapt the way they work on plans to ensure COVID safety is maintained within the layouts they are creating, and the furniture and accessories they are supplying.

“Some businesses have already moved back to the office but often board meetings now see each person bringing their own laptop or iPad - which means having access to electrical points in the middle of the boardroom table is important,” adds Richard.

“We can also advise on the addition of reminder and warning laminated signs in corridors, offices, meeting rooms and break-out areas to help employees keep to social-distancing guidelines.

“There are many issues but there are also many options and many solutions and we are here to help.”

Familiar face takes the reins at HR firm

A Shropshire-based human resources company is looking forward to a bright future following a management buyout.

Nikki Hall, who joined Triangle HR in 2012, has now officially taken over the running of the company from its founder, Justine Vaughan.

“I’m absolutely delighted to have formally completed the deal and I’m looking forward to working with the team to take the company into the future – we have some really exciting plans and with the ongoing Coronavirus situation, we’re anticipating a greater need for professional HR support,” said Nikki.

“We are already seeing an increase in enquiries since the start of the year, and as lockdown begins to ease, we will continue to expand our range of services and support packages to companies across Shropshire, the West Midlands and beyond.”

Triangle HR – based in Shrewsbury – provides a tailored and personalised HR service and the team has a wealth of knowledge and experience of employment matters, employment law, resourcing and management training.

The company assists managers through the entire employment journey: from writing job specifications and interviewing, to managing absence, dealing with disciplinary and grievance matters, maximising employee performance, restructuring project management, managing TUPE transfers, and other exit strategies such as settlement agreements and redundancy.

“Given the strange times we’re all experiencing due to Covid-19, many companies are finding themselves dealing with situations that have never cropped up before, and we’re keen to work with businesses of all shapes and sizes to help them navigate their way through,” said Nikki.

“We’ll be developing our services to complement our existing offer including an upgrade for our popular online client portal which has proved invaluable during the pandemic.

“Alongside the new products and services, we are planning to grow our team significantly as our staff are invaluable when it comes to taking the company forward.



“We will also continue to deliver support that is clear and jargon-free, and clients can rest assured that everything we do will always be adapted to suit their very individual needs – nothing is ‘off-the-shelf’, it’s all focused on each company’s specific circumstances.”

Triangle HR works with an ever-growing portfolio of clients including businesses in manufacturing, transport and distribution, wholesale, food and hospitality, medical, private care, and professional football.

Free training on offer to improve employability prospects

Telford College is launching a new range of free adult training courses as its commitment to the Government's new 'Lifetime Skills Guarantee'.

The programme is designed to deliver free, fully-funded training to adults who do not currently have an advanced technical certificate, diploma or equivalent qualification.

The level three courses will aim to help improve people's employability prospects, removing the cost barriers which may have previously denied access to training.

Telford College is offering five courses – a foundation diploma in IT, a diploma in the principles of management, AAT accountancy, plus qualifications in maths and warehousing/logistics.

The courses will involve a mixture of on-site and remote learning, with the majority starting in September.

To enrol, or to find out more information,



go to www.telfordcollege.ac.uk/courses/part-time/lifetime-skills-guarantee

Mr Guest said: "We are working more closely than ever with the local business community to ensure that we can deliver qualifications which meet the ever-changing skills requirements.

"Through initiatives such as the new

Telford Skills Group, and our recently launched Engineering Hub, we are opening up regular dialogue with local businesses.

"We're delighted to playing our part in this new Lifetime Skills Guarantee project, which will remove barriers to learning for many people at a time when they need help the most."

In a letter to Telford College principal Graham Guest, prime minister Boris Johnson says: "We do not underestimate the challenges you have faced in the past months, working hard to do the best for your learners.

"We want to thank you for your efforts to date, and to thank you in advance for your future efforts to address the upheaval that Covid-19 has brought to the labour markets you serve.

"By delivering this programme, you will play a leading role in ensuring that more people have the skills they need to get on."

Enterprising students shine

Business students from Telford College showcased their organisational, problem-solving and leadership skills in a national competition – and earned huge plaudits for their efforts.

The level three students represented the college in an enterprise challenge organised by Staffordshire University, in conjunction with The Inspirational Learning Group.

Around 1,000 young people took part, and the winning Telford College team - Callum Croft, Ethan Lamb, Akeel Shabir and Paulina Szymaniuk - finished in the top 10.

The programme, designed to help learners make informed decisions about their futures, was delivered using a mix of physical and virtual challenges.

The initial brief was to create a concept which would engage young people in a local business, and a total of 24 Telford College students took part, split into six teams.

The first stage involved an online chat with Chris Pallett of Telford IT firm Bespoke Computing, Lajina Leal of Lajina Masala, and Telford College principal Graham Guest to find out more about their businesses.

Students then went away to prepare pitches, which were judged by Lajina, plus Paul Cook of Bespoke Computing, Telford College deputy principal Janet Stephens, Teresa Hughes, the college's learner manager for business, professional studies and digital, and chair of the corporation, Paul Hinkins.

The winning college team then progressed to the regional final, where it was tasked with creating and storyboarding a one-minute video to promote a local business.

Ethan Lamb said: "I enjoyed the project; it gave us a good insight into what it would be like to working for a professional marketing agency.

"I also think it was good for our soft skills too - communication and team working in particular."



Managing director of Bespoke Computing, Chris Pallett, presented gift boxes including an Echo Dot, digital radio and power banks, to members of the winning Telford College team.

He said: "Getting to meet the students was very interesting.

"Their pitches were all excellent and the winning team's concept was very comprehensive. I could actually see it working as part of a marketing campaign.

"It's invaluable experience for students to engage with organisations throughout their education; it gives them an insight of the real working world.

"Competitions like this allow students to make their studies relatable to actual business scenarios, which is invaluable to young people.

"It also allows the community to get involved in something they may not have access to normally - getting feedback on your ideas from a professional is an important experience to go through, and learn from.

"I see Bespoke Computing also benefitting, as it's a chance for us to meet young people and explore how they are developing and thinking about challenges."



Claire Brook, Employment Law Partner at Aaron & Partners presenting at the firm's online employment roadshow to support businesses



Head of Employment Law Helen Watson at the Aaron & Partners employment roadshow

Renowned roadshow goes virtual

A team of solicitors from Shrewsbury-based legal firm Aaron and Partners are celebrating the success of their annual employment law roadshow after taking the event online for the very first time.

In line with UK lockdown restrictions, the law firm replaced in-person events with a virtual seminar that was attended by more than 340 people.

Various sessions took place throughout the seminar and focused on key changes, lessons learned and trends within UK employment law, with topics including Brexit and Immigration, IR35 and the employment bill.

Having been run for 17 years, the annual

roadshow offers an opportunity for HR directors, managers and business owners to learn from the firm's highly regarded employment law team, which is listed in the prestigious Legal 500 – a leading industry guide.

Helen Watson, Partner and Head of Employment Law at Aaron and Partners, said: "Our employment law roadshows have always been one of the biggest events of the year for us, and despite being unable to deliver the seminar in person this year, we felt it was important to make sure businesses still had access to expert advice.

"Almost exactly one year on from the first national lockdown, the coronavirus pandemic has had a huge impact on all aspects of employment law and there is so much that businesses can and need to learn from the past 12-months.

"It was great to see so many people

attend, and we had lots of positive feedback with many impressed by the range of topics and level of depth covered, with delegates praising the new virtual format."

Ben Mason, Employment Law Partner at the firm, who also spoke at the seminar, added: "I look forward to the roadshows every year. It was fantastic to see so many businesses positively engaging with us online and taking part in our live Q&A.

"Now, more than ever, it's vital that businesses are up to date with any legal changes being introduced and our roadshow has become a recognised resource for directors and HR teams seeking CPD accredited employment law insights for their organisations."

To find out more about future employment law seminars, including the firm's regular HR Lunch Club events, visit: <https://www.aaronandpartners.com/events/>

Free digital advice to help small companies

A Shropshire web tech expert and Chamber Patron is giving up his time to make sure businesses impacted by the coronavirus pandemic get the digital support they need to recover.

Shaun Carvill, managing director of Bridgnorth-based website agency Clickingmad, said Covid-19 had forced nearly all businesses to re-evaluate their use of digital technology and with many still looking at how best to adapt, he wanted to help by offering free one-to-one advice through a new programme called 'Ask the Expert'.

Launching this month, the free, expert advice sessions aim to support businesses to evaluate the effectiveness of their current digital assets such as their website so that they can plan for improvements and drive growth.

Mr Carvill said: "The coronavirus pandemic has irreversibly shifted the way we do business and the reliance on digital technology is greater than ever before.

"With so many businesses forced to close their physical premises during the national lockdowns and the lack of opportunities to sell goods and services face to face across all sectors of industry, websites have fast become the number one asset for many businesses.

"Making sure they function effectively is therefore critical and that's what



Shaun Carvill of Clickingmad

these sessions are about. We're offering businesses the opportunity to receive a free website review to help them identify how they can improve the effectiveness of their website in order to capitalise on inquiries.

"Things like the download speed of

images, whether websites are mobile friendly, and the ease of navigation can all make a difference to overall website performance."

In addition to a website review, Mr Carvill will also help business owners identify other digital improvements they can make to boost their online presence including how to get noticed in online searches.

The programme launch comes as the Government encourages businesses to sign up to its new Help to Grow digital scheme announced as part of the budget to improve productivity through funded support for digital solutions.

Mr Carvill said: "The fact that the Government has also recognised the need to support small businesses by helping to boost digital skills is great news. This combined with our digital support programme means businesses across Shropshire will be able to reach new customers and boost their online trade."

Clickingmad has been providing website services to businesses for 21 years and has a successful track record of supporting local, regional and national clients across a range of industry sectors.

To take part in the new Ask the Expert sessions email sales@clickingmad.com or contact 01746 769612.

A grand way to save lives

As part of Midlands Air Ambulance Charity's 30th anniversary celebrations, and due to a community fundraising shortfall over the last 12 months, the vitally important service is asking people across Shropshire to join in the fun and play its Lifesaving Lottery.

The local charity, which responds to an average of 13 lifesaving missions across Shropshire and the Midlands per day, has an established lottery scheme which boasts almost 69,000 members, 17 per cent of which reside in Shropshire. With chances for participants to play more than once, the current total of live numbers played on a weekly basis is in excess of 95,000, funding four out of ten critically important missions.

The scheme has increased in popularity over the last three years. Thanks to the generosity of supporters, the Lifesaving Lottery raised over £3.8 million** in 2020 funding 1,290 air ambulance and 2,580 critical care car lifesaving missions. This popular way to support the charity is enhanced because for a donation of £1 per, the supporter also has the opportunity to win prizes – either a jackpot cash prize of £1,000 or four prizes of £25.

Emma Gray, chief operating officer for Midlands Air Ambulance Charity said: "Its thanks to the kindness of local people, like the supporters of our Lifesaving Lottery, we are able to continue making critical



Visit midlandsairambulance.com/lottery to find out how you can help

care missions possible and saving lives across the Midlands. This year has been exceptionally challenging for us all, which is why we offer this additional way for support the charity, which is mutually beneficial as the supporter also has the chance to win money each week, while helping to fund our extremely important pre-hospital service."

To find out how you can get involved and play the Midlands Air Ambulance Charity Lifesaving Lottery, please visit: midlandsairambulance.com/lottery and follow the organisation on social media.

- The Midlands Air Ambulance Charity Lifesaving Lottery is operated and promoted by Midlands Air Ambulance Charity (MAAC). Midlands Air Ambulance Charity is licensed and regulated in Great

Britain by the Gambling Commission under account number 42471

- The sole charitable beneficiary of this lottery is Midlands Air Ambulance Charity, which will receive all the proceeds after deduction of the expense of running the lottery, including the cost of prizes.

- All net proceeds from the Lifesaving Lottery are donated to Midlands Air Ambulance Charity, which requires £10m a year to ensure the continuation of its essential pre-hospital service. In 2020, as a percentage of the total plays, 79 per cent went directly to Midlands Air Ambulance Charity, 1 per cent was paid in prizes and 20 per cent in expenses.

Terms and conditions apply:

- You must pay in advance by cheque or standing order – only paying members are entitled in each weekly draw.

- You must be aged 16 or over to join the Lifesaving Lottery.

- Results are published on the charity's website every week and winners will be notified directly.

For full terms and conditions, visit: midlandsairambulance.com/lottery

** This represents 79 per cent of the total proceeds, after prizes and expenses and means every four in ten missions attended by the charity, is funded by the Lifesaving Lottery players.

A TaylorMade role

The belated golf season got underway for the members of Wrekin Golf Club when they gathered to celebrate the 2021 Captain's Drive in. TaylorMade rep and single figure handicap golfer Royston Parkes took over the mantle from Dominic Bagnall in true style.

Royston, who began his golfing career at the now closed Severn Side Golf Course in Ironbridge has been a member of the Wrekin since the age of ten. He has represented the club at every level including the Scratch and Hargrove teams and has been part of winning Handicap League teams on three separate occasions. Added to this Royston also served as competitions chairman from 2014 to 2017.

Said Royston: "I'm really looking forward to getting the season under way, there are a lot of golfers who have been itching to get back on the course and hopefully we have seen the last of lockdown. Surprisingly, given all the uncertainty that the pandemic has brought, the club is in a strong position which has been bolstered by a loyal and pro-active membership. Hopefully, we can all move forward together, play some great golf and raise lots of money for my chosen charity."

Severn Hospice is a charity that is very close to Royston's heart. In 2015 his mother



Vice Captain Terry Brentnall, Club President Andy Patterson, Lady Captain Dr Janine Fletcher, and Club Captain Royston Parkes

passed away there after a courageous battle with cancer and the help that the hospice gave to the family was very much appreciated, so much so that Royston's stepfather is now a bereavement councillor for them. "I think it's important that we give something back, and my year as Captain is the perfect opportunity for the whole club to say thank you to this fantastic Shropshire institution."

The appointment of Royston as the 116th Captain of the Wrekin Golf Club is a very welcome one. Tony Dawes, Club Chairman commented; "There are very few members

who eat, sleep and breath golf like Royston and we're truly lucky to have him take on the role. Not only has he made golf his career, but he also is a very committed member of the club who will give his all in the coming year."

The new captain got his year off to a flying start when nearly 200 members played in his Texas Scramble competition in aid of Severn Hospice. For the drive in, which followed, Royston was joined by Club President, Andrew Patterson, Lady Captain Dr Janine Fletcher, Vice-Captain Terry Brentnall and Junior Captain Jess Warren.

Community theatre

The Holroyd Community Theatre provides 'a space for everyone' in the heart of the North Shropshire and the Welsh borders countryside. It exists to advance education in the Arts and to provide facilities in the interests of social and cultural capital through the promotion of drama, music, dance and the arts for the benefit of the local community.

Designed by one of the world's leading theatre designers, The Holroyd Community Theatre is fitted out to the highest professional specification. It benefits from state-of-the-art lighting and sound equipment, a spacious foyer with stunning views, bar facilities, a box office and of course is fully accessible for persons with reduced mobility.

The Holroyd Community Theatre presents an ideal venue for community groups, businesses, schools, charities and arts organisations across the region, in addition to providing a stage for professional theatre. The auditorium's flexible studio-style space holds fixed seating for 180 with additional seating up to 250, or up to 290 standing. The foyer is flooded with natural light with views onto the school's golf course and the canal beyond, and is a spectacular space for dinners of 60 guests, talks for up to 100 people and meetings.

With theatres opening up across the country from May, there are exciting opportunities in abundance for lovers of



Holroyd Community Theatre

creative arts with a programme of live events developed in collaboration with local arts organisations.

The theatre will be used regularly by local community and charity groups, amateur drama societies and arts organisations, alongside a professional theatre programme of events taking place throughout the year.

The International Piano Week festival takes centre stage between 26th July and 7th August 2021. Classical music and jazz lovers can attend spectacular solo piano recitals given by the festival's in-house faculty of international concert artists, with the closing performance featuring world-renowned

pianists. Face2Face Performance Academy continues to provide expert teaching in dancing, singing and acting whilst building their confidence and having fun!

The team of experienced teachers and guest professionals run a programme of masterclasses for students from across the region. The Face2Face Performance Academy is open to anybody in the local community between the ages of 9 and 18 and runs weekly alongside the academic term.

To be kept informed of the upcoming theatre programme or to hire the facilities please contact: Kelly@theholroyd.com

Email scams and how to recognise them!

Over the past 12 months, email scams have increased - targeting both personal accounts and business accounts, sometimes with devastating results.

An increasing number of people are now communicating digitally due to not being in the office or because a period in lockdown has led to many becoming more comfortable with digital communication.

But with important messages - such as track and trace and information about the COVID vaccine - coming via our phones and laptops, it is important to question every communication.

Katy Jones, of PC Net Solutions, said: "Email scams, or phishing scams, are a particular concern.

"They have become regular features in our inbox with numbers and frequency increasing all the time. It has reached the stage when it is now really difficult to identify a genuine enquiry from a scam.

"But as employers, and parents, and homeowners and more - we need to protect ourselves from the email scammers and the first step is to take a few simple precautions."

Katy and the team at PC Net have put together a list to support employers, and employees, in advising what to look for:

- Not expecting an email? - If you have not been anticipating an email from this particular sender, beware! It's probably a scam so delete it straight away.
- Is the 'from' address genuine? - Scammers are able to hide their address behind a genuine address the email has been sent from. By hovering your cursor over the visible address, you will be able to see if a scam address is lurking behind it.
- Does the branding look real? - Some emails claiming to be from an organisation, like supermarkets, banks or even Government departments, are often accompanied by the firm's branding which includes company colours and wording and can be so convincing. Check the company's brand colours and wording fonts - if they differ, even slightly, this should set the alarm bells ringing!
- Is the email asking for bank or other personal information? - This vital information is what the scammers are after. Keep your personal details to yourself. The vast majority of companies will not ask for this information in an email. If they do, the chances are it's a scam.
- Check the small print - Read through the contact information, dates and so on. Emails that contain inconsistencies are often tell-tale signs of a scam, but be

careful! No information inconsistencies doesn't mean it's genuine!

- Bad spelling or grammar? - While we are on the subject of checking through an email, check the grammar and spelling. Legitimate companies are normally very hot on this kind of thing, so if the email you have received falls short of the standards you would usually expect, it's likely to be a scam.

- Is the linked website genuine? - We've all seen it. An email asking you to click on a link to view an important message, some even threatening legal action or some such dire consequences if you don't. It may prove costly if you act in haste and click the link. The answer, if you are unsure about the email authenticity, is to log into your account via the official website and check if there are any messages waiting for you. If not, you know the email is a scam.

- Carry out your own checks - If you have received an email from a firm, organisation or department, it's easy to check up by calling the number you will have on any correspondence if it's someone you already have dealings with, or by looking up their contact details on their official website. Never checkup by calling the telephone number in the email.

Clients get to take control of glamping plans during strange point in history

With the majority of their front-office staff furloughed, Love2Stay quickly recognised that facilitating the volume of booking changes and cancellation requests would be a huge challenge when the first lockdown was declared in the UK in March 2020.

Their early decision to develop a bespoke self-service application in partnership with their long-standing digital marketing partner, Built For Now, has proven to be a key strategic investment as the app has generated thousands of transactions since its launch in April 2020.

Guests may use the app to cancel a scheduled booking and obtain an instant e-voucher for the full price of their reservation. The voucher comes in the form of an electronic code that can be used to make a reservation in the future.

Guests who just wanted to change their reservation date benefited from the app also. They can easily cancel the reservation and receive an e-voucher that can be used to make a new reservation on their chosen dates. The whole procedure takes less than a minute to complete and can be performed on the Love2Stay website. No need to call, no need to email.

"At the start of the pandemic, we had to make some difficult decisions to keep the business running, said Chris Skitt, Park Manager of Love2Stay. Investing when we had no revenue coming in was stressful, to say the least, but we had to reprioritise and strategically choose where to focus our time and investments. This has included making sure that innovations coming out of this current crisis be focused on increasing occupancy, improving efficiencies, ensuring guest and employee safety, and driving revenue or decreasing loss, all of which leads to improved guest experiences. This self-service application has more than met these objectives and will become a permanent function on our website even after the pandemic is over."

In a study conducted by Steven Van Belleghem a best-selling author in customer service strategy, it was found that 70% of customers now expect a company's website to include a self-service application.

Nick Spiteri, Managing Director at Built For Now said, "to succeed during the pandemic, sometimes quick decisions are critical and for small businesses this is often a huge challenge. When Covid-19 wreaked havoc on Love2Stay's booking revenue, they refused to accept defeat and focused immediately on assessing new market needs and shifting demands. They anticipated that the best value they could offer their guests during lockdown would be quick response times, and that the quickest way to achieve that goal would be to give them leverage of their own bookings. We got to work on the app and got it up and running in record time, with a tonne of positive reviews from guests."

Joint venture to make tax and financial advice easier



Reclaim Tax UK and Q Financial Services are proud to announce their new partnership, which will make finding tailored financial guidance and tax advice easier than ever before.

The projects which both businesses will work together on focus on utilising the expertise of each company and offering clients of either, the chance to engage with their combined services. Through their new collaboration, clients of Reclaim Tax UK will now be able to work with Q Financial Services, and vice versa.

Reclaim Tax UK are experts in tax relief, helping individuals and businesses maximise their claims. Meanwhile, Q Financial Services are equipped with the skills clients need to organise their financial planning more effectively.

Q Financial Services and Reclaim Tax UK were recently pictured together at Shrewsbury Town Football Club, of which Reclaim Tax UK is a sponsor, and Dave Edwards one of the Directors at Q is a

player! This photo op provides a valuable way for the two companies to signal their togetherness and collaboration as they work together.

The partnership is a timely blending of skills and expertise at a time when many clients are seeking a one-stop solution to their tax and financial services problems. "We're delighted to be partnering with Q Financial Services to bring an even greater service to both new and established customers," says Chris Jones,

Managing Director of Reclaim Tax UK. "This project looks set to be extremely positive for our clients and for each company, as we continue to expand our services."

These sentiments are echoed by Stuart Mackintosh, Director of Q Financial Services, who adds, "Finding the right tax guidance and financial advice is more important than ever before, and we're confident that this partnership will ensure clients receive the best possible service."

Find out more about Reclaim Tax UK online at the official website <https://reclaimtaxuk.co.uk> or discover Q Financial Services at <https://www.qfinancialservices.co.uk>.

The partnership is a timely blending of skills and expertise at a time when many clients are seeking a one-stop solution to their tax and financial services problems

Don't always take things so seriously

Merulae offers Counselling, Psychotherapy and Training Services. We ensure we have associates to work with various presenting issues. The training is very much about raising awareness of Mental Health and the challenges it brings and to drive down the stigma and discrimination that is a barrier for so many. We write the training to meet specific outcomes for Businesses and Schools, Colleges and Universities. We also deliver the various Mental Health First Aid Courses .

Who is someone you admire, and why?

Professor Marius Romme - Marius was one of the first to encourage us to put a Mental Health Label to one side and engage with the person in therapeutic settings.

Tell me three pet hates?

Lateness - when a driver pulls out in front of you and proceeds at 10miles an hour! - Slow internet.

What's a typical day like for you?

No two days are ever the same and I thrive on this!

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

Sketching and Painting.

If you could be anywhere, where would you be?

The Island of Bequia, St Vincent and the Grenadines.

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

A Horse Riding Instructor.

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

A large Edinburgh Gin and Tonic.

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

In my hot tub!

How do you want people to remember you?

As someone who went the extra mile to assist others and always did her homework first!

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

Keeping delegates emotionally safe in my training room while we discuss difficult aspects of Mental Health. I can listen to absolutely anything a client brings to therapy and empathise. I am also very honest and so will challenge where appropriate and keep clients on track.

Name three words that best describe you.

Determined - Creative - Reflective

How do you think your colleagues would describe you?

Hardworking - Accepting - Energized - Focussed - Bossy I've just been told!

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

Have a home near the sea!



Wendy Brook

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

Spend a month in Cornwall - The next stage and completion of my studies with Dr Gabor Mate.

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

When I began my studies to work in the field of Mental Health it was a highlight, I was a Company Director previously in the Hotel trade. I look forward to work every day and consider this to be very lucky. The lowlights are when I hear or read about someone taking their own life or when life is cruel to someone as it can be at times..

What publications do you regularly read?

Mental Health Today, Therapy Today, Artists and Illustrators and The Guardian.

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

Painting with watercolours or out with my Labradors.

What are some causes you care about?

Mental Health and sharing knowledge as far and wide as possible on a subject which needs to be better understood!

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

Spend time with my daughter. I walk my two gorgeous Labradors, Visit family on South Coast, Spending time with good friends is always time well spent no matter what we do!

What would be your personal motto?

Life isn't as serious as the mind makes it out to be - Eckhart Tolle.

Innovation and invention are the key words

Innovation. Invention. Prototyping. Oh, and tanks. Yes. Tanks. Not the usual things that you'd associate with a watercooler company. But at Wenlock Water things are a little different. Bruce Orme, Director, is a bit of a force of nature. He's always looking for new products, new ideas – new ways to dispense water in an environmentally friendly way.

One of the latest products is Humphrey, the hand pump for 19 Litre bottles. It's small, compact and fits neatly onto a bottle as shown on the photo here. Ideal for use in many places including campervans, sheds, garages and various places around the home. There are both hand pump version and USB charged versions.

Another innovation is Wilf. He is basically a conversion of the old style drinking water fountain. With a simple adaptation, these can be converted to refill drinking bottles. Bruce is currently changing several of these in and around Shropshire in readiness for coming out of this lockdown. Recycling and innovation at its best!

The 19 Litre bottles that the water comes in are also extremely environmentally friendly. The bottles are sterilised and cleaned each time they come back and are reused again and again. One bottle is estimated to be 21 years old and still going strong.

Now let's get onto tanks. Bruce collects and restores them. Actually, that's for another day. But just one other thing – some of you may remember Bruce from his Shropshire DJing days? Bruce and the Spinning...

Visit www.wenlockwatercoolers.co.uk to find out more.



The Humphrey hand pump in action

Travel agent's recommendations

Peakes Travel Elite, Shrewsbury's award-winning travel agent, are staying ahead of their competitors and at the forefront of customer opinion on travel with the results they have collected from an AITO travel insights survey.

The survey revealed 48% of respondents would like to book a holiday in the next 12 months and uncovered that just 3% of customers are unsure about travelling again. Being vaccinated ranked as the most important factor in deciding to book a holiday this year – which ranked higher than waiting for the removal of quarantine measures on their return and also low infection rates in the country they want to visit.

Claire Moore, managing director at Peakes Travel Elite, is delighted that 80% of respondents would recommend their services to family, friends and colleagues – with Peakes' helpful, friendly service being a key reason.

She said, "We are eagerly awaiting news from the Government allowing recreational travel overseas again. In the meantime, it has been great to gather research on how our customers are feeling about travel, and if the events of the last year will change how they holiday in the future. Overall, people seem optimistic and still want to plan fantastic holidays abroad, rich in culture and experiences. We know some customers aren't ready yet,



Claire Moore, Managing Director

which is completely understandable. For those customers we can discuss options for 2022 and even 2023. It is never too soon to dream!

"We are hopeful the Government will make a decision well before the summer rush, and when news does come, my super team at Peakes Travel Elite are ready to help customers make that booking at long last! We are going to continue operating an appointment only system for the time being. Not only does it ensure social distancing, but it also means we can match customers to the most suited travel agent in advance. That is really important

for booking the best holiday possible – speaking directly to a travel expert will always have infinitely better results than scrolling through internet pages. We are here to talk through all your dreams and wishes, as well as your concerns and worries. We can run through the new health travel protocols and pass on our expertise and reassurance.

"The last year has been tough for our business. We have worked tirelessly to rearrange and refund holidays for our customers, staying true to our commitment to premium customer service. We just want to get back to what we do best – finding the most amazing holiday experiences for our wonderful customers!

"As customers start to feel ready to book holidays abroad again, we would urge them to use a trusted travel agent to ensure they are investing in holidays with tour operators they can depend on. We can offer customers a high level of reassurance with our ATOL bonded and ABTA protected holidays. We pass on that protection to our customers, which means no matter what happens, their holiday plans are protected."

You can get in touch with Peakes Travel Elite by calling 01743 233234 between 10am and 2pm Monday to Saturday, or email sales@peakestravelite.co.uk.

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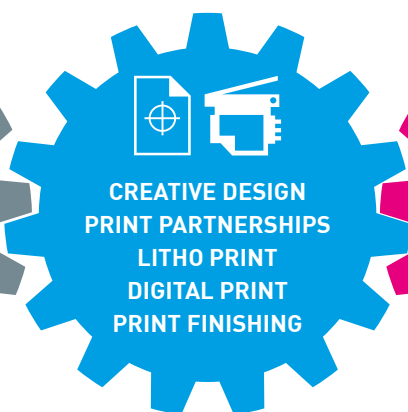
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