

YOUR CHAMBER YOUR VOICE

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2021



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The deadline for the October/November edition is Friday, September 17th. Publication date is Friday, October 1st.



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. Stay safe.

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paul@mediaandyou.co.uk

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For all editorial requests contact Hollie Jones on: magazine@shropshire-chamber.co.uk

For all advertising requests contact Mia Carter on: m.carter@shropshire-chamber.co.uk



Shaping the support from your Chamber

As if this year isn't tough enough for so many, we now have a "Pingdemic" to deal with.

With many businesses facing difficulties recruiting, the last thing anyone needs is further losses of staff, just at the time opportunities to do business are freeing up. Be assured our Westminster team are kicking down the ministerial doors to make sure that policy makers fully understand the consequences of their actions and the need to act quickly and with clarity to mitigate the issues.

Continuing the theme of staff, we are receiving increasing reports of staff being poached as many businesses look for recruits that are ready to hit the ground running, this is feeding into wage inflation and increased costs to retain or replace key staff.

My question is therefore, what notice period are your key staff contracted to? Do your staff feel valued? Do you need to make changes to reduce risk? I leave that thought with you.

Our research is identifying the significant shortage and increased cost of materials. This is once again feeding into either price increase or margin erosion, not a healthy position when many are starting to repay loans and deferred costs whilst government support is winding down. Be assured our network is making sure that ministers are fully aware of these ongoing challenges and the potential impact on the economic recovery.

Looking to the future we continue to shape the support your Chamber provides in response to your feedback, keep it coming, it is so important that your voice is heard through us at a local, regional and national level. Our Quarterly Economic Surveys have been running since 2008 and without question is the most up to date, business intelligence with trend analysis available in Shropshire. Your contribution to this is vital, as the outcome not only informs local stakeholders but feeds into the national picture ending up on the Chancellor's desk.

Please look out for the next request for you to complete the survey, have your say, help us to help you, help us to help Shropshire.

Richard Sheehan
Chief Executive Officer,
Shropshire Chamber of Commerce

New members to engage with

Pronto Logistics Ltd 07568 716347 NEWPORT Shropshire TF10 7HQ	Lion & Pheasant Hotel 01743 770345 SHREWSBURY Shropshire SY1 1XJ	Thrive HR UK 07495 826904 SHREWSBURY Shropshire SY3 8DU	KPI Recruiting Ltd 01952 797 577 TELFORD Shropshire TF1 1PS	Home-StartTelford & Wrekin 01952 872280 WELLINGTON Shropshire TF1 1HL
Ethos Group 01691 404359 OSWESTRY Shropshire SY10 7AG	Omega, The National Association for End of Life Care 01743 245 088 SHREWSBURY Shropshire SY1 1TX	YourGreen Ltd 01743 624277 SHREWSBURY Shropshire SY1 3AF	Landau Ltd 01952 245015 TELFORD Shropshire TF1 1HE	Invertek Drives Ltd 01938 556868 WELSHPOOL Powys SY21 8JF
Cando Douglas CIC 07792 586649 SHREWSBURY Shropshire SY2 6LG	Roger Parry & Partners LLP 01743 343343 SHREWSBURY Shropshire SY5 0HZ	Autocraft Telford Ltd 01952 617468 TELFORD Shropshire TF1 7EX	OneAgency 07710 521027 TELFORD Shropshire TF5 0PQ	Kaleidoscope Plus Group 07795 290059 WEST BROMWICH West Midlands B70 8LU
Crane Quality Counselling 01743 240546 SHREWSBURY Shropshire SY1 1JE	Shrewsbury Christian Centre Association 01743 363305 SHREWSBURY Shropshire SY1 2DJ	Coopers Gourmet Foods 01952 770400 TELFORD Shropshire TF6 6BN	Wisp IT 01952 908708 TELFORD Shropshire TF1 7UL	The Midlands News Association Ltd 01902 214098 WOLVERHAMPTON West Midlands WV1 1ES
Enterprise Holdings 01743 457600 SHREWSBURY Shropshire SY1 3AB	Taking Part 01743 363399 SHREWSBURY Shropshire SY3 9JW	Equine Reproduction Supplies Ltd 0800 1412550 TELFORD Shropshire TF2 6EF		

PATRONS

Mobile solar power station to lead in sodium-ion technology

A pioneering battery and energy storage firm is poised to lead the world in developing a commercial use for a ground-breaking new battery technology.

AceOn - described as 'the Telford company taking on Tesla' - has been awarded a £1 million grant from Innovate UK to accelerate development work on its mobile solar energy storage unit.

The newly-designed product will use Sheffield-based Faradion's sodium-ion batteries - the first time its technology is in commercial use in sub-Saharan Africa.

Sodium-ion battery technology uses low-cost materials that are sustainable and widely available.

AceOn - one of the country's leading solar energy and storage specialists - will be working in partnership with the University of Wolverhampton, DZP Technologies, a specialist battery materials development company, and Nigeria-based energy and power company Nevadic Limited to deliver the innovative Government-backed project.

AceOn Group Managing Director Mark Thompson said the new solar energy storage unit could bring clean, sustainable and affordable power to millions of people around the globe - and that the Telford company was leading the world in adopting the next-generation sodium-ion technology.

"Sodium-ion represents a real step change in technology and we really are leading the way in finding one of the first commercial applications for it in Africa.

"Our mobile storage unit will play a massive part in bringing clean, affordable and sustainable power to some of the world's poorest regions - and develop new technology that will help fight climate change all over the world.

"It is fantastic that the government, through Innovate UK, sees the huge potential of this technology and have placed their confidence and funding in us here at AceOn to deliver it successfully.

"We want to create new green-tech jobs here in the UK as we establish this country, and AceOn, as a global leader in this field.

"The funding is to develop this technology to integrate with solar energy generation to provide affordable, safe power for use initially in Nigeria. But our plan is to roll this out to a truly global market to answer the urgent need for clean, sustainable energy.

The project will start in October and run for two years.

The company's bid was just one of five from 126 submissions to be granted funding by Innovate UK, the nation's innovation agency.

Alice Goodbrook, innovation lead, energy at Innovate UK said: "All over the



Mark Thompson with the new solar storage device

world, Innovate UK-supported companies are improving lives of people in developing countries. By backing transformative ideas such as AceOn's, Innovate UK is making Global Britain a reality by supporting projects overseas and enterprise in the UK."

Professor Geoff Layer, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Wolverhampton, said: "The University has worked in partnership with AceOn over a number of years. Sustainable energy generation and storage is a fundamental requirement if we are to tackle climate change effectively. We are excited to be working on this innovative project, and Professor Ndy Ekeré and the Wolverhampton Institute of Sustainable Energy (WISE) Team will be leading this work on behalf of the University of Wolverhampton."

Doctor Zlatka Stoeva, from DZP Technologies, said: "I have been working with AceOn to develop this project for over 12 months now. This is a new state-of-the-art battery technology and we will show its capabilities to the rest of the world, as well as making a real and positive difference in Nigeria."

Dave Nwosu, Chief Executive Officer for Nevadic Ltd, said: "Nigeria is a perfect test-bed for developing this technology - it has soaring electricity prices, there is a clear need

for innovation in energy supply, and lessons learnt from this project will be shared with other countries."

James Quinn, CEO of Faradion, said: "We are really excited to be working with AceOn to expand the use of our batteries into Africa. Sixty six per cent of the Nigerian market faces unreliable or no energy access, so we see a lot of potential to support its ambitious economic growth projections."

AceOn originally helped develop sodium-ion technology and Mark said "now is the right time to establish the next generation and scale-up its potential to help combat climate change".

The project will see the development of a new version of AceOn's solar energy generator to enable full integration with sodium-ion batteries, including hardware and software development, and scalable to 1MW.

New diagnostics tools and a battery management system will also be developed. It will also create a new trailer to transport the equipment, new assembly and maintenance systems to enable pack assembly, repair, and re-use locally in Nigeria, and include a full life cycle analysis of the system, including its environmental impact.

For more information about the AceOn group visit <https://www.aceongroup.com/>

Our mobile storage unit will play a massive part in bringing clean, affordable and sustainable power to some of the world's poorest regions - and develop new technology that will help fight climate change



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Apprenticeship programme is a huge success

An apprenticeship programme at a Shropshire law firm is flourishing, with the latest recruits working their way towards successful qualifications.

Lanyon Bowdler Solicitors, which has offices across Shropshire, Herefordshire and North Wales, has recently welcomed Emily Jones, Dana Johnstone and Dylan Boydell to the firm as apprentices.

All three are working towards Business Administration Level 3 Apprenticeships, and managing partner, Brian Evans, said helping young people take their first steps in the legal profession was always a priority for the firm.

"As a progressive law firm, we value apprenticeships highly and appreciate the importance of nurturing young talent," he added.

"We are looking forward to supporting, developing and working with Dana, Dylan and Emily on their Lanyon Bowdler experience as their apprenticeships and careers progress."

Emily Jones, who is from Oswestry and joined Lanyon Bowdler from The Marches Sixth Form, said: "This apprenticeship is a great opportunity to achieve a qualification, gain new skills and knowledge while being in a real working environment. It has also allowed me to get into employment with the opportunity to progress in my career path. I have already learned that I really enjoy being in the legal sector and the day-to-day work it involves. Lanyon Bowdler has provided me with many role models to look up to, and I would like to stay within this area of work in the future, aspiring to be a solicitor myself one day."

Dana Johnstone, of Shrewsbury, used to work full-time in a care home and said: "The firm is very passionate about providing support and training to staff who want it, which impressed me as it is comforting knowing the firm wants to help your personal growth."

"Despite the fact I am an apprentice here at Lanyon Bowdler, I am not treated any differently to other staff and I am still given a variety of tasks to complete which I particularly enjoy, as I like a challenge. I have always been interested in a career in the legal sector, so in the future I would definitely like to stay within the solicitors and grow my knowledge."

Dylan Boydell, of Coalbrookdale, studied at Shrewsbury College and used to work part-time in McDonalds. He said: "I initially started looking for an apprenticeship as I wasn't enjoying college and thought I would benefit from a more hands-on role. At Lanyon Bowdler I am enjoying getting an inside perspective of a law firm and how it operates, as I find it intriguing and have always had an interest in law. I am unsure on what I want to do in the future, but by working here I am further developing my understanding of law which will help me decide if I want to take up a career in law."



Emily Jones



Dylan Boydell



Dana Johnstone



Rachael Watts, project co-ordinator



Kiran Uppal, executive assistant

Exciting times for Rachael and Kiran at college

Two business administration apprentices have taken up important new roles at Telford College.

Rachael Watts has been appointed project co-ordinator to oversee the college's plans to open a new maths and digital hub in Telford town centre's 'Station Quarter'.

And Kiran Uppal has joined the administration team as an executive assistant, where her role includes supporting the executive and senior leadership team.

Rachael, a former Church Stretton Secondary School student, is an army wife who has returned to education after taking a break to start a family.

She began on a level three apprenticeship at the college's Willow Tree centre before moving to the employer engagement team, and completed her level four business and professional administration apprenticeship last spring.

"It was tough fitting the apprenticeship around family life, but Telford College has been very flexible with any needs or changes I have needed to make," she said.

"The main skills gained from my apprenticeship training include communication, organisation and the ability to prioritise.

"This qualification slots in everywhere - no matter what sector you work in, there is always some sort of administration going on behind the scenes."

Since taking on the project co-

ordinator role in May, Rachael has also began studying for her Prince2 project management qualification.

"To anyone considering studying a business administration apprenticeship, I would say definitely do it! There are so many routes and departments you can take yourself, such as customer service or HR.

"After being at the college for only just over three years, I have made so much progress."

Kiran, a former student of Wrockwardine Wood Arts Academy - now Telford Priory School - completed her level two business administration qualification at Telford College, and is now combining her new role with level three studies.

She said: "Apprenticeships really are the way to go. You can fit them around yourself and your working life.

"With a business administration apprenticeship, there are so many pathways you can take.

"I have really increased in confidence since starting my apprenticeship. I work with a great team of people, and appreciate the relationships I have built with my colleagues and the support I get from people around me at work."

Telford College is throwing open the doors of the campus for an open event on June 23, when there will be an opportunity to find out more about the latest apprenticeships and courses, and view the facilities.

For more details, or to register, see www.telfordcollege.ac.uk/open-events/

Taking up a position at HR firm

An award-winning Shropshire HR firm has taken on a new consultant to help meet the demand of an ongoing expansion.

Vicky Dickson, 29, lives in Shrewsbury, has three years' experience in the HR industry and is looking forward to her new role helping The HR Dept Shropshire expand its client base.

The HR Dept Shropshire was launched by Niamh Kelly in May 2018 to provide human resources and employment law support to small and medium sized businesses. She set up sister company The HR Dept Wrexham and Chester last year and recently joined forces with Lee Monroe of The HR Dept Abergavenny, Brecon, Blaenau Gwent & Cwmbran in a move to provide extensive HR support to businesses across Mid Wales.

Vicky, who is originally from Dolgellau in Mid Wales and is excited to be able to offer advice in Welsh to clients in the new territory, said: "I am excited to be a part of The HR Dept Shropshire team and look forward to helping get across all the things we offer as a successful HR company and what support we can provide.

"We have so many resources behind us, so much support and information to draw on in finding the best way to help the client.

"The last 12 to 14 months have been a big challenge for many companies, their employees and the HR industry. There were a lot of companies initially with furlough queries, so the early days of the pandemic were focused on getting our heads around what furlough was and advising on that.

"We then saw a spike in the number of businesses considering redundancies and more recently it has been all about getting employees back to work - so it's been a busy time and extremely difficult for so many people.

"On the positive side I believe it has made employers think more about mental health and employee engagement, especially with people working from home and trying to keep them included in the team and not to feel too isolated and lonely.

"More managers are trying to touch base with staff to find out how they are doing and how they could support them a bit more.

"It's still difficult trying to change some people's opinions about how HR works but new things like furlough that employers have not had to consider before, have brought HR more to the forefront of employers' minds.

"There is more talk about mental health and wellbeing and trying to keep employees happy. There are many things we have to deal with, and people definitely have a greater awareness of HR and are discovering more value in it."



Vicky Dickson, from Shrewsbury, has three years' experience in the HR industry

Vicky said her move to The HR Dept Shropshire was a great opportunity to keep developing her skills and experience and she hopes to become a chartered member of CIPD.

"We have a team of friendly, helpful professionals offering pragmatic advice on employment law best practice," she added. "One of main things we are dealing with at the moment is absence from work and that's probably going to be an issue as we try to get people back into the workplace.

"The pandemic has had a major effect on mental health and we are seeing a lot of depression and anxiety with people going off for long periods of time - so it's all about managing their return to work and how we can best support them."

Ms Kelly said: "We are delighted to welcome Vicky to the HR Dept Shropshire team, part of an ongoing expansion and our commitment to providing the highest standards of HR support to businesses across the region."

For more information about The HR Dept email Niamh.Kelly@hrdept.co.uk and visit <https://www.hrdept.co.uk/shropshire/>

It's a new role for a familiar face

A well-known and familiar face to the Shropshire business community has recently made a high-profile appointment at local firm, Reclaim Tax UK Ltd as Operations Director.

Teresa Rowe who previously worked for Shropshire Chamber of Commerce for over 21 years as Events Manager brings a huge wealth of expertise, professionalism and has a 'people first' attitude which is key for her new role. Teresa has extensive knowledge, experience, and a full understanding of working with all sectors and size of business, she really gets to know the company and ensures she exceeds expectations by going the extra mile. She has boundless enthusiasm and is the perfect fit for this brand-new role.

Teresa says "I am absolutely thrilled to be part of the Reclaim Tax team here in Shrewsbury which also has offices across the UK. I am looking forward to reigniting existing relationships and cementing new ones. I cannot wait to get started and focussed on a new

and exciting journey with the team.

I am grateful to both Richard Canfer-Taylor, CEO and Chris Jones, Managing Director for investing and believing in me, I hope I can succeed and make a real difference to the business and its clients for many years to come."

Chris commented "I have known Teresa for many years as we previously worked together so I am obviously delighted she has decided to join us, I know Teresa's strengths and she can only add to the success of the business moving forward, she will certainly bring significant value to the team".

Reclaim Tax UK Ltd are experts in specialist areas of tax relief, including Capital Allowances, Research & Development (R&D), Remediation of Contaminated Land and the Patent Box. With over 10 years' experience, we have identified over £264m in tax benefit for our clients to date.

Our average client benefit is £50k for Capital Allowances and £59k for R&D and the Patent Box!



Teresa Rowe, operations director

Two new recruits

A Shropshire skin clinic has expanded its services after taking on two new members of staff as part of its expansion - one from the skies and an NHS hero.

Elite Skin Studio on Newport High Street has seen a welcome resurgence in demand for treatments from clients new and old wanting to restore the appearance of their skin.

Despite being forced to close in March last year, mother and daughter pairing Anne and Fliss Ashton, who operate the business, have been able to welcome two new members of staff to their team adding valuable additional skills and experience following a £70,000 expansion and renovation and expansion during lockdown.

The studio has been back up and running since April - joining the team are aesthetic practitioner Julie Newton who lives in Market Drayton and skin therapist Niki Gittins from Lilleshall.

Studio director Fliss said she was thrilled to welcome the new staff to the team.

"It's been a difficult time for everyone, but we are delighted to finally be back open and with our two new team members on board.

"These ladies bring a considerable range of complementary skills to the business, and we know our customers are already really pleased with the results they are delivering," she said.

Julie Newton also works as a nurse at the Princess Royal Hospital in Telford joined the business when it reopened on April 12.

Julie's background is in elective orthopaedics although she has been very much more hands on during lockdown working in intensive care by virtue of her



Julie Newton, Fliss Ashton, Anne Ashton and Niki Gittins at Elite Skin Studios

critical care experience. She said: "Over the past 15 months I have worked in a variety of roles, vaccinations, swabbing... everywhere really! My usual role will hopefully be restarting shortly."

Julie, who herself suffers with a skin condition, says there is a lot of help there for people but it's very often a question of finding the best solution.

"For me, it's about accessing help early. A lot of the time it's about treating from the inside out, so working out firstly if there's something going on within your body that is having an effect on your skin is vital.

"This is where professional advice is so important - the understanding and experience from the likes of Elite Skin Studio help you address your problems and help you treat your issues early on, which in turn will hopefully help prevent really damaging confidence issues."

For Niki, working at Elite Skin Studio

came as a complete career change. She was previously a flight service manager for one of the larger airlines but decided to re-train in advanced skin care treatments when faced with redundancy.

Niki explained: "I had been flying for 20 years which I loved but suddenly the future was not looking good.

"When I met up with Anne and Fliss it was a case of right place right time - for once! I have been made to feel so welcome as part of the "team" from day one she said.

"It's been so nice to mix with people again and it is a really lovely environment here. I've always worked with the public on the customer service side so for me I feel like a duck to water!"

Anyone who would like advice on their skin, email hello@eliteskinstudio.co.uk, call 01952 814200 or visit the website www.eliteskinstudio.co.uk for information on a full range of treatments and services.

Insurance specialist unveils operations manager

A Shropshire insurance broker has welcomed a new face to the team who has a wealth of industry experience.

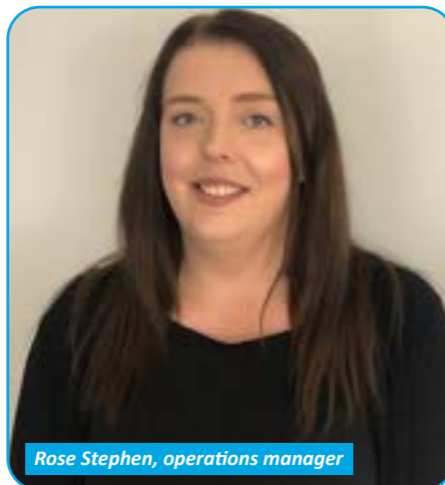
Rose Stephen is the new operations manager at Henshalls Insurance Brokers and she will be working across all three of the company's offices in Newport, Shrewsbury and Stafford.

Originally from Shrewsbury, Rose spent several years living in New Zealand before returning to the UK four years ago.

"I chose to join Henshalls as they have such an incredible reputation for outstanding customer service, and they have very little staff turnover which is always a good sign of a company that's great to work for," said Rose.

"My new role will involve dealing mainly with agricultural and commercial clients, and I'm looking forward to the challenge of growing the Henshalls client base even further.

"I'll also be responsible for the operation of the client management system on a daily basis to ensure our database and client information is regularly updated and stored correctly.



Rose Stephen, operations manager

"The new position gives me a great opportunity to continue to develop my professional skills, and I love the fact that no two days are ever the same. It allows me to build different relationships across the business and my favourite part of the job is

watching staff and the business grow and hit new development levels."

Rose has previously worked in personal lines claims, before specialising in commercial claims with losses over £1million, fraudulent claims, and VIP client claims.

After she returned to the UK, Rose also worked for a Shrewsbury-based commercial insurance broker which has given her vast experience of dealing with business clients and prepared her well for working with the Shropshire business community.

Dave Williams, for the Henshalls Group, said Rose's appointment was the latest in an ongoing programme of growth and development for the company.

"We're delighted to welcome Rose to the team, and we're looking forward to the contribution she will be making to the shaping of our future strategies and to her input in the continuing development of our online systems.

"At Henshalls, we're committed to giving all our employees opportunities to develop their skills and to build a strong and successful career in the insurance industry."

Violetta is welcomed

Business communications provider, Enreach, has further expanded its UK senior leadership team by welcoming Violetta Parylo as its new Chief Financial Officer.

Parylo joins the business from the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors after 11 years in senior roles. Violetta has worked in a variety of sectors, ranging from private equity to technology and telecoms. As Chief Financial Officer, Violetta takes responsibility for the UK billing and finance teams at Enreach and will steer the business through its next phase of growth.

Speaking of her new role, Parylo said: "I'm excited to be joining the team at Enreach. The company has ambitious plans for the rest of 2021 and beyond, which I can't wait to help shape. We are focused on delivering the best possible solutions to our customers and expanding our offering here in the UK."

Duncan Ward, Chief Executive Officer, said "We're thrilled to welcome Violetta to the team as Chief Financial Officer. With her background, Violetta is a great fit for Enreach and how we are planning to grow. Violetta is a very driven leader, with a relentless focus on doing things well, and is well suited to this role with a growth, acquisition, and transformational agenda."



Violetta Parylo

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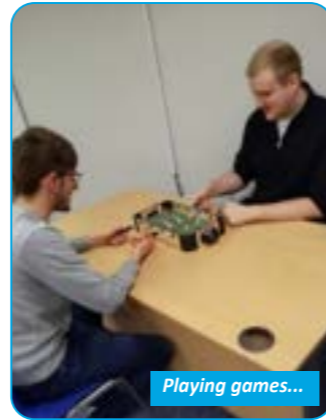
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Staff were encouraged to relax with a doughnut and coffee



Playing games...



...for improved mental health

Shropshire Chamber shows support for first Wellbeing Day

The Shropshire Chamber team took part in the county's first Wellbeing Day – highlighting the importance of the physical and mental wellbeing of staff.

Laura Butler, of Laura Butler Coaching, asked employers to bring focus back to welfare of their team members by taking an important step towards promoting wellbeing in the workplace.

Hollie Jones, Shropshire Chamber's membership advisor, said: "We organised various activities for all staff to take part in and enjoy throughout the day.

"For example, we ran a 'Take 5 with a Hot Drink and Sweet Treat' session, with doughnuts kindly donated to us by Planet Doughnut.

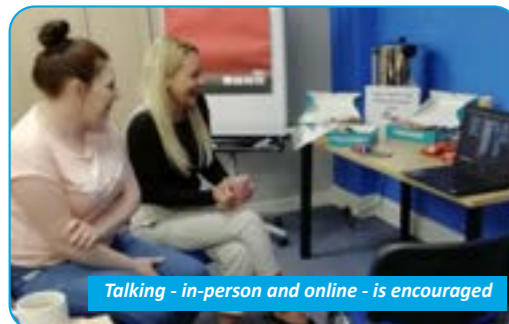
"We also set up Chamber Games where various board games were set up for staff to enjoy with colleagues."

Shropshire Wellbeing Day was launched to

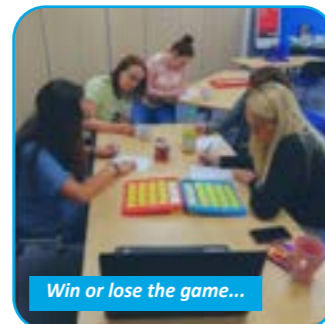
celebrate and coincide with World Wellbeing Week and the lifting of lockdown restrictions. It was sponsored by The Wellness Hub and Paycare.

The organisers said: "If the pandemic has taught us anything it's that our health is everything. Now more than ever we are encouraging businesses to support the physical and mental health of their employees.

"We know many businesses are passionate about doing what they can, but that starting is the always the hardest part."



Talking - in-person and online - is encouraged



Win or lose the game...



...all were winners on Wellbeing Day

Our People Your Team

Here to Help

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

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Green shoots of recovery – but still a need for caution

Shropshire's business community could return to its pre-pandemic levels as early as the first quarter of next year.

That's one of the headline conclusions in the latest economic forecast from the British Chambers of Commerce, which surveyed companies across the UK.

But Shropshire Chamber says there is still a mixed picture across the county, with some sectors in far better financial shape than others.

Richard Sheehan, chief executive of Shropshire Chamber, said: "This forecast predicts that UK GDP could grow as much as 6.8% this year, which would be the highest since records began."

"It means the Shropshire economy could return to its pre-pandemic level in the first quarter of next year, with a continued rate of sharp growth throughout 2022."

"But we must inject a degree of caution, because these findings are based on the assumption that lockdown restrictions will continue to be lifted as planned – which is far from certain right now."

He added: "Here in Shropshire, we are acutely aware that the true depth of the economic scarring will only be fully apparent once all Government support has been withdrawn."

"It is going to take hardest hit sectors such as catering and hospitality – which are such a vital part of our county's economy – much longer to return to pre-pandemic levels."

Mr Sheehan added: "Small businesses are the lifeblood of the Shropshire economy, and it is reassuring to hear that the majority are emerging from lockdown with either concrete plans or intentions to grow their business over the next 12 months."

"The manufacturing sector seems to be particularly optimistic, while nearly six-in-ten of the hardest hit business-to-consumer firms such as hospitality, catering and retail still anticipate growth."

The survey said consumer spending would be the main driver of this year's economic rebound, with a release of pent-up demand by consumers spending some of the 'unanticipated' savings accumulated during lockdowns.

Hannah Essex, co-executive director of the British Chambers of Commerce, said: "We must not believe that this represents job done."

"If there are bumps in the road, the Government must be prepared to extend existing support until all sectors are able to fully trade again."

"Young people now entering the workforce and those who lost jobs during the pandemic are at particular risk of longer-term unemployment."

As the economy emerges from the pandemic, we need to create a dynamic and flexible skills system that meets the needs of local employers and supports individuals looking to return to the jobs market."



Richard Sheehan, chief executive officer

Meeting in person – expo makes a return



Our Chamber Business Expo is back Thursday 14th October at Shrewsbury Town Football Club.

Open to members and non members of Shropshire Chamber this event is ideal for businesses looking to forge new contacts, raise their profile and extend their business knowledge.

Our event includes a networking breakfast with guest speaker, exhibitors looking to promote their businesses and to compliment the

Open to members and non members of Shropshire Chamber this event is ideal for businesses looking to forge new contacts, raise their profile and extend their business knowledge

exhibition we will be running 3 free seminar sessions.

There will also be the opportunity to end the day with lunch.

Book your stand now and be part of our Business Expo 21!

We look forward to seeing you there.

To find out more about the event, call 01952 208200, or contact the Shropshire Chamber of Commerce by email via events@shropshire-chamber.co.uk

Fantastic job – praise for customs support

Shropshire Chamber of Commerce has been praised for the 'fantastic job' it is doing to offer international trade advice to the county's importers and exporters.

ChamberCustoms Limited, part of the British Chambers of Commerce, has given the Shropshire team a completely clean bill of health in its latest audit.

The Shropshire team, based at the Chamber's offices in Telford, handled import and export queries worth nearly £2.4 million during the first four months of the year.

And the comment on the ChamberCustoms Limited audit report for both areas, which included import deals worth more than £1.4 million, was: "Congratulations – fantastic job!"

Ruth Ross, Shropshire Chamber's director of business, said: "Our brokerage services, helping companies to navigate the many changes to international trade rules, only launched at the start of the year."

"So much has been achieved in such a short space of time, and our international trade team continues to grow to meet demand."

"We are delighted to have come through this audit with flying colours, and want to say a big thanks to our team for the cracking job they have done – and continue to do – on behalf of Shropshire businesses."

ChamberCustoms is the customs advisory, training and brokerage service delivered through Chambers of Commerce across the UK.

It harnesses the reach, expertise and knowledge of the British Chamber network to offer a fast, reliable and compliant service.

Ruth said: "Our borders are changing, the rules of the game are



Members of the Chamber's international trade team, from left, Ingrid Griffiths, Will Higgins, Steven Rushton and Caroline Volles Loos

shifting and traders need to build or reset their customs processes.

"We're able to offer a 'one stop shop' with direct links to all sea, air, rail and road ports and terminals in the UK. We'll help you keep control while we do the hard stuff, acting in your best interests every time."

ChamberCustoms is ready to respond to increased demand for compliant-led services, and can make your customs declarations on behalf of businesses.

More details can be found on the Shropshire Chamber website, in the international trade section – see www.shropshire-chamber.co.uk

PRESTFELDE

Shrewsbury's co-educational prep school for 3-13 | admissions@prestfelde.co.uk | 01743 245400



K Kimber, Courtney Battams, Joe Osborne, Mary Tait and Meryl Green - Derwen Specialist Provider of the Year

College wins an education 'Oscar'

Shropshire's Derwen College has scooped a highly prestigious award in the further education equivalent of the Oscars.

Derwen College has been named as Specialist Provider of the Year in the TES FE Awards – one of the UK's top awards for recognising those that work in further education.

Staff and students at the college are over the moon to receive such fabulous news during what has been an incredibly challenging year.

Judges praised the college for 16-25 year olds with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), for doing everything in its power to continue its mission to create a world without barriers even during a pandemic.

When the pandemic hit, the college didn't just survive: it thrived. Staff across curriculum, care and support came together with parents, carers, supporters and industry partners to ensure work, independence skills, health, fitness, sports and the Duke of Edinburgh's Award all continued, despite the challenges.

Throughout online delivery, the college constantly sought feedback from students and learners, and adapted resources and delivery to ensure their needs were met.

The college also set up an on-site charity

shop, an online eBay shop and a new staff and student takeaway service to ensure that work placements for students continued. Staff also worked tirelessly to host annual events virtually, including open days, a prom and graduation ceremony.

As a result of staff commitment, the college even opened a new Telford campus as planned in September 2020. Today, it delivers much-needed provision to students with SEND in the area.

Derwen College Chair of Governors Kathleen Kimber said:

"We have long been proud of how Derwen works with its students and their achievements never fail to amaze us. Recently the staff have gone above and beyond what could have been expected of them. Their commitment and creativity during long periods when students were having to isolate in bubbles here or spend time at home have been outstanding.

"What has been striking is that student engagement and enjoyment have been very evident. There has been a sense of fun. New ventures have been successfully launched, either to offer an alternative to work experience off-site or to bring to fruition a planned development, such as the opening of the new satellite at Telford. And virtual events, such as the graduation ceremony, open days, fund-raising walks, and skills competitions have ensured our wide-ranging activities continue - and with an additional dimension. Thank you to all the staff; well done to all

students. We know we shall build further on this."

Derwen College Principal and CEO Meryl Green said:

"I would like to say a huge thank you to every single member of staff at Derwen College. This award recognises the commitment, imagination, passion and resilience of staff across College campuses. It has been a year of triumphs for the college during some challenging times. We are honoured to have been recognised by judges who are experts in the field of education. The Specialist Provider of the Year category has many contenders of an impressive calibre who have all worked tirelessly to support people with SEND in further education. We couldn't be happier to have received an award of such high esteem."

Tes FE Awards 2021 lead judge Lynette Barrett said: "During such adverse and difficult times, this college has shown how it has remained focused on student achievements and outcomes. The pandemic did not hold this college back; it initiated new projects, which meant student outcomes could be achieved, and learners remained safe and engaged in their education.

"The staff worked relentlessly to remain open and create new ways of working, which allowed some of the most vulnerable young people in society to achieve their outcomes without compromise."

To find out more about Derwen College go to www.derwen.ac.uk

Could you trim, clip, and shave the costs of business energy bills with use of a smart meter?

Hairdressers, beauty salons and other close contact services have made a welcome return in recent months, bringing much-needed services back to towns and cities across the UK.

While the impact of the pandemic is still being felt, business owners and managers have embraced the changes and adapted to new ways of working to protect their clients, their staff, their business and their bottom line.

Energy is a key expense for hairdressers, beauty salons and other close contact services which makes it a crucial area for these businesses to save money and take control of their finances.

Anyone who manages a business knows the importance of embracing changes, both big and small. A small change like switching to a smart meter could make a big difference to your business.

Now more than ever, it is important for business owners to know how much they



are spending to keep track of unnecessary energy waste or additional costs.

A smart meter could give businesses additional visibility over energy use and costs to make it easier to identify where changes and savings can be made.

Mind the planet and your pocket

Sustainability is a key focus for many businesses across Great Britain and a smart meter is a step in the right direction, to help business owners and staff cut down on energy waste and make their business more sustainable.

A smart meter could help your business save energy, time and money

Working around clients' schedules means that time is precious for business owners. Smart meters send your gas and electricity readings directly to your energy supplier saving you time too!

Firms with 10 employees or less could be eligible and installations can be arranged at a convenient time to ensure minimal interruption to your business and your clients.

To find out more, make an appointment with your energy supplier or broker today and see if you are eligible.

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The legacy of Covid lockdown

As lockdown restrictions are eased and we look forward to the post Covid landscape, what can we expect? Whilst the initial signs appear to be quite encouraging as trade returns, indeed some sectors are flourishing, it can be easy to ignore the CBIL loans now sitting on Companies balance sheets and have all business' understood the Covid cashflow legacy that they will inherit?

During the various lockdowns, the different forms of CJRS and CBILS/Bounce back loans provided vitally important financial aid from the Government, which eased cashflow for business' forced to close or those who may have ceased trading otherwise. In many respects these loans have been perceived as 'free' money and the CJRS has been a vital prop and certainly avoided a catastrophe in the employment market whilst the interest free periods and repayment holidays being offered on many of the CBIL loans means that business' have been looking at healthy bank balances and have spent or are making plans to spend the additional cash.

The potential problem in doing this

and the effect on cashflow is the ability to service the loan, with much of the normal lending criteria being overlooked due to the need for the cash to oil the working capital cycles of business under extreme stress, the ability of business' to do this from generating additional profits to cover loan repayments is an important question to be asked and answered if defaults and cashflow problems are to be avoided.

When the CRJS scheme finishes in September there is undoubtedly going to be a surge in redundancies and the cost of this needs to be considered if the cash from the CBILS loan has already been used. A further impact on cash in the business could also be felt if the CBIL loan has been used for capital investment then this will hopefully produce additional profits, but where the real problem sits is where business' have had to

use the CBIL loans to bridge losses incurred during Covid and when markets open up and full trade resumes and full or increased profitability is not realised, then the capital and interest repayments will start to be a problem.

In the weeks and months ahead, these problems will take time to develop and evolve and the risk of future variants and lockdowns may improve or exacerbate the situation, some firms will flourish and not look back whilst others will struggle to recover, especially if previously cashflow had been tight. However, all businesses with a CBILS Loan should quantify the impact of this risk when reviewing their business plans in the post Covid world and making contingencies as required.

Phil Matthews is part of the WR Partners advisory team offering advice and assistance on all areas of business life.

All businesses with a CBILS Loan should quantify the impact of this risk when reviewing their business plans in the post Covid world and making contingencies as required



Green Card news is welcomed by drivers travelling to Europe

Experts at a Shropshire insurance broker have welcomed the news that UK drivers will no longer need to show a Green Card when they travel to the European Union.

The move comes after a prolonged campaign by major insurance industry bodies and Dave Williams, from Henshalls Insurance Brokers in Newport and Shrewsbury, said it was long overdue.

"A Green Card is an international certificate of insurance and it confirms that motorists are insured to drive in the EU. They had to be issued and signed by the vehicle insurer, and needed to include vehicle and registration details.

"The cards were introduced at the start of January this year after Brexit – previously British drivers were not required to carry them as the UK was part of the card free circulation area.

"But now, after a focussed and concentrated campaign, the European Commission has over-turned the ruling which is great news for both private motorists and commercial vehicle users."

Dave warned though that the changes will not take effect immediately as the rule will need to be formally ratified by the Commission.

"The decision needs to be sent for publication in the Official Journal of the EU, and the law won't come into effect until 20 days after that.

"So, in the meantime, UK drivers must continue to request a Green Card from their insurer if they want to travel in Europe, but of course they can only travel if Covid 19 rules allow.

"This news is a great step towards reducing the complications of travelling abroad when things return to the new normal following the end of Coronavirus restrictions, and it will help to make it easier for families to get a chance to take that summer holiday we're all so desperate for."



Dave Williams

Free Covid-19 Cashflow Advice

For a limited time, you can get a FREE 15-minute consultation with one of our finance experts.



Scan the QR code or visit wrpartners.co.uk to find out more!

www.wrpartners.co.uk

08000 664 664

hello@wrpartners.co.uk



One life – make the best of it

Simon Wilson is senior business development manager at Axa, health and wellbeing specialists, helping people to be the best versions of themselves.

1. Who is someone you admire, and why?

I've always admired Richard Branson. To have achieved what he has from his boyhood dreams is truly remarkable. I am of course, asked this soon after he has returned from space, but the rest of it is pretty impressive too!

2. Tell me three pet hates?

1. The reserving of sunbeds on holiday at stupid o'clock, whilst not getting used until lunchtime. 2. Cars parked in Parent & Child spaces without children. 3. When people ask for my "PIN number" – i.e. My personal identification number number

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

I used to be a ski instructor in Austria and a Ski Guide for a Tour Operator for seven winter seasons, so can get down a hill fairly well, or used to at least!

4. Who would be your 3 dream dinner guests?

1. Richard Branson (if he pays) 2. Adam Richman (Man v Food) 3. Michael McIntyre

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

The most expensive, single malt whiskey on the list

6. What is your favourite holiday destination?

Without a doubt, Mexico – My wife and I got engaged there, and married there some 14 years later. My daughter has since been too as a baby, but we're taking her back next year to experience it properly

7. Name three words that best describe you?

Adventurous, ambitious and reliable

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

A fully charged i-pad, a bottle of factor 50 and a speedboat

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

I have set myself a personal goal of cycling the equivalent distance from home to Bodrum in Turkey, (where I met my wife) in the space of a year. It's some 2700km and works out to be just short of 8km per day. It doesn't sound a lot, but that's 8km EVERY day for a year, so I have to account for holidays, trips away with work and of course, days where I just don't fancy it. I started the day after my birthday some two weeks ago and have only missed one day. Early days but on track so far as I've been around the 15km mark per day – usually during a lunch hour.

10. What was the last book you read?

Looking Good Dead by Peter James

11. What is your favourite aspect about your career?

I love the nature of my work, which is client facing, building strong relationships and forming new ones too. It's a varied week from being in the office (outside of a pandemic), working from home and travelling around to meet people. A great combination and a great company to represent.

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

No. I wanted to be an airline pilot but got way-led somewhat by the skiing. By the time I returned to the UK, it was a little late for me to go down the route of flying for a living. Looking back though, seven great years in the Alps, still an achievement in my books so no regrets.

13. What are some causes you care about?

Climate change is the big one for me, now that I've brought my daughter into the world – it's hers and her kids futures that worry me. I'm also a huge animal lover and would like to see more done to protect animals and improve their wellbeing around the world.

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

With family, just being together is the most important thing, but we do enjoy woodland walks with our Cocker Spaniel and a picnic thrown in for good measure. Camping is also a favourite. With friends, I can't think of a better afternoon than the sun shining and a group of us setting off to discover new trails on mountain bikes, with a visit to a country pub or two along the way.

15. What would be your personal motto?

One life – live it.

Anna Turner, Lord-Lieutenant of Shropshire



Chamber backs the campaign for Covid-19 county sculpture

Shropshire Chamber of Commerce is backing a project to commission a new sculpture, recognising the sacrifices made by the county through the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Lord-Lieutenant of Shropshire, Anna Turner, is hoping to gain enough backing for a publicly-funded sculpture to be placed in The Abbey, Shrewsbury.

The full-size sculpture will cost around £16,000 – a one fifth sized replica is currently on display at Shrewsbury Museum, and the public are invited to enter a prize draw, for a chance to win it.

There will also be a chance for members of the public to put their fingerprints on the main sculpture at the Abbey during September.

Shropshire Chamber president Mandy Thorn, who is also one of the county's Deputy Lieutenants, said: "The Lord-Lieutenant's vision for this project is to make a fitting tribute which will last long into the future to mark the period in which many people have lost loved ones and everyone has had to make extraordinary sacrifices in their daily lives and in their businesses.

"Communities on all levels have pulled together to get us through. From the dedicated work of health and care staff, through frontline workers in a wide variety of roles, to many people helping their



The Lord-Lieutenant is campaigning for a permanent Covid-19 monument in Shropshire

The sculpture has been created by Paul Kennedy, who is based at Acton Round.

He says he has created a design 'to be reflective as well as projecting hope', with the main circle representing the divine life force or spirit that keeps our reality in motion.

The void between the two halves is filled with coloured glass to represent a rainbow and is the symbol of hope and promise for a better future.

The bronze sculpture will be raised and grounded on Shropshire stone with a pink hue and tool marks from the original stonework in the Abbey will be replicated onto three sides of the base.

Richard Sheehan, Shropshire Chamber's chief executive, said: "Shropshire has risen to the Covid challenge in extraordinary ways. Businesses responded to calls for support like never before, whilst the spirit of collaboration across society was and is amazing.

"It is fitting that we not only remember this but recognise the pain and suffering many have endured through the crisis through this wonderful sculpture.

"I am confident that business will once again come together to support this funding effort and help the Lord-Lieutenant to make this happen."

The Lieutenancy has teamed up with the Shropshire Rural Communities Charity to assist in fundraising, and any surplus funds will be put to Community projects across Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin.

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¹Lines are open 8:30am – 5:30pm Monday to Friday. We may record and/or monitor calls for quality assurance, training and as a record of our conversation. ²Direct new customers only. 50% off up to a value of £125 per employee covered, per year, for up to three years. See website for more: axahealth.co.uk/chambers-home. ³Available to members, dependents aged 16 on their membership, and employees of clients of AXA Health. Up to 50% discount off an annual membership is based on PureGym's non-promotional monthly price x 12. For terms, visit: axaactiveplus.co.uk/puregymterms

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Growing green together and saving energy costs

We can help you in your journey to net zero. We can help by providing a free energy efficiency assessment, during which our expert advisors will review your current energy usage and provide you with technical advice.

The report you'll receive will offer tailored recommendations to suit your organisation that will not only save operating costs, but also reduce your carbon footprint – whether it's switching to LED lights, upgrading machinery, or installing renewable measures like solar.

After your assessment, we will guide you through the process of applying for a grant that could represent up to 40% of the cost of your project.

Reducing energy usage

The Business Energy Efficiency Programme (BEEP) offers up to £20,000 to businesses in Worcestershire, Herefordshire, Telford & Wrekin and Shropshire for energy efficiency improvements including but not limited to:

- Lighting
- Compressors
- Insulation, Heating & Boilers
- Fast-shutting doors
- Refrigeration
- Energy storage
- Heat recovery
- Energy management
- Waste and water reduction and recycling

If you have a much larger or more ambitious energy efficiency project, funding up to £100,000 is available under the Low Carbon Opportunities Programme Large Scale Energy Efficiency fund.

Why consider energy efficiency measures?

- Lower energy consumption and costs
- Process improvements
- Improve profitability
- Reduce carbon emissions



Case Study

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Old Moulding Machine



New Moulding Machine

CV Rollers (TPP) Limited

Based in Shropshire, CV Rollers (TPP) Limited was operating with old inefficient Boy 90A and Boy 30D injection moulding machines.

The company requested BEEP funding for energy efficient Boy 35E Pro Procan Alpha, two injection moulding machines.

- Project Net Value was £68,380.
 - BEEP grant awarded £23,220.00 in January 2021.
 - Monetary savings of £17,294, from their previous all fuel usage of £33,077.
 - Carbon savings 38.7CO2e tonnes.
 - Payback of 2.8 years.
- Additional benefits would involve increased productivity. Company maintains sustainability and invested 164 solar panels previous to grant request.

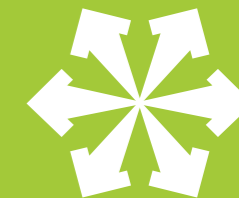


Helping your business to save energy, cut costs and reduce waste too!

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



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Part of the government-supported growth hub network

Business Energy Efficiency Programme

Grant activity examples:

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

Please discuss other technologies with us to see if they are eligible.

Eligibility/Criteria

To qualify, your business must:

- Be situated in and trading from Worcestershire, Herefordshire, Telford & Wrekin or Shropshire.
- Employ fewer than 250 employees.
- Have an annual turnover of less than 43 million Euros.
- Spend at least £2,000 on energy per year

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

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

The Business Energy Efficiency Programme is a partnership between:

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

Find out more at www.business-central.co.uk/BEEP

Email info@business-central.co.uk

or call 01905 677888

The project is receiving up to £2,161,050 of funding from the England European Regional Development Fund as part of the European Structural and Investment Funds Growth Programme 2014-2020. For more information visit gov.uk/european-growth-funding

Meet the team

Shropshire Chamber of Commerce is one of 53 Chambers in the UK, accredited by the British Chambers of Commerce.

Each accredited Chamber of Commerce is:

- an independent SME
- a non-profit organisation
- a private limited company
- owned by its members
- committed to supporting UK business

Every Chamber of Commerce is different. Each structured and resourced to best deliver business support to our region. Each has experts specific to the landscape and business support needs.

Here, we get to meet the team at Shropshire Chamber of Commerce. The faces behind the roles of your Chamber of Commerce.

At Shropshire Chamber, we have solutions to help your business to:

GROW – your market, your profile and your bottom line

PROTECT – essential services such as HR, H&S, legal and tax cover included in your membership fee

CONNECT – through events, introductions and wide reaching social networks, spanning the globe

SAVE – exclusive low cost benefits and access to funding

LOBBY – We feed YOUR views to government, hold them to account and push for change

MEET THE TEAM



Richard Sheehan
Chief Executive

Richard enjoys golf and walking the dog. His best skill is relationship management.

Don't forget, you can contact Richard for anything that his fantastic Chamber team can't help with.

Favourite quote: "Fail to prepare, prepare to fail"



Ruth Ross
Director of Business

Ruth's family is a really important part of her life and she is blessed with two wonderful granddaughters. Work wise she loves a challenge and delights in using her project management and HR specialisations to grow the Chamber and support the team.

Favourite quote: "Breathe in possibility, breathe out fear"



Mia Carter
Director of Membership

Mia always has her hands full with her four-year-old twins and pug! She is a creative, and great at building rapport.

Contact Mia for anything membership, sponsorship, or advertising related.

Favourite quote: "Whatever you are, be a good one"



Marie Raybould
Director of Finance

Marie enjoys walking, camping and reading.

She is great at all things finance, so contact her for any assistance.

Favourite quote: "Every accomplishment starts with the decision to TRY!"



Shernel Stevenson
Head of International Trade

Shernel spends her time cooking, gardening, and walking.

Her best skills are being a good team player, and an engaged listener. Contact Shernel for advice on exporting, and business growth.

Favourite quote: "A positive and pleasant attitude goes a long way"



Rachel Owen
Membership Manager

Rachel loves spending time with her family and enjoys watching the latest films especially Marvel – she's a huge fan! She considers herself to be well versed with all things Chamber. Speak to Rachel for any membership and patronage support.

Favourite quote: "When life gives you lemons, make lemonade"



Hollie Jones
Membership Advisor

Hollie spends her time going to the gym, walking the dogs and with family and friends.

She is a master at teamwork, and making the 10am cuppas! Contact Hollie for all things membership, and the Your Chamber, Your Voice magazine.

Favourite quote: "Everything happens for a reason"



Kelly Roberts
Events Manager

Kelly spends her time walking, and making family time as fun as possible. She is a great communicator and an even better listener. Speak with Kelly for all things events – what you love now and what you'd love to see. Get in contact if you'd like to speak at one of our events!

Favourite quote: "Life is for living"




Gwynneth Slavin
Membership Sales Executive

In her spare time, Gwynneth loves reading, travelling, and keeping up with current affairs.

Her best skill is organisation, so if you're interested in joining the Chamber, contact Gwynneth!

Favourite quote: "How can I help you pet?"




Adam Tyler
Membership Administrator

Adam joins the Chamber through the Kickstart scheme.

Outside of work, Adam loves playing instruments, listening to music, and spending time with his dog.

Contact Adam with any questions about membership.

Favourite quote: "The Beatles are bigger than Jesus"



Alison Gray
Marketing and Comms Manager

Away from the office, Alison enjoys a good walk, music and studying. She is a creative, a great team player and her greatest asset is her design skills, she is responsible for the marketing of every strand in the business.

Favourite quote: "You are the artist of your own life, don't hand the brush to anyone else"



Steve Rushton
Chamber Customs Manager

Steve loves music, fitness, and all things sci-fi. His best skills are multi-tasking and utilising the IT systems.

Speak to Steve for help with Customs declarations and enquiries.

Favourite quote: "It's still magic, even if you know how it's done"




Ingrid Griffiths
Export Documentation Manager

Ingrid enjoys reading, baking, and travelling (when she could).

Contact Ingrid with any export documentation needs, she is methodical and ultra-organised!

Favourite quote: "It is better to repent a sin than regret the loss of a pleasure"



Caroline Volles Loos
Customs Agent

Caroline loves gaming, and she is a keen amateur astronomer.

She is great at providing you with the best solution. Contact Caroline for all things Customs.

Favourite quote: "There is perhaps no better demonstration of the folly of human conceits than this distant image of our tiny world..." – Carl Sagan




Will Higgins
Export Documentation Assistant

Will enjoys watching sports, spending time with family and exploring. His best trait is his organisation, so contact Will for assistance with processing and certifying export documents.

Favourite quote: "Remember that today is the tomorrow you worried about yesterday"

MEET THE TEAM



Sue Hartland
Credit Controller

Sue is responsible for looking after the sales ledger, and outside of work, she loves going on holidays.


Favourite quote: "If you don't ask, you don't get"



Nicola Clinton
Training Manager

Nicola's favourite thing to do is go on long walks with her children. She is a great multi-tasker – contact Nicola for help with any training enquiries, bookings or the Kickstart scheme.


Favourite quote: "Don't regret the things you have done, only the things you didn't do"



Alex Brown
Kickstart Coordinator through the Kickstart scheme

Alex enjoys mountain biking, walking, and all things food and fitness. He has great attention to detail. Speak with Alex for anything regarding the Kickstart scheme.


Favourite quote: "You miss 100% of the shots you don't take"



Josh Carpenter
Policy Officer

Josh enjoys watching most sports, and playing a few (poorly). He maintains relationships with local policymakers. Contact him re research and policy (local and national), and Network Clubs!

Favourite quote: "Success is not final, failure is not fatal: it is the courage to continue that counts"



Norman Rikunenko
International Trade Advisor

Norman is a very keen reader, and a great communicator. Get in contact with Norman for support and advice on exporting.

Favourite quote: "Problems? No problems, only opportunities"




John Wigley
Strategic Partnership Manager

John enjoys bouldering, cycling, and all things outdoors.

His client relationship management is second to none, so contact John for info on any of the services our DIT team offer!

Favourite quote: "Be the best version of you"



David Caine
International Trade Advisor

In his free time, David enjoys snowboarding and hiking.

Speak to David for any support or advice on exporting, including International Action Plan questions.

Favourite quote: "I feel the need, the need for speed"



Gail Jennings
International Trade Advisor

Gail likes spending time with her children, walking her two Rhodesian Ridgebacks and looking after a menagerie of farm animals. Speak with Gail to sell goods and services overseas.

Favourite quote: "People will forget what you said, will forget what you did, but never forget how you made them feel"

Take note of new breathing space law

The Covid-19 crisis has led to a great level of financial distress for individuals across the Shropshire region and beyond, but to help relieve some of this pressure, the Government has introduced new regulation in the form of the Debt Respite Scheme - otherwise referred to as 'Breathing Space'.

The scheme came into force on 4 May 2021 and is designed to give legal protection to individuals who are in problem debt. It gives those facing financial difficulties 'Breathing Space' to receive debt advice, allowing them to get their finances back on track.

Businesses need to be aware of these new laws as it may impact customers that currently owe money to them, effectively granting each eligible individual a temporary protective shield that companies cannot then bypass.

The introduction of Breathing Space comes after the Money Advice Service estimated that 8.3 million people in the UK are in debt, with the impact of the pandemic meaning 4.6 million people had accumulated over £6 billion worth of debt and arrears by May 2020.

There are two types of Breathing Space available to individuals who owe money. The first is Standard Breathing Space, which provides a debtor legal protection for up to 60 days and includes freezing charges and certain interest on debts, along with pausing



Mark Davies

enforcement action and contact from creditors.

The second is mental health crisis Breathing Space. With this, debtors are provided with protection throughout the entirety of their mental health crisis treatment, plus a further 30 days. To be eligible for this protection, debtors will need to obtain evidence from an Approved Mental Health Professional (AMPH), certifying that they are receiving mental health crisis treatment.

Creditors must adhere to certain responsibilities if Breathing Space is invoked by an individual, and it's crucial that businesses understand what they can and cannot do. Once a debtor has successfully applied for Breathing Space, their details will be added to an electronic register by the Insolvency Service.

A notification will then be sent either by email or by post and creditors must follow the protection from the date they receive notification. This means that any enforcement

or recovery action being taken for any interest, fees, penalties, or charges must be stopped for the duration of the Breathing Space. Any enforcement or recovery action to recover the debt (including any appointed agent) must also be stopped and contacting the debtor to request payment for the debt is prohibited unless permission is granted by the court.

Creditors will be notified when a Breathing Space comes to an end and this could range from between 30 and 60 days. If the Breathing Space was revoked by a debt adviser or by the court, creditors will be notified of the reason why.

From the date the Breathing Space ends, creditors can re-start applying interest, fees, penalties, and charges to debts. Creditors can also continue with any formal enforcement action to collect debts. However, it is important to note that creditors cannot apply interest, fees, penalties, or charges which would have accrued during the Breathing Space period, unless the court allows.

As a relatively new form of protection, so far there is little evidence of creditors falling foul of Breathing Space, but any business should check whether it has been applied when chasing debt. Any attempts to collect payments during a period of Breathing Space could lead to penalties for the creditor, although the severity of any potential penalty is yet to be confirmed.

If you're an individual in need of advice on Breathing Space, or a business looking to understand more about how the new legislation works, please contact me directly and I'd be happy to help.

Mark Davies

Mark.Davies@aaronandpartners.com

Covid-19 puts digital transformation centre stage

The coronavirus pandemic has accelerated the rate of digital transformation across all sectors of business — and Shropshire-based website agency Clickingmad has been at the heart of the movement.

The company has been providing web development and design solutions to a range of UK-based businesses for more than 20 years, but managing director and Chamber Patron Shaun Carvill says challenges brought about by Covid-19 had triggered one of the fastest shifts in digital connectivity in over a decade.

He said: "The pandemic has sparked a ripple effect of technological advancement with businesses relying, more than ever, on new and existing digital technologies to ensure effective communication with employees, customers, partners and stakeholders.

"At the heart of this reliance are websites and over the last 12 months and more, people have changed their shopping habits, the way they consume information and the way they interact socially and professionally. The pandemic has resulted in exponential internet usage.

"With almost everything happening online, it has been essential for businesses to make sure their web platforms are accessible, efficient and informative.

"Making it easy for people to do business online, providing content that informs and advises customers on your latest news, operational

changes and Covid-19 procedures has never been more important and it's why our team has been working flat out, dedicating hundreds of hours in time and expertise to managing our clients' websites.

"There has been talk of digital transformation in business for many years but only now has the internet truly taken centre stage.

"Businesses that weren't prepared or had outdated web platforms have very quickly recognised the need to make sure their digital assets are up to speed, and we think this trend will continue throughout the second half of 2021."

During the last 12 months, the Clickingmad team has worked on several flagship projects including creating a new innovative web platform for Ascot Lloyd, one of the UK's fastest growing independent financial advice firms and building a localised web platform for Tension Control Bolts, a leading UK manufacturer of high strength bolting systems, to support its overseas growth.

In addition, it has supported several Shropshire businesses, including Bridgnorth-based Dangagri3 and Telford's Serchem, by providing creative and technical web development services to help them build their brand and grow their online presence.

For more information on the services offered by Clickingmad visit <https://www.clickingmad.com/> or email info@clickingmad.com

Connecting members

Shropshire Chamber is the ideal forum for networking and building up great working relationships - just ask members JR Slee and Chrisbeon!

JR Slee is a hugely successful Shrewsbury based family-run building contractor founded 32 years ago. In the last three years the company has continued to grow and has seen Helen Slee take over from her father as Managing Director.

The business is well-known in the commercial sector having carried out local authority projects such as schools, community and medical centres – and also works on residential jobs including new builds and extensions, as well as having expertise in the specialist area of refurbishing listed buildings.

Chamber patron Chrisbeon is a Telford-based leading office furniture and stationery supplier which has been serving the community, and employers across the country, for more than 45 years.

JR Slee recently refurbished their offices and needed a supplier to work with them on their fit-out.

A member of the chamber suggested the team at Chrisbeon as they had worked with them in the past.

Helen said: "We wanted to refurbish our offices as they were very tired and dated and did not reflect the Slee standard of workmanship. The business has been growing steadily over the last few years and I felt it was a good time to refurbish the offices not only to reflect our own company standards but also to create a much more enjoyable workspace.

"Our office furniture was old and did not fit the room sizes very well, so we decided it was a good time to review the office layout and furniture requirements, whilst also modernising our processes has led to less paperwork and so our storage requirements have changed too.

"We wanted office furniture which was modern and light, and also invested in new office chairs.

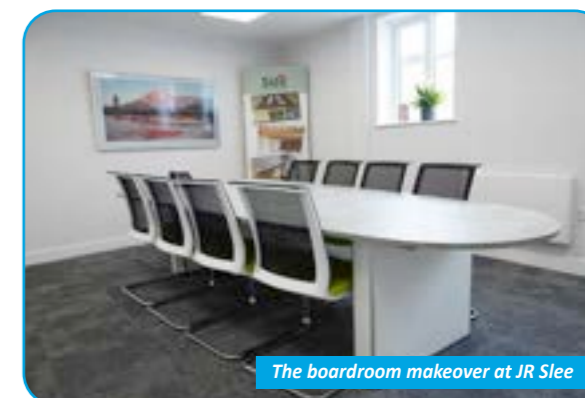
"We are absolutely thrilled with the overall look of the offices and the furniture. We went to Chrisbeon as I like to buy from local companies wherever possible, and Craig Hughes has been brilliant in guiding and helping us achieve our goal."

Chrisbeon Partner Craig Hughes said: "We were pleased to help JR Slee with their office requirements - a collaboration which came about through the Chamber and just goes to show how members can work together successfully for mutual benefit.

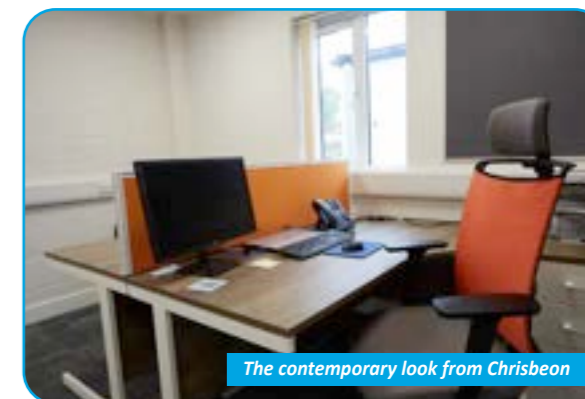
"They visited our Telford showroom on two occasions while choosing the furniture they wanted and we were also able to provide a number of colour 3D office plans - a great asset in showing how it would all look in the colours Helen liked.

"We were able to talk through what Helen was looking for, offer advice and then provide the solutions to meet the needs of the company. We were delighted with the end product and the positive feedback we have obtained from Helen."

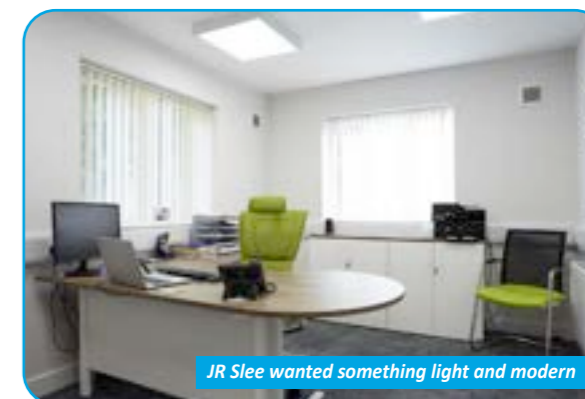
For more about JR Slee, visit <https://www.jrslee.co.uk/> and for more about Chrisbeon, visit <https://chrisbeon.co.uk/>



The boardroom makeover at JR Slee



The contemporary look from Chrisbeon



JR Slee wanted something light and modern

New trustee of charity announced

Neal Hooper has recently been appointed as a Trustee of The Midlands Air Ambulance Charity. The Managing Director of Aico, who are the European market leader in home life safety, joined the Board following an open selection process.

The Midlands Air Ambulance Charity (MAAC) operates and funds three air ambulances, covering six counties in the Midlands to deliver advanced care to 4,500 patients every year. The charity's mission is to provide patients with outstanding pre-hospital care and life-saving intervention through the operation of helicopter-led emergency medical services.

Neal pioneered Aico's Corporate Social Responsibility initiative with a core focus on supporting both local and national educational and charitable organisations. The importance of giving back to the local area was the driving force behind Neal's application for the position, as well as to provide senior support and participate in the charity's initiatives and activities.

Neal comments, "I am fortunate that Aico is in a very strong position, and we have a very proactive and passionate team, who, like me, want to give back to good causes in our area. As I work in the home safety industry, through fire and carbon monoxide products and testing, there is great synergy



between our two organisations; the protection of life."

As a Trustee, Neal's role will include offering strategic direction to the charity and contributing to its goals. He will also have an important role within the charity's fundraising committee.

Neal says of his recent appointment, "As a company director since the age of 27, I have learnt a great deal about business strategy, how to maximise opportunities and mitigate threats. While MAAC is a charity, I was pleased to see it is run like a business; adhering to good governance, being responsible with outgoing spend, while not compromising its core purpose of excellent patient care and building long-lasting relationships with its supporters, donors, volunteers and patients." He continues "While joining in the charity's 30th anniversary year, I am keen to build on these qualities, helping to ensure the charity remains in the hearts and minds of supporters for a further 30 years, and more!"

Along with most UK charities, MAAC has been affected by the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic in regard to volunteering and fundraising activities.

Neal comments, "With furlough coming to an end later this year, and the likely cuts to Government spending, now more than ever we must continue to raise our profile, highlighting the vital need for our service to remain operational.

"No one ever expects to need the support of our critical care paramedics and doctors, but sadly 4,500 of us do each year. For this to happen, we require continued support."

As one of the busiest Air Ambulance Services in the UK, MAAC relies on support and donations from across the six counties to continue their critical, life-saving work.

The charity's new airbase and headquarters, which will be completed in September 2022, will allow the teams to come together under one roof, and the new clinical training suite will provide the perfect platform for the team to further practice their skills in a highly pressurised environment.

To find out more about the Midlands Air Ambulance Charity and how you can show your support, please visit www.midlandsairambulance.com/

Import tax charges prove costly

Shropshire retailers who sell goods to customers in the EU can now take responsibility for import VAT charges thanks to a change in the law.

Matt Orange, from Dyke Yaxley Chartered Accountants in Shrewsbury and Telford, said since Brexit at the start of the year, the majority of goods sold by UK retailers to consumers in Europe have been subject to import VAT when they enter the EU.

"The rule meant that customers faced additional fees before they could take delivery of their goods.

"And for many consumers, the charges came as a shock as the first they knew about it was when they were asked to pay a hefty fee to release their goods from the shipping provider.

"Understandably, this led to a poor shopping experience for the customer who often wrongly blamed the retailer for the extra charge.

"But now, the Import One Stop Shop initiative has been introduced which gives UK businesses the ability to deal with the EU import VAT on behalf of their customers, as long as the shipment is worth less than 150 Euros.

"It's not mandatory, and some businesses may choose to continue to leave it for their customers to pay the import charges, but you may risk losing the goodwill of your customers when they realise you could have dealt with the extra costs instead."

Matt said businesses that sell using online services such as Amazon or Etsy would find that the marketplaces themselves had registered for IOSS and they would be responsible for paying the VAT to the EU member states.

"But if you sell through your own website, you will need to register for IOSS yourself and this registration will of course bring additional administration responsibilities."

Matt said UK businesses could register for the IOSS in an EU member state of their own choice, and when selling goods online, they would apply the VAT rate of the EU member states where the goods were being delivered.

IOSS VAT returns need to be submitted monthly as do payments of any associated VAT to the EU member state your business is registered in for IOSS purposes.

"Currently there are organisations emerging who offer to deal with the EU VAT on your company's behalf, but they charge for their services.

"If you think your business may be affected by the changes to the import VAT rules, it's vital to seek professional advice to ensure you're complying fully with the regulations."



Matt Orange from Dyke Yaxley

Two industry awards for communications specialist



Business communications provider, Enreach, has won two industry awards at the prestigious Channel Champions Awards.

The company was victorious in the Reseller Marketing Team category and the Reseller Sales Support Team category, taking home the trophies. The provider

was also highly commended in the Reseller Billing and Finance category and the Reseller People and Culture category.

Duncan Ward, Chief Executive Officer, said "We're absolutely thrilled to have won two awards at this year's Channel Champions Awards. This is a true testament to the hard work of our teams

over the past eighteen months. We were up against some fantastic competition and we'd like to say a huge well done to all other winners and finalists."

The Channel Champions was the first awards ceremony in the telecoms calendar since the pandemic began and celebrated the best of the best in the industry.

Is it the end of the traditional working week?

One Shropshire business that turned the traditional 9-5 on its head is calling for industry to wake up and scrap outdated working practises for the benefit of all.

Telford-based PR and Communications agency Zen Communications Ltd abolished the working week last June and instead gave every member of its team the autonomy to work when (and where) they wish, to plan their working week around other commitments, and to deliver their promises to clients in their own way.

And now, with the furlough scheme coming to an end and with the news that many non-full-time workers are to face job losses, the agency is urging other businesses to re-evaluate the ways in which they take on staff and take into real consideration those who can't – or who choose not to – align with an employment structure that is no longer fit for purpose.

Rhiannon Williams, Head of Agency, said: "This last year has been tough. On a human level the losses have been devastating and far-reaching. From a business perspective, the landscape as we knew it has changed beyond recognition. Almost overnight we had to adapt our attitudes to how, when, and where we worked. And that was if we were able to carry on at all.



Rhiannon Williams

"The furloughing of staff was a temporary fix to get us all through, but now, as the Government confirms the end of the payment contribution, it's reported that 7.8million part-time workers (mostly women) face losing their jobs completely. This is purely because in times of crisis 'business' reverts to the tried and tested, and that means full-time hours, burns on seats where staff can be seen, and flexi-time being seen as the ultimate perk.

"But that means we're losing access to some brilliant people. Brilliant people who have skills, knowledge and passion to share, but who have their own reasons for not working full-time hours. They may be working around childcare, looking after a poorly relative, or simply want more free time than a full-time role brings. Ultimately, it's their prerogative. What is more than evident though, is that no matter the reason, those who don't fit with our traditional perception of what being employed means are being penalised. And absolutely unfairly so.

"This last year and a half has been an horrendous time for all of us for many reasons, but one true positive we can take away from it is that it's changed how we as a business operate forever. And we believe that it's about time other businesses followed suit.

"Social Enterprise Timewise has recently shared recommendations with the UK Government to ask that businesses offer flexible working from day one, that they incentivise flexible working through job-creation, and that they provide better employment support for those seeking flexible opportunities. And we back these recommendations wholeheartedly."

For further information visit the site www.zen-communications.co.uk or email hello@zen-communications.co.uk

Plans illustrate Major boost for college's Maths and Digital Hub

Telford College's plans to open a new digital skills and enterprise hub in the town's 'station quarter' have received a major Government cash boost.

The town has been awarded £22.3 million to trigger a series of investment projects which will transform the town centre, create jobs, and boost economic growth.

They include Telford College's new digital skills and enterprise hub, to be delivered in partnership with the University of Wolverhampton, the local authority, and businesses.

It is described as 'a centre of excellence focused on meeting business need'.

The funding from the Government's Towns Fund follows a successful bid which was made by Telford's Town Deal Board.

It is expected to attract up to £30 million of further investment, creating the foundations for significant development.

Graham Guest, Telford College's principal and chief executive, said: "This is fantastic news – not just for the college's own expansion plans, but for the whole town.

"It will transform the town centre, opening up exciting opportunities to the local community, and making Telford a much more attractive opportunity for inward investors.

"There are some fantastic plans to grow Telford's station quarter, and we see it as a tremendous opportunity to create an ambitious and exciting innovation centre right at the heart of it.

"For us, it's an opportunity to expand Telford College's provision in a way which is



An artist's impression of the building

accessible to a greater proportion of people across the borough, and which would raise people's aspirations.

"It's also about supporting local employers to ensure they can develop the sort of workforce they require – and help to retain these important skills in the town."

It is hoped that the new Telford College hub will serve as an innovation centre and accelerator hub for employers, with close links to the borough's schools, business support organisations.

Mr Guest added: "Maths and digital qualifications are a vital pathway to higher quality and better paid career opportunities for the people of Telford.

"We are talking about equipping people for careers in sectors such as cybersecurity, AI and robotics, virtual and augmented reality, cloud computing, wireless technologies, 5G innovation, and a whole lot more. The

future of education needs to be built around imaginative and creative collaboration, and we are keen to work closely with partners across the business, school and local government sectors.

"Statistics show that young people in Telford & Wrekin have aspirations which are lower than the national average.

"This new project has the potential to open more people's eyes to what is possible, right on their doorstep – and with this funding commitment, it is a major step closer to reality."

Telford MP Lucy Allan said: "Telford's £22.3 million is a huge sum and will play a vital role in Telford's future and its ability to bounce back post-pandemic.

"Skills training and technology will be the engines of new growth and jobs and will confirm Telford's position as an economic hub fuelling growth across the West Midlands."

Unto thyself be true

Rosemary Phillips founded Euroconnection in 1990 after having had considerable experience as a translator and export sales manager. Euroconnection offers translation/interpreting services in almost any language, export consultancy and language training.

1. Who is someone you admire, and why?

Rick Stein not just as a chef but excellent guide to the places he visits abroad.

2. Tell me three pet hates?

Inefficiency, insincerity, bad manners.

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

I play the piano and write poetry.

4. Who would be your 3 dream dinner guests?

Joanna Lumley, Michael Portillo and Judi Dench

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

Prosecco with a "twist!"

6. What is your favourite holiday destination?

South of France

7. Name three words that best describe you?

Sensitive, enthusiastic, funny!

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

A case (cases!) of wine, CD player and Paris Match magazine.

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

Encourage people more to realise that "languages translate into opportunities".

10. What was the last book you read?

"A la gloire des chats".

11. What is your favourite aspect about your career?

Being able to travel/connect on an international scale.

Rosemary Phillips



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

No - I hoped to be a professional pianist.

13. What are some causes you care about?

Cancer and heart research.

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

Go swimming, listen to French chansons, go to concerts, wine and dine.

15. What would be your personal motto?

"Unto thyself be true".

Launch for first-of-a-kind mortgage system in plans for national growth

Chamber member My Simple Mortgage has partnered with finance giants Legal and General (L&G) to help home buyers and home owners get the best real-time answer to the big question – How much can I borrow?

The system – which was launched on their website in June – integrates L&G's digital mortgage sourcing technology tool into the My Simple Mortgage website. The tool uses customer's financial information, such as their earnings and expenditure, to give them an accurate indication from real lenders of how much they could potentially borrow, whilst also eliminating results from providers that would not consider the individual based on their specific lending criteria.

"My Simple Mortgage Director and founder James Adams said: "This system is completely unique. We have been working with L&G to build a replica of a system which they were already using, and we've adapted it and made it even better. It has taken us about 12 months to get to this point and we are delighted to have now launched it."

James added: "For the first time ever, customers can just punch their details in and

they will get exact information on how much they can borrow, from actual lenders.

"They don't even have to speak to one of our brokers, unless they decide to take the process further.

"This level of information has only previously been available to professionals within the industry, so it's really exciting. "The system has access to 120 lenders – from the big boys to smaller brands which you may never have heard of – and 90,000 mortgage products.

"The best part is, it doesn't do any credit checks, and you don't need to enter your name or email address to get the answer. It's truly a free gift to the public from us."

Fellow director Mark Savill, who joined the business in 2016, said: "The prime focus for us is to make the customer journey better, so we are really proud of being the first company to develop this system in partnership with L&G. It's great for our customers, and it's helping

us to get the My Simple Mortgage brand noticed across the UK. We are the first mortgage broker to offer this tool directly to customers, and we are delighted that we are flying the flag for Staffordshire & Shropshire in providing this fantastic free service to improve the information that is available to people all across the UK.

"We have grown organically over the past five years through recommendation and referrals and have built our reputation and brand by providing great customer service, helping people find a mortgage even though their circumstances can sometimes be complicated, and by regularly networking in Staffordshire, Shropshire and South Cheshire.

"We've now got to the point where we can really push on with our growth plans. We are expanding our team locally, and also recruiting advisers around the UK to work under the My Simple Mortgage brand. Our plan is to have 75 advisers across the UK in the next six years."

For the first time ever, customers can just punch their details in and they will get exact information on how much they can borrow, from actual lenders

The Passivhaus homes that Pave Aways built at Sarn is one of two schemes that has earned the firm two nominations in the Wales Property Awards



Building contractor makes the shortlist for sustainability awards

Two Passivhaus schemes in Mid Wales have earned the building contractor behind the project two top award nominations.

Pave Aways has been shortlisted in the sustainability category in the Wales Property Awards for Passivhaus homes it built in Sarn and the new Welshpool Church in Wales Primary School, which was completed last December. Both projects were delivered for Powys County Council.

The £1.3m development in Sarn, near Newtown, was the first Passivhaus development that had been built for the local authority. The seven energy efficient homes – four two-bedroom bungalows, two two-bedroom and one three-bedroom houses – were built using low energy construction methods and include sustainability features such as solar panels and mechanical heat ventilation recovery systems.

Pave Aways took over the building of the partially completed Welshpool Church in Wales School in January 2020, following the collapse of the original contractor. The 360-pupil school was built around a sustainably sourced timber frame and features a superior level of insulation and was built to be airtight. It also has a heat recovery and ventilation system and solar panels on the roof to minimise running costs.

Managing Director Steven Owen said both projects were equally deserving winners.

"Both schemes were delivered during a testing time for construction following Brexit and during the covid pandemic, so it is testament to the hard work of our team, our partners, our sub-contractors and suppliers, that they have been recognised in these awards," he said.

"There's some tough competition from other big industry names, so to be shortlisted is an achievement in itself," he added.

The winners will be revealed in a ceremony at Cardiff City Hall on September 15.

New construction training centre is helping to meet skills shortfall

With the construction sector predicting an annual shortfall of 5000¹ skilled people per year across the West Midlands the SBC Training Construction Centre in Harlescott, Shrewsbury is a very welcome additional local facility.

The Centre has received grant support from the Shropshire Council Economic Recovery Programme and aims to support some of the many people whose career paths have been impacted by the pandemic and help local businesses to fill their vacancies as the economy begins to build back. In addition to apprenticeships in carpentry, bricklaying and electrical installation, the centre will also offer foundation courses which will prepare young people to progress on to apprenticeships and short return to work courses to help those currently unemployed to gain basic site skills and achieve a CSCS Card.

Young people who may be unsure of the next steps towards joining the workforce are encouraged to come forward to join foundation courses with the aim of progressing on to apprenticeships as soon as they are ready.

Colin Thaw SBC Training Managing Director said "It is great to see and hear the enthusiasm of the people who have come along to visit the centre; both individuals wishing to enrol and employers seeking to offer an



Teaching bricklaying

apprenticeship opportunity. They have all been impressed by our approach to training which is in small groups with high levels of support from highly skilled craftsmen. Initially the training is available in Bricklaying, Carpentry and Joinery and Electrical trades which are reporting some of the highest skills shortages. Drawing on vast experience in the training sector and good knowledge of the local economy SBC Training is excited about being able to help fill this gap in training provision."

For further information about the SBC Training Construction Centre contact Clair Schafer 01743 454810 or clair.schafer@sbc-training.co.uk

¹ CITB Construction Skills Labour Market Intelligence Report 2021-25

Energizing ways to support your employee's wellbeing

It is amazing how much better we feel being around water. Likewise getting out in the fresh air, moving our bodies and being in nature – it really is the epitome of self-care and science is backing this up more and more.

We'd like to introduce ourselves. We are Shrewsbury Canoe & eBike Hire, and are brand new to the Shropshire Chamber. Shrewsbury Canoe Hire has been operating on the river from The Quarry Park in Shrewsbury since 2016, and have expanded now to offer electric bike hire too from our new office base in Shrewsbury. We are very excited about meeting you all & coming up with ways we can help you take care of your staff's health and wellbeing, strengthening teams, through our canoe and electric bike hire services.

You'll no doubt agree we need a bit of a refresh after the year we have been through with Covid. We invite you to let our blue canoes take you out of town and become completely immersed in the natural beauty of the River Severn and its wildlife. Groups can explore the river at a leisurely pace, stop at one of the many river beaches for a bite to eat even and take time to really enjoy the peace upstream.

Electric bikes also make discovering Shrewsbury and the surrounding area literally a breeze. Imagine getting out and about, seeing the sights without hardly breaking a sweat, well that's what eBiking is all about. Recapture the freedom and excitement of cycling - without all the hard work. They are loads of fun, and especially accessible for many people who may think cycling is now beyond them. EBiking is a really flexible, very green, clean way of getting around and doing a really exhilarating activity together, whether it is getting out of the office or bringing teams together who have been home-based for the past year.

We would love to chat with you to explore the possibilities of a staff day out on the water or land, either through your business or as a special rate for staff teams organising their own events.

You can contact us, Nigel Conway or Rebecca Dove-Thomas on 01743 244800 or email@shrewsburycanoehire.co.uk We'll happily meet for coffee or pop down to our office at 6 Claremont Hill, Shrewsbury, SY1 1RD. www.shrewsburycanoehire.co.uk www.shrewsburybikehire.co.uk



Making Christmas memories at the Severn Valley Railway

Although there are still more than 160 sleeps before Christmas, the Severn Valley Railway is already feeling festive, as tickets went on sale on Monday 19th July for its 2021 Santa trains

With up to seven departures a day from Kidderminster, the ever-popular Santa services will run on selected dates from 27th November through till Christmas Eve.

The journey starts at a spectacularly-lit Kidderminster Town station, with a complimentary hot or cold drink and a bespoke SVR souvenir travel cup for each adult. On board the train, delicious mince pies and gingerbread will be waiting, and family groups will be allocated their own

private compartment or table, with plenty of photo opportunities to take advantage of.

The excitement builds, as passengers are transported on a steam-hauled trip along the Severn Valley, passing through a magically-decorated Bewdley station to arrive at Arley. Here, they disembark for the thrills, spills and laughs of an all-new Christmas show, Jingle, Jangle and the North Pole Lake.

"Our professionally-produced shows last year proved to be a smash hit, so we're doing it all over again!" said Michael Dunn, the SVR's head of visitor experience. "This hilarious, brand-new show will appeal to all

ages and if everyone laughs loudly enough, there might even be a visit from Father Christmas himself! Performances take place inside a marquee and each family group will be seated on a socially-distanced bench."

When they re-board the train, children will discover that the elves have left them each a high-quality special gift, then it's full steam ahead for a journey back to Kidderminster in reserved seats. The festive excursion lasts around two-and-a-half hours.

Prices start at £135 for a table of four and are available from svr.co.uk or by phoning 01562 757900.



Hoping to save lives with new defibrillator

A Telford manufacturing company has invested in a new outdoor defibrillator which it hopes will make a life-saving difference to the local community.

Seymour Manufacturing International Limited (SMI) says it was motivated by distressing scenes at the Euro 2020 football tournament, when Denmark star Christian Eriksen collapsed in front of live TV cameras.

A defibrillator, which delivers a high-energy electric shock to the heart, was used as part of the emergency treatment on the pitch that is credited with saving the footballer's life.

SMI director Jill Seymour said: "Those powerful scenes brought into graphic focus just how important it is to be able to act swiftly in instances like this.

"Fast use of a defibrillator can increase a patient's survival rates by up to 70% - yet there are relatively few public defibrillators in Telford, in comparison with the town's growing population. I would like encourage others to consider having one installed.

"We are right in the heart of the Stafford Park Industrial estate, where thousands of people are employed, and felt that this small gesture on our part was the least we could do.

"After all, what's the cost of a defibrillator if one day it is able to save somebody's life?"

Lloyds Electrical Design Limited, from Old Park in Telford, also stepped forward to install the defibrillator at SMI's premises, free of charge.

The SMI defibrillator is now registered with the local ambulance service and the National Defibrillator Database so it can be easily found in an emergency.

SMI is a specialist in thermal protection and insulation products, and works with blue-chip brands, including retailers Waitrose, Morrisons, ASDA, Sainsbury's, Marks & Spencer, The Co-operative, and Lidl.

It also supplies the NHS, the Ministry of Defence, logistics industry and pharmaceuticals companies.





Beth Heath receiving her National Business Women's Award



Husband and wife team, Sid and Beth Heath

Events company owner scoops a national award

Beth Heath, owner of the award-winning events company, Shropshire Festivals, has scooped the award for Business Chameleon at the National Business Women's Awards 2020/21 at an awards ceremony in Wembley.

The award recognises the work of professionals who have adapted, diversified or changed careers amid the challenges over the last 18 months. During the pandemic, unable to hold their usual festivals, the business held a drive-in series of events, launched a new hamper business, built up the online directory - Shropshire Food and Drink, united the nation with Carols on the Doorstep and grew their

sister business – marketing agency Shropshire ThinkTank. But, this isn't the only award news from the events company this year.

Shropshire Festivals has been crowned the regional winner in the rural enterprise category of the Countryside Alliance Awards, and they have been shortlisted as a finalist for The Sustainability and Environmental Impact Award in the Midlands region of the 2021/22 Rural Business Awards.

As well as launching new ventures in the last 18 months, Mrs Heath has also stepped up to Chair the Shropshire Business Board and Chair Visit Shropshire, the region's destination management organisation, as well as continuing to lecture at University Centre Shrewsbury on Events Management.

Commenting on the awards news, Mrs Heath said, "I was not expecting to win the award and was happy to just be at an in

person event – but I am absolutely over the moon to win this award! I'm so proud of my team for adapting to the pandemic, helping the business to pivot and rolling with my new business ideas. There's no way I could do any of it without them, my supportive family, our loyal sponsors and our fantastic volunteers.

"It means so much to be recognised for our hard work – the recent award news celebrates our creativity in adapting to challenges and our commitment to providing a service to the community.

"We are going to celebrate by doing what we love best – hosting fun festivals!

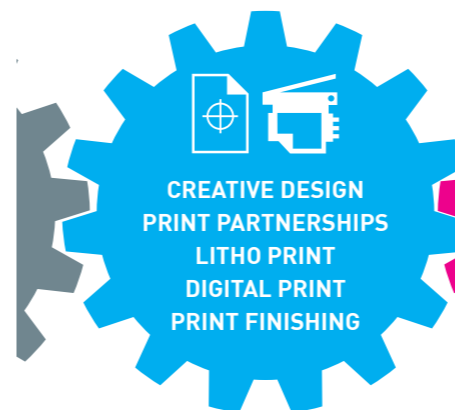
"We have lots lined up for the rest of the year, including Festival on the Field, Shrewsbury Food Festival, Shropshire Oktoberfest and Carols on the Doorstep.

For more information on Shropshire Festivals visit www.shropshirefestivals.co.uk

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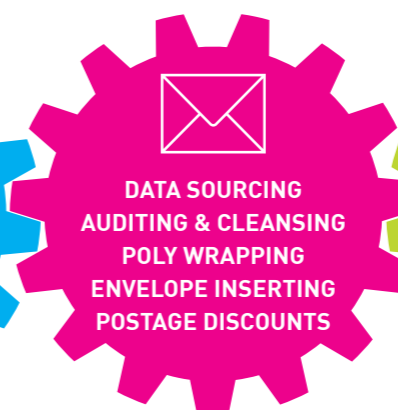
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Taking off

Shropshire Chamber of Commerce has passed a major milestone in its delivery of the Government's Kickstart campaign, by completing its 100th placement. And to prove just how well the initiative is now 'taking off' across the county, the latest recruit was treated to a ride in a hot air balloon over Shrewsbury.

Virgin Balloon Flights, based at Stafford Court in Telford, is the company which has taken on the 100th Kickstart recruit through Shropshire Chamber.

Bookings and admin assistant Charlie Collins is the second team member welcomed to the Virgin team through the Kickstart programme this month.

He was treated to a balloon flight over Shrewsbury, along with Alex Brown, a member of the Chamber's own team who was also recruited through Kickstart.

Shropshire Chamber was the first 'gateway' provider in the county to post live vacancies as part of the £2 billion scheme to help young people aged 16-24 at risk of long-term unemployment.

Hundreds of companies across Shropshire have since come forward to offer vacancies in a wide range of sectors from manufacturing to professional services, hospitality, social care, marketing, animal welfare, and more.

"It was both a lovely surprise and really quite an honour to hear Virgin Balloon Flights took on the 100th Kickstart placement facilitated by Shropshire Chamber," said the company's head of



Alex Brown, Maria Wilkinson, and Charlie Collins

marketing, Maria Wilkinson. And what a way to celebrate, with a balloon ride over the gorgeous Shropshire countryside.

"Charlie is absolutely fantastic and a real asset to our company. He is the latest of a number of brand new roles we introduced as part of our flying recovery from Covid-19 restrictions, which has seen us back in the air for the first time in over 18 months.

"It seems everyone is heading into summer with a real enthusiasm for 'living life to the max' and after a tough year for the leisure and experience industries, we're as busy as we have ever been in almost 27 years of taking you up, up and away.

"Shropshire Chamber has co-ordinated new Kickstart roles across our customer service and even marketing departments and everyone we have employed under the scheme has brought great skills and inspiration. Mentoring and encouraging young people and giving them a chance to really shine has always been something we have strived towards here at Virgin

Balloon Flights. It's a brilliant scheme with an equally brilliant gateway team in Alex and Nicola, who made the whole process from our very first application to the last of our Kickstart employees to start work completely seamless.

"To any company who is either just hearing about the scheme or might be in two minds about whether to sign up, we'd absolutely encourage them to 'go for it!'"

Under the Kickstart scheme, the Government funds 100% of relevant National Minimum Wage for 25 hours a week, plus associated employer National Insurance contributions and employer minimum automatic enrolment contributions.

Shropshire businesses taking on a Kickstart candidate receive £1,500 per job placement available to cover their setup costs, support and training.

All the placements generated from the Chamber gateway are being advertised on the dedicated Shropshire Chamber web page – see www.shropshire-chamber.co.uk/policy-representation/kickstart-scheme/.

Shropshire Chamber chief executive Richard Sheehan said: "We are proud to have now placed 100 people into companies across the county – that's 100 lives which have been potentially changed by the programme. On top of this, we have around 450 further placements approved, and are working hard to keep the flow of opportunities running smoothly.

To find out more, register at the website www.shropshire-chamber.co.uk/kickstart-scheme/. More information is available by emailing kickstarter@shropshire-chamber.co.uk.

Welcomed to the board

A family-owned Shropshire business has reshuffled its senior management team as part of its ambitious growth plans.

Tudor Griffiths Group, which has its head office in Ellesmere, specialises in the supply of construction materials and building supplies, ready-mixed concrete, waste management and recycling.

And now four senior employees who have given decades of service to the company have been rewarded with seats on the company's divisional boards, and a new group finance manager and company secretary has been appointed.

The board appointments are:

- TG Builders' Merchants general manager Mark Evans has joined the TG Builders' Merchants Board
- TG Group transport manager Jamie Jones and TG Concrete general manager Dave Morris have been appointed to the Board of Tudor Griffiths Limited
- TG Group estates manager Stuart Lawrence joins the Board of Ellesmere Sand and Gravel Limited

The company has also welcomed Carla Jackson as the new TG Group finance manager and company secretary.

She has previously worked in the audit department at Whittingham Riddell – now WR Partners – and was also employed by



Jamie Jones, Stuart Lawrence, Carla Jackson, Tudor Griffiths, Dave Morris and Mark Evans

a national domiciliary care provider and a Shropshire-based not-for-profit care home provider.

Managing director Tudor Griffiths said: "We are always looking for ways to expand and grow the services that we deliver, and these appointments are key developments in our planning strategy as we move forwards following the Coronavirus pandemic.

"We're very pleased to welcome these already familiar faces to the Boards of the relative divisions of our company, and we'd

like to thank all four of our newest directors for their commitment and dedication to TG Group over the years. We're particularly delighted to welcome Carla to the senior management team too, as her experience will be invaluable as we plan for the future.

"As a company, we are always keen to encourage our colleagues to continue their development throughout their career, and we are sure the new directors and Carla will play key roles in helping us to take the divisions to the next level."

Two companies brought together into partnership

Zoom 1hr Delivery have announced their partnership with worldwide delivery and fulfilment cloud platform, Bringg.

This new partnership connects Zoom with Bringg's expansive retail customer base, enabling their retailers to quickly increase delivery capacity and last mile execution for a greater customer experience. Bringg's customers will be able to easily select and utilise Zoom as a last mile delivery partner throughout their delivery network.

"This partnership is the start of an exciting chapter for Zoom," said CEO and Founder, Kev Williams. "Our recent investment fundraising has enabled us to supercharge the growth of our delivery network throughout the UK. With this extra capacity, we can now develop our national partnerships to fulfil even more deliveries. We look forward to connecting with Bringg's retail and hospitality customers over the coming weeks."

Michal Gindi, Alliances and Ecosystems at Bringg, said, "Bringg's delivery hub aims to increase delivery volumes and improve retailers' service offering without delay or compromise. The hub enables retailers to scale up delivery services quickly with pre-integrated last mile fleets like Zoom's, so that retailers leverage delivery for differentiation and greater customer experiences."

Zoom 1hr Delivery is a hyper local, last mile delivery service supporting local and national grocery, retail and hospitality businesses with online ordering and last mile delivery fulfilment.



Highest ratings from housing regulator

The Wrekin Housing Group has achieved the highest regulatory governance ratings, following an in-depth assessment (IDA) carried out by the Regulator of Social Housing.

The assessment, which takes place every four years, was conducted during the current pandemic and sees the Group maintain its G1 status for Governance and V1 status for Financial Viability – meaning Wrekin meets the highest regulatory standards in both areas.

Group Chief Executive, Wayne Gethings, added: "I am delighted the regulator has awarded us the highest

possible rating for governance and viability.

"These ratings reflect the both our current level of performance, as well as our constant drive to improve

"The fact that we have maintained these high standards, despite the challenges brought by the pandemic, is a fantastic result.

"It underlines our strength as an organisation and is a recognition of the hard work, professionalism and achievements of all our staff.

"Wrekin is in a strong position to continue to make a difference to people's

lives as we invest in our communities, build new homes, and deliver outstanding levels of care."

Desmond Hudson, Chair of The Wrekin Housing Group said: "This positive IDA outcome is confirmation of the regulator's confidence in our financial plans, our strategy and the way we manage our business.

"To achieve and then retain the highest possible rating from the regulator is certainly no mean feat; the assessment process is rigorous and exhaustive, so to come out with this result is testament to the hard work of our entire workforce."

Generating community investment when you're a not-for-profit business

When Paycare was first founded in 1874, under the name the Patient's Aid Association, the primary focus was the people of Wolverhampton, workers who were struggling to afford everyday healthcare.

And it's a source of great pride to the team that people have remained the focus in the intervening 15 decades, during which we have remained as a not-for-profit organisation and donated more than £2.2 million to charitable and community causes.

But while we don't have shareholders, we do have stakeholders – (our customers, our people, and our community) and their shared belief in our ethos is essential for us to remain successful.

Engaging our customers

Our purpose is all about making people happier and healthier – so when a new customer (whether it's the entire staff of a large corporation or one individual) comes on board, we want to show them that we're genuinely invested in their wellbeing.

We've evolved our product to ensure that as well as offering cashback on a range of healthcare costs, we're also looking after their physical, mental and financial wellbeing with counselling support, GP access and discounts on mental health courses. And we also go above and beyond what's offered as part of our products – with newsletters, exclusive content within their log-in area on the website, posters and other materials which can be used in and around a workplace, and much more.

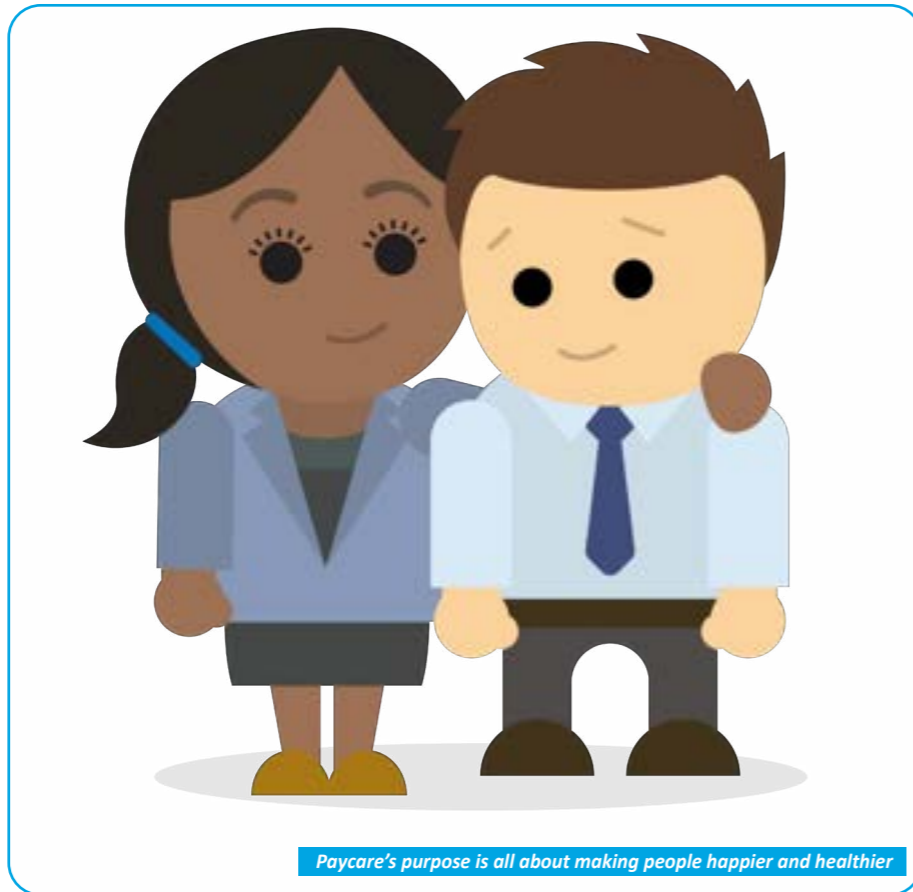
We also call on them to get involved in our community giving – after all, many of them cite being a not-for-profit is one of the reasons they chose to become a Policyholder with us. Last year, our team nominated a variety of charities and then our customers were asked to vote to determine how the money was shared out between the chosen causes.

Engaging our people

Especially as new generations join the workforce, increasing amounts of research is showing us that people are motivated to work for organisations which have a strong moral code, support good causes, or give back to the community.

And it's not just about recruitment, a wealth of policies and practices which encourage staff to become actively involved in the good works undertaken by a not-for-profit has a positive impact on retention, productivity, and loyalty.

Whether it's giving our team £250 each annually to kickstart a fundraiser for a charity



Paycare's purpose is all about making people happier and healthier

of their choice, offering two paid days which they can use for volunteering each year and an addition two wellbeing days to be used for whatever they choose, or asking them to submit ideas for charity votes, our aim is to encourage everyone to be involved in the community spirit rather than dictating who Paycare supports and how.

Engaging our community

While we naturally ensure our customers get added value from signing up to be part of the Paycare family, we also want to give back to the entire community. Partnering with charities and organisations to give away not only millions of pounds, but also countless hours of our time and expertise, certainly goes a long way to cementing us as part of the Black Country (and the wider UK) community.

But we don't just want to engage with you if you're a customer or part of one of the countless charities we support, we regularly share our expertise when it comes to health and wellbeing with absolutely anybody through our blog where we highlight tips, awareness days, particular health concerns, and share input from partners who are experts in their own fields.

And there's also our monthly e-clinics, which are free and open to everyone – whether they're a Policyholder or not.

In summary...

At Paycare, we want to give back because it's the right thing to do, because we genuinely want people to be happier and healthier, and because we are committed to distributing as much money (and support) as we can to good causes.

It's not a tick box exercise, it's not something we do because we want to make more money or impress people. It's something we do because every single one of our team members believes it's the right thing to do.

And that's why it engages people – because they can see it's authentic.

When we say community is at the heart of all we do, that's not a phrase we've come up with to impress people, it's what we truly feel – and people respect that and want to be a part of it.

So even if you're not in the market for a Paycare product today, you're always welcome to share our stories, tell your friends about us, and do your bit to help us make everyone healthier and happier!

Demand for land and property soaring

Demand for new homes in Shropshire is soaring, with developers keen to snap up suitable land for new projects.

That's according to legal experts at a Shropshire law firm who are assisting a growing number of developers with projects "of all shapes and sizes" across the county and beyond.

Charlotte Nutting, a commercial property lawyer with Lanyon Bowdler Solicitors, said the booming housing market was creating a variety of opportunities for developers.

She said: "I was very pleased to assist local developers, KCS Design and Build Limited, with the creation of a gated development of three stunning contemporary homes in Llys Hill Gardens, Oswestry.

"The design and construction of the houses are of an extremely high standard and I know there has been a great deal of interest since they went on the market.

"It's a good example of a developer spotting a relatively small parcel of

land to create a really impressive set of residential properties.

"Despite the challenges of the pandemic, or perhaps because of people's changing behaviours as a result of the pandemic, we have seen a sharp rise in demand for land across Shropshire and into Wales.

"It's been well-documented that people are seeking a move away from busy city centres, and rural areas like ours are now even more attractive than they were before.

"From my point of view as a commercial property solicitor, I am speaking to an increasing number of existing developers, as well as people looking to start their first project, about land transactions.

"With demand for houses so high, particularly in this area, it's understandable that people are seizing the opportunity to build new homes - of various shapes and sizes - to meet that growing demand."

Head of commercial property at Lanyon Bowdler, Praveen Chaudhari, said Charlotte's experience was being replicated across the firm's regional offices.



Charlotte Nutting

"Our teams in Shrewsbury, Telford, Oswestry, Ludlow, Hereford, Bromyard and Conwy in North Wales have all been extremely busy in recent months," he

said. "There is undoubtedly more interest in rural areas from people who previously lived in cities due to the changing work patterns we have seen over the past year or so.

"Whilst that provides some challenges for the local housing supply, it also presents a fantastic opportunity for landowners and developers."

For any legal advice, call the Lanyon Bowdler team on 0800 652 3371 or visit www.lblaw.co.uk

Adding a new benefit to Chamber membership

Shropshire's leading accident repair centre, Autocraft Telford have teamed up with the Shropshire Chamber of Commerce by joining as a member and providing additional support for their local community.

All employees of the businesses that are members of the Shropshire Chamber of Commerce, which total around 44,000, will qualify for support from Autocraft Telford when they contact the business direct and become a customer.

This support is for employees who have unfortunately been involved in a car accident, and they can receive a contribution from Autocraft Telford towards their insurance excess of up to £300.

Autocraft Telford is approved by manufacturers with the capability of repairing both major and minor damage for a wide range of vehicles

including BMW, Citroen, Peugeot, DS, Nissan, Honda, Volvo, MINI, Hyundai, Mitsubishi, Vauxhall and Kia.

With over 40 years of experience they can guarantee vehicles will be treated as if it was their own, and their state of the art bodyshop in Telford is a shining example of a modern day repair facility.

The Shropshire Chamber of Commerce provides business and industry support in Shropshire. A true champion of Shropshire businesses at a local, regional and national level, the Chamber sits at the heart of the community, working with companies of all shapes and sizes, and representing all sectors.

Their membership Director Mia Carter is pleased to welcome Autocraft Telford. "The facilities and services at Autocraft Telford are very impressive," said Mia. "Their level of support for any of our members that



Mia Carter (Membership Director at The Shropshire Chamber of Commerce) Jan Gidney (Marketing Consultant at Autocraft Telford) Darren and Matt Fielding (Directors at Autocraft Telford)

have unfortunately damaged their vehicle in an accident is fantastic and we look forward to seeing their team at our chamber events".

Matt and Darren Fielding, Directors at Autocraft Telford, are looking forward to the partnership.

"One of our aims is to increase our support within the local community, and we're delighted to start our association with the Shropshire Chamber of Commerce and to offer this level of support for their members," said Matt.

Autocraft is based in Hortonwood in Telford, Shropshire. Further information about the business can be viewed via their website Autocraft-Telford.co.uk and enquiries can be made by email to office@autocraft-telford.co.uk or by phoning their reception on 01952 617468.

Fast valve response thanked

The South West Water sewer upgrade project at Fowey needed a supplier of specific and unique recoil non-slam check valves. T-T Pumps was the only supplier who could meet their requirements.

Fowey is a picture-postcard harbour town in South Cornwall. Over the past few years, the residents had been experiencing several internal and external sewer flooding events centred around the Whitford Yard and Lostwithiel Street areas.

To protect residents from future flooding and enhance public health, South West Water designed a new sewer installation project that would transform the 70 metre-long existing sewer between Whitford Yard and the Town Quay pumping station into a modern service residents could rely upon not to flood.

Completed in February and March of 2021, the project South West Water undertook was not without its challenges: The narrow streets of Fowey and the need to close main thoroughfares had to be managed to minimise disruption, which included when components would be delivered to site.

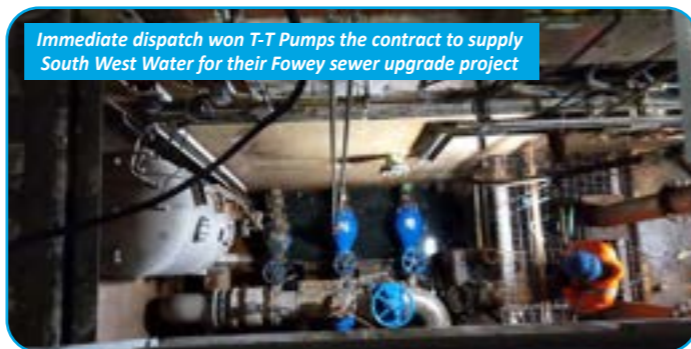
South West Water's planning for the Fowey sewer upgrade was detailed and included state-of-the-art valves that would be integral to deliver a reliable defence against any future flooding. Once the project's specifications were complete, it was apparent which company had the valve technology needed and could supply this time-sensitive project with ease.

Gareth Reece, Internal Sales Engineer, T-T Flow, explained how being able to supply the required valves from stock was critical for the Fowey sewer project:

"T-T Pumps were clearly the ideal supplier as these valves are ready to go from stock," Gareth explained. "The time constraints and circumstances involved in this project due to low tide, access to the public areas, harbour master accommodating the installation and a trailer full of safety equipment already set up, meant that we had to react quickly and efficiently to hit these tight deadlines. Due to our flexible approach and constant customer communication, we were able to arrange dedicated transport to ensure they arrived on-time."

Efficient valve supply

The DN150 recoil non-slam check valve is unique to T-T Pumps. In addition, the T-T Flow recoil check valve features weld deposit bronze seats, unlike competitor valves that tend to offer push-fit seats, which risk detachment under higher velocities.



In addition, the T-T Flow recoil check valves unique design ensures rapid closure where extreme flow exists. Its robust design incorporates an angled seat, and its high eccentricity design reduces the risk of water hammer and valve slam.

Also, mechanical assistance is gained by reducing inertia coupled with the optimal suspension of the moving components. Ideal check valve for reducing water hammer in supply systems, often caused by sudden changes in pump state, benefitting from reduced door travel to minimise the potentially damaging effects of water hammer.

As a result, the DN150 was a perfect choice for the demanding environment of the new Fowey sewer.

Managing Director Bob Nash commented on how T-T Pumps have continued to innovate with unique value technology: "T-T Flow have invested heavily in our UK in-house research and development team. Utilising the latest design software, we are constantly able to re-evaluate our products which gives us the flexibility to meet our customer's ever-changing needs."

South West Water knew they had to partner with multiple contractors to deliver the Fowey sewer upgrade on time and with the minimum level of disruption to residents, and ensure all works were completed before Fowey welcomed its annual visitors.

T-T Pumps' long-term development of recoil valve technology and its position as a direct supplier meant South West Water had to look no further for the essential valve supplier they needed.

Ultimately, the Fowey project was successful via detailed advanced planning, which included using a supplier that consistently meets the high demands of companies across the water industry.

If your business is struggling to find the right supplier, call our experts today: +44 (0) 1630 647200. Visit www.ttpumps.com

You get what you pay for

It is not so long ago that Research and Development Tax Credits were almost un-heard of. When we first established The Refund Agency to help business tap into what must be one of the most generous gifts ever provided by the British Government, a member of the HMRC team which dealt with R & D Tax Credits told "We are sitting on a whole pile of money that we are supposed to give away, but much of it is going unclaimed because businesses either don't know it's here, or if they do, they don't know how to claim it properly."

But now things have changed. HMRC is inundated with claims, and distributes them all over the country for processing, some more expertly than others. Businesses are inundated with cold calls from the world and his mother offering to secure R & D funding. Some are excellent at what they do, but some are not, and its those we need to be wary of.

They will offer their "Do it Yourself" packages at a price that's hard to resist. A spreadsheet will arrive on your desk with instructions as to how to complete it...bingo your claim is complete! The danger is they have now stepped back from taking any liability if you fill the form in wrongly and claim money that you shouldn't have. You are on your own. If the claim is overstated, then huge problems can follow. If a report justifying the expense wasn't filed at the time, then you could be asked for information to back up your claim.

If you can't provide it, then the money will have to be repaid, possibly with penalties. A fraud case being brought against you is another possibility.

It has become a lottery as to which tax officer assesses your claim, you may have one that simply approves the application without fully checking it because they are so busy. It may fall to someone who

is an expert in the field and comes back with very valid questions. You need to be prepared to make the time to answer those questions. Perhaps worst of all it may land on the desk of a tax inspector who is not an expert in the field but decides to ask a multitude of questions which seem to be relevant. This time, you need to be prepared to spend a great deal of time defending your position, citing the correct legislation upon which each particular part of your claim is based.

If you have the time on your hands to do that, then I would suggest that you don't need to engage the cheap "do it yourself" providers. Go the whole hog and do it yourself anyway.

Those in the industry that properly offer their services which take their clients right through the process cannot hope to compete with the cut-throat prices of the do it yourself market. They earn their fees when the going gets tough.



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