

YOUR CHAMBER YOUR VOICE



Shropshire
Chamber of
Commerce



Autumn 2023

Educating and training the next generation



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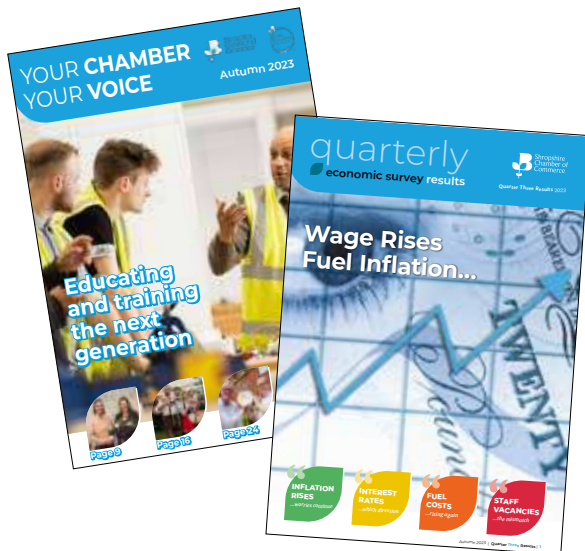
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Cover photography courtesy of Telford College

The deadline for receiving editorial content for the Winter edition of Your Chamber, Your Voice magazine is Thursday, 9th November, with a publishing date of Friday, 15th December.



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Resourcefulness and resilience impresses



Ruth Ross, Chief Executive Officer of Shropshire Chamber of Commerce, says: "Your support, feedback, and consistent willingness to share your needs are the driving forces behind our ability to deliver services that enhance the wellbeing and prosperity of the Shropshire business community."

Welcome to the autumn edition of Your Chamber Your Voice magazine, my second issue at the helm of the Shropshire Chamber of Commerce.

The past few months have been a whirlwind. Working alongside our exceptional team, I've dedicated a significant amount of time to connecting with as many of our valued members as possible.

If I haven't managed to catch up with you yet, and you'd like to schedule in a cuppa and a chat, please do let me know. Listening to your views and ideas is absolutely crucial.

From the conversations I've had so far, my admiration for the unwavering resilience and resourcefulness of our members during these trying times has only been reinforced.

Shropshire businesses continue to grapple with soaring energy costs and a nationwide skills deficit spanning multiple sectors and industries.

It's one of the reasons why retraining, upskilling and motivating our teams remains at the forefront of our priorities.

The perpetual quest for the right talent - particularly individuals in the early stages of their careers or those with specific technical expertise - is one of the toughest challenges for businesses right now.

We recognise this, and as the region's most enduring business support organisation, I can promise you that we remain steadfast in our commitment to providing you with support, and lobbying on your behalf at the highest level.

It's a challenging business world out there, but adversity also presents opportunity, and we must ensure we are perfectly placed to seize it.

So to all our members, I'll end by simply saying 'thank you'.

Your support, feedback, and consistent willingness to share your needs are the driving forces behind our ability to deliver services that enhance the wellbeing and prosperity of the Shropshire business community.

The past few years have been filled with uncharted upheaval and change, yet your unwavering spirit is nothing short of inspirational, whatever hurdles you have to confront.

We all share a common aim: to create a business community that is happier, healthier, wealthier, and wiser. Working together will always give us the best chance of success.

**Ruth Ross, Chief Executive Officer,
Shropshire Chamber of Commerce**



New members to engage with



Air System Controls
Unit 10
Stafford Park 12
TELFORD
TF3 3BJ
01952 290959

Amery IT Support
2 West View
Bratton Road
Admaston
TELFORD
TF5 0BU
01952 263651

Arrow County Supplies
Ltd
Arrow House
Longden Road
SHREWSBURY
SY3 9AE
01743 283624

Balufab Ltd
Unit 21
Ollerton Business Park
Near Childs Ercall
TF9 2EJ
01952 840613

Barker Healey Property
Limited
10 High Street
Newport
TF10 7AN
01952 813625

Brockton Care Ltd
40 High Street
NEWPORT
TF10 7AQ
01952 222555

Bruce's Executive Travel
Suit 1
Condover Mews
Condover
SHREWSBURY
SY5 7BG
01743 545464

Castro Catering
Equipment Ltd
58 Lyth Hill Road
Bayston Hill
SHREWSBURY
SY3 0EX
07496 394052

Certax Accounting
Telford
25 Church Street
Wellington
TELFORD
TF1 1DG
01952 769466

Eliminox Ltd
11 Melbourne Rise
Bicton Heath
SHREWSBURY
SY3 5DA
07968 451854

Evolve My Media
19 Eardly Close
Cophorne
SHREWSBURY
SY3 8FB
07539 359607

Filkin & Co EHS
Limited
163 Holland Street
Denton
MANCHESTER
M34 3GE
01939 769073

Granville Credit Control
Services
112 Teagues Crescent
Trench
TELFORD
TF2 6RF
07814 690878

J W Marketing
The Fort Business
Centre
Artillery Business
Park
OSWESTRY
SY11 4AD
07772 835188

Jonathan Lee
Recruitment
Midlands Agri-Tech
Innovation Hub
Poultry Drive
Edmond
NEWPORT
TF10 8JZ
01952 987032

Kagyu Dechen
Buddhism
45 Manor Drive
MANCHESTER
M21 7QG
07985 144609

KPI Recruiting Ltd
5 Old Bakery Row
Wellington
TELFORD
TF1 1PS
01952 797577

Life Shed
Unit 5-6 The Stables
Sansaw Business
Park
Hadnall
SHREWSBURY
SY4 4AS
07792 825639

Liquid Fleet Ltd
Unit 4B, Maple House
Queensway Business
Park
TELFORD
TF1 7UL
01952 691025

Meeting Point House
Southwater Square
Telford Town Centre
TELFORD
TF3 4HS
01952 292268

Mercure Albrighton
Hall Hotel & Spa
Albrighton
SHREWSBURY
SY4 3AG
01939 291000

NBC Group Ltd
Unit D,
Stafford Park 18
TELFORD
TF3 3BN
01952 222400

Pro2Pro Limited
Units A, B and C
Hortonwood Enterprise
Park
Hortonwood 50
TELFORD
TF1 7GZ
01952 608939

R 1 Construction
Unit 7 The Courtyard
Yeomanry Road
Battlefield Enterprise
Park
SHREWSBURY
SY1 3EH
01939 252700

SB4 Group Ltd
Cae Idris
Cwm Nant Y Meichiaed
LLANFYLLIN
SY22 5NE
07957 982376

Shoothill Ltd
2 Canon Court East
Abbey Lawn
SHREWSBURY
SY2 5DE
01743 636300

Sight Loss Shropshire
The Lantern
Meadow Farm Drive
SHREWSBURY
SY1 4NG
07778 956096

Telford Compressed Air
Services Ltd
Sunningdale House
Stafford Park
TELFORD TF3 3BD
01952 292121

TP Manufacturing Ltd
Unit C1, Halesfield 19
TELFORD
TF7 4QT
01952 685707

UK Auto Pro Limited
2 Pavillion Grove
St. Georges
TELFORD TF2 9PN
07903 470364

Westbury
Environmental Ltd
Agriculture House
Southwater Way
TELFORD
TF3 4NR
01952 879705

Y-our Network
Group Ltd
13a Church Street
Wellington
TELFORD
TF1 1DD
07572 033215

A taste of life behind bars for our patrons

Shropshire Chamber of Commerce welcomed businesses from across the West Midlands to the county – by sending them to prison!

The Chamber hosted a networking event for around 30 regional patrons at Shrewsbury Prison which included a guided tour, networking lunch, and a taste of life behind bars.

Rachel Owen, Shropshire Chamber's director of membership, said: "The West Midlands group of chambers each host their own patron event where patrons from across the region come together to share ideas and networking opportunities.

"We have been to Coventry, Hereford and Worcester, and the Black Country events so far, and we thought Shrewsbury Prison would be an interesting and innovative venue when it was our turn to host.

"Everyone enjoyed the experience and we were very pleased with the response we received – it was certainly something a little different to our usual networking venues."

The patron event was just the latest in Shropshire Chamber's busy calendar of business meetings, workshops and networking dates.

They have also revealed the date for their next Connectin Business Expo which will take place on Wednesday, October 11, at Shrewsbury Town Football Club, from 7.45am to 2pm.

It is open to members and non-members of Shropshire Chamber, and is ideal for businesses looking to forge new contacts, raise their profile, and extend their business knowledge.

Guests will have the opportunity to enjoy a breakfast meeting followed by an informal networking session, and then the business expo will open including a networking buffet lunch.

To find out more or to book a stand at the expo, visit <https://www.shropshire-chamber.co.uk/events/events-calendar/connectin-business-expo-book-a-stand-2>



The Chamber hosted a networking event for around 30 regional patrons at Shrewsbury Prison

New experiences in store at the next Chamber expo

Businesses will get the chance to meet new contacts and suppliers at Shropshire Chamber of Commerce's upcoming expo event – and take part in a speed networking event with a difference.

The autumn 'Connectin Business' expo – always one of the most popular events in the Chamber's calendar – will take place at Shrewsbury Town Football Club on Wednesday October 11, from 7.45am to 2pm.

It's the latest in a series of events organised by the Chamber to give local business people chance to forge new contacts, raise their profile and extend their knowledge.

Events and training manager Kelly Riedel said there had already been a positive response from both Chamber members and non-members.

"Our latest expo will be a fantastic opportunity for businesses to meet the Chamber team as there have been several new appointments and we'll also be running a speed networking workshop too," she said.

"The day will start with a breakfast meeting followed by networking opportunities and the expo will open at 10am followed by a networking buffet lunch."

The day will also include a speed networking event with a difference – bringing fun and colour to proceedings with a special 'safari' theme.

Kelly said: "I promise you will never have



Kelly Riedel, events and training manager

been to a speed networking event quite like this! We're not giving too much away at this stage though, other than to say it's going to be a really memorable occasion."

She added: "We are always looking for interesting and different ways to connect with our members and with non-members.

"Our calendar of business meetings, workshops and networking dates is packed with diary dates that could lead to that next business opportunity that you're looking for."

To register for a place or to book a stand at the expo, visit <https://www.shropshire-chamber.co.uk/events/events-calendar/connectin-business-expo-book-a-stand-2>





Prime Minister, Rishi Sunak, unveiled plans to substantially water down the UK's commitment to net zero, including pushing back the ban on new petrol and diesel car sales from 2030 to 2035, altering plans to phase out gas boilers from 2035 and delaying the ban on oil fired boilers from 2026 to 2035

Race to Net Zero

The latest Climate Change Committee report suggests that Britain has lost its leadership in climate action and that progress towards net zero has stalled. That verdict makes it all the more imperative that the UK hits the accelerator on net zero, not only to reach our long-term targets, but also to capture a share of fast-growing green markets.

The UK has a legally binding target to reach net zero by 2050 and business action will be crucial to delivery. However, in his keynote speech (September 20) the Prime Minister, Rishi Sunak, unveiled plans to substantially water down the UK's commitment to net zero, including pushing back the ban on new petrol and diesel car sales from 2030 to 2035, altering plans to phase out gas boilers from 2035, delaying the ban on oil fired boilers from 2026 to 2035 and the scrapping of energy efficiency upgrades to homes.

We know that businesses across Shropshire want to address the changing climate, providing sustainability for their business and creating opportunities for the next generation.

We also know that they cannot plan for future investment if the sands keep shifting in Whitehall. If we are to meet the challenge of making the UK Net Zero by 2050 then we must have pragmatic goals, that business can be confident they will be supported to reach. We need to move from just target setting to actually implementing change. But this action requires stability and investment from the government.

Driving this fundamental change across all sectors of the economy requires immediate action from business and government. Business must commit to decarbonisation and government must support the transition by delivering strategies and providing detailed policy frameworks to get the UK on track to reach the target.

Achieving net zero will require businesses across sectors to make real changes. While we have demonstrated bold ambition and outlined much needed high-level commitments, we also need to deliver, at pace, to capitalise on our early leadership position. And that's on everything from rolling out clean heating systems to enabling access to the electricity grid.

The Chamber, as an accredited Chamber of British Chambers of Commerce, stands ready to support businesses across Shropshire to understand the race to net zero.

**Matt Lowe, Director of Business
Shropshire Chamber of Commerce**



If we are to meet the challenge of making the UK Net Zero by 2050 then we must have pragmatic goals – Matt Lowe



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to create a better borough



Continue learning and improving via training sessions

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

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

For full details of all upcoming courses please do take a look at our website <https://www.shropshire-chamber.co.uk/business-training>

Our upcoming courses over the next quarter are highlighted below:

October:

- Structured Sales Training for More Profitable Results - 10 October
- Managing Safety in the Workplace – 11 October
- Manual Handling – 17 October
- Google Ads Advanced – 18 October
- Marketing to Attract Local Clients (Virtual) – 19 October
- How to Get results at Networking – 19 October
- LinkedIn For Business – 24 October
- Key Factors to Running a Successful Recruitment Campaign – 25 October
- Customs Procedures and Documentation – 31 October

November:

- Fire Marshall & Fire Awareness – 1 November
- COSHH Training – 7 November
- Import Procedures – 8 November
- WordPress in a Day – 8 November
- Basic Understanding of Health & Safety Duties – 9 November
- Digital PR and Social Media – 14 November
- Customer Service Excellence – 14 November
- Trust Based sales – 15 November
- First Aid for Mental Health Level 2 Award – 16 November
- Digital Marketing, SEO and Website Fundamentals – 16 November
- Insta for Business – 23 November
- Search Engine Optimisation – 28 November

December:

- Do you Know How or Why You Should Be Blogging for Business? – 5 December
- Incoterms Training – 6 December
- Easy and Effective Sales Techniques – 7 December
- Presentation Skills and Confident Communication – 7 December

For further information please call the team on 01952 208200.

Chamber 'tool-kit' to help firms tackle recruitment troubles

Shropshire Chamber of Commerce is producing a new recruitment 'tool-kit' to help employers re-engage with people who have stepped away from the workplace.

It comes as companies across the county continue to report problems finding people with appropriate skills to fill job vacancies.

Ruth Ross, Shropshire Chamber's chief executive, said: "When we speak to local businesses about their most pressing concerns at the moment, two words get repeatedly mentioned – skills, and recruitment.

"We have been aware for many months now that some companies are being held back from taking advantage of growth opportunities by an inability to find the right staff.

"We are currently carrying out important pieces of work designed to tackle the issue from two perspectives - rapidly upskilling the existing workforce, and encouraging experienced people back into employment."

One of the initiatives involves producing a new Shropshire Chamber recruitment guide for employers, described as a 'tool-kit' with helpful ideas for re-connecting with people who have stepped away from the workplace.

Ruth said: "We need to address the fact that – particularly since Covid – there is a latent pool of talent in Shropshire which, for whatever reason, has turned its back on the workforce.

"They may have stepped away completely from a skilled profession, or decided to find other ways of earning a living which allows them to change their work-life balance.

"We know through our recent research that a significant proportion of these are in a position, and are indeed eager, to return to the workplace. The question is, how do we help them to do it?"

She added: "Educating employers about how to engage and interact with these people is key.

"They are looking for a greater degree of flexibility, a different kind of working relationship, and a recognition that some of them - while extremely talented - lack the confidence and belief that their skills are still right for today's working world.

"Our new guide for employers, available very soon, will offer a tool-kit to help companies re-engage with these people who have stepped away from the workplace.

"We're not just talking here about those in a more senior age bracket; it applies equally to parents who are seeking a return to work after starting a family.

"With childcare and nursery places





Ruth Ross, chief executive

at a premium, and certainly not cheap, businesses might need to consider offering more flexible part-time roles.”

It comes as the British Chambers of Commerce’s latest Quarterly Recruitment Outlook, published today, reveals there is still no easing in the record high difficulties in finding staff across the whole of the UK.

The second quarter results for 2023 show that the percentage of firms facing recruitment difficulties has fallen just three percentage points from the historical high of 82% at the end of last year.

While recruitment difficulties are being experienced across the economy, the construction and engineering, and hospitality sectors were the most likely to report problems, the survey found.

Jane Gratton, head of people policy at the BCC, said: “The tight labour market continues to ramp up wage costs, fuelling inflation, and creating huge difficulties for businesses.

“Firms are being squeezed on all sides. There are more employment opportunities than ever before, but we also have low unemployment, and over a million jobs are currently left unfilled.

“Firms cannot fulfil order books and are turning down new work. They are caught in a vicious circle where the lack of people holds back growth and reduces opportunities for investment, including in training - part of the long-term solution.

Ann's decade of service

Shropshire Chamber of Commerce has said a big thank-you to its long-serving company secretary who has stepped down from the role after nearly a decade of service.

Ann Fisher, from Hatchers in Shrewsbury, specialises in corporate and commercial law, and took up the Chamber position in December 2013.

Ruth Ross, Shropshire Chamber’s chief executive, said: “We are hugely grateful for everything Ann has done for the Chamber over the past 10 years – and to Hatchers for allowing her the time to work with us.

“She has been invaluable in covering our Companies House duties, and in carrying out other crucial duties on our behalf such as reviewing our articles of association and code of conduct.”

Ruth visited Ann at the Hatchers offices in Shrewsbury to present her with a departing gift on behalf of the Chamber team. Going forward, her duties will be covered in-house by the Chamber team, as part of an internal restructure.

Ann studied law at Staffordshire University and the College of Law in Chester, and has specialised in corporate and commercial law since qualifying as a solicitor in 2000.

She has a particular interest in advising owner managed businesses on matters including business sales and acquisitions,



Ruth Ross presents Ann Fisher with a parting gift, on behalf of the Chamber team

start-ups, shareholder agreements, articles of association, share options, joint ventures, intellectual property, agency and distribution, manufacturing and supply agreements, e-commerce, website terms and conditions and general commercial contracts.

Ann acts for a wide range of not-for-profit organisations, including charities, schools and societies, advising on constitution, company secretarial and commercial contracts.





The free virtual seminar is an excellent opportunity for businesses to learn more about the risks of cyber attacks and the steps to take to avoid them

Is your business secure from global hackers?

Businesses from across Shropshire will get the chance to take part in a free virtual seminar next month that will help them stay safer online.

Shropshire Chamber of Commerce is set to host the event as part of National Cyber Security Awareness month.

It will take place online on October 24, from 11am to 11.30am, and the guest speaker will be Ian Groves, managing director of Shropshire's only National Cyber Security Centre-assured service provider – Start Tech.

He will help to explain why businesses need to take cyber security seriously and

will cover topics including cyber essentials, cyber insurance and best practices that are easy to implement and that all organisations should follow.

Kelly Riedel, events and training manager for Shropshire Chamber of Commerce, said: "Cyber criminals are becoming increasingly devious and inventive, and there has been a real rise in the number of cyber crime incidents all over the world.

"This means if your company is targeted, there could be serious

consequences and you could lose crucial business and face financial difficulties.

"So this virtual seminar is an excellent opportunity for businesses to learn more about the risks and more importantly, the steps to take to avoid them."

Kelly said although the event was free to attend, businesses would need to register their interest in advance.

To find out more and to register visit: <https://www.shropshire-chamber.co.uk/events/events-calendar/who-want-s-to-be-cyber-aware>

"Cyber criminals are becoming increasingly devious and inventive, and there has been a real rise in the number of cyber crime incidents..."

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McPILLIPS

First phase of Marches Local Skills Improvement Plan is published

FShropshire Chamber of Commerce has published the findings from the first phase of its Local Skills Improvement Plan project – designed to gain a better understanding of the area's skills and training requirements.

The stage one report outlines a series of 'quick wins' which could be achieved over the coming months to boost upskilling and knowledge sharing, and paints a comprehensive picture of current training provision across the area.

Hundreds of local businesses contributed to the first stage of the research, which has now been officially signed off by Secretary of State for Education, Gillian Keegan.

The Marches LSIP project is being led locally by Shropshire Chamber, and is targeting specific sectors across the including engineering, manufacturing, professional services, construction, environmental technologies, and health & social care.

The aim is to help post-16 education providers and other public sector bodies across the Marches – Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin and Herefordshire - to ensure that the voice of employers is at the forefront when planning skills training.

Richard Sheehan, LSIP project director, said: "The Government's Skills for Jobs White Paper has put employers firmly at the core of the skills agenda for post-16 education - a stance welcomed by the business world.

"With productivity sluggish and the economy still damaged by Covid and other world events, it now requires an even greater push to ensure that skills needs are met.

"The Marches LSIP project is giving us that extra strength; enabling us to unpack ambition and opportunity, for current employees, prospective employees, and employers whose businesses provide wealth, employment, and opportunity to the Marches"

Reflecting on the first stage of the report, Mr Sheehan added: "We have a wide range of provision within the Marches already striving to ensure they meet skills shortages. With the strong stakeholder collaborative culture already embedded it allows us to willingly agree to work even more closely, openly, honestly, and productively to embrace the opportunities the LSIP project offers.

"Change takes time, but even in stage one we clearly saw the appetite from businesses to get involved, to give their honest opinions and to willingly to work



Richard Sheehan, LSIP project director

with the LSIP stakeholders to ensure that everyone is focused on the same goal.

"Many business/provider relationships already exist and work well; LSIP gives us the opportunity to increase those relationships, broaden the voice greatly and strengthen current relationships.

"Barriers that hinder unnecessarily but can easily be removed through a collective willingness. Our one objective is to ensure that The Marches, grows, prospers, innovates; to achieve that we will ensure, collectively, that we continue to harness the power of the employer's voice."

Among the 'quick wins' the report suggests is the effective use of Local Skills Improvement Fund cash – not restricted to a single project, but spread across a variety of projects involving a collective of training providers.

"Other funding streams or employers self-funding would help support fast and vital upskilling, whilst not requiring current staff to be away from the businesses for long periods," the report says.

"Though the larger employers will have bulk training requirements, there is also a significant number of SME employers and they cannot not always create viable cohorts for larger providers

but can be amply served by small providers or innovative delivery methods."

Marches LSIP project officer Rosie Beswick said: "Shropshire Chamber would like to thank the businesses who supported the research during this first stage – without them, this report could not have been written.

"More than 450 businesses across the Marches gave their time, insights, and views to the researchers to ensure that the employer's voice was heard.

"As we move into phase two of the project the Chamber will ensure that employers have access to providers so they can support each other to ensure the skills needed are the skills that are being trained for.

"This project will also help to support those giving careers advice and help signpost employers to the vast array of local providers who can support their staff development.

"The end goal is to ensure that employers can find the skills they need, that training is understood and focused, and that the Marches businesses can prosper and grow for the benefit of all."

To read the full stage one report, visit <https://www.shropshire-chamber.co.uk/policy-representation/local-skills-improvement-plan>

"With productivity sluggish and the economy still damaged by Covid and other world events, it now requires an even greater push to ensure that skills needs are met."

Companies struggling to keep 'wage inflation' to manageable levels



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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



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From left, BCRS senior business development managers Lynn Wyke, Angie Preece and Louise Armstrong

Business development managers hit £12,000,000 lending milestone

Three BCRS Business Loans senior business development managers have hit a significant lending milestone.

Angie Preece, Louise Armstrong and Lynn Wyke have each surpassed the milestone of supporting £12 million in lending since they joined the organisation.

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

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

Stephen Deakin, Chief Executive at BCRS Business Loans, said: "Collectively Angie, Louise and Lynn have supported customers with loans worth more than £36 million to businesses across the West Midlands, which is a tremendous achievement.

"All three of them have shown outstanding commitment to supporting

Stephen Deakin, Chief Executive at BCRS Business Loans, said: "Collectively Angie, Louise and Lynn have supported customers with loans worth more than £36 million to businesses across the West Midlands, which is a tremendous achievement."

SMEs and BCRS's mission to leave no viable business unsupported. I am incredibly proud that in the last financial year BCRS delivered £6.5 million to 72 businesses, adding £33.7 million in value to the West Midlands economy.

"We will strive to continue increasing our impact and consider what useful part we can play in the economic, environmental and social challenges faced by the SMEs and communities we support."

Angie Preece said: "It is incredibly rewarding to be able to support businesses that have struggled to get funding from mainstream banks. It has been another challenging year for SMEs across the West Midlands, so it is vital that we provide them with the finance they need to prosper and grow."

Louise Armstrong said: "What I enjoy most about lending at BCRS is that it is all about building relationships with those

we support. We visit the businesses of everyone we lend to and meet them face to face, which really helps us understand their needs on a personal level."

Lynn Wyke added: "It is really rewarding to see the impact a loan can have on a business and the wider community. Not only do we get to see business owners realising their dreams and aspirations, but they are often able to create jobs and safeguard roles for others as a result of receiving funding, which brings prosperity to their local area."

Since BCRS was founded in 2002, it has provided loans worth more than £80 million to businesses across the West Midlands region. Over 21 years BCRS funding has supported 1,446 businesses, safeguarded 9,836 jobs and created 5,268 more roles.

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



Cooking-up 45 years' service at Market Drayton care home



Chris Fair celebrates 45 years' service at Woodcroft care home in Market Drayton

A dedicated member of staff has clocked up an astonishing 45 years working at the same care home in Market Drayton.

Chris Fair started as an assistant cook at Woodcroft's predecessor home in 1978, a month before his 18th birthday, and moved with the rest of the staff to the new purpose-built home when it opened in 1989.

Chris originally worked for Shropshire County Council, but Woodcroft is now owned by Coverage Care Services, Shropshire's leading not-for-profit care home provider.

Chris progressed from assistant cook to catering manager, a role he filled for more than 30 years. He is now responsible for maintenance at the home – a job which has some benefits, he said.

"I find it better because I have more to do with the residents now, and I like that. My wife likes it better as well, because I do most of the cooking at home now! She is a cook as well but because I'm not cooking during the day anymore, I tend to do it at home.

"Woodcroft is a lovely care home and because I live local, I don't have to travel too far to work.

"I am finding now that residents are coming in who I grew up with. They

are older than I am but they are people that I knew, which is nice but it can also be hard if they have dementia or something similar."

Chris's role now involves doing any odd jobs which don't require specialist contractors.

The 63-year-old said: "I do all the jobs in the rooms – if residents want pictures hanging or want something doing, I do it for them. I do whatever anyone wants that I can and I find it very rewarding."

Coverage Care Services employs in the region of 1,000 people and several of its employees have recently celebrated reaching milestones in their long-service.

Chief executive Debbie Price said: "We pride ourselves on supporting and training people for a career in care and as a result the dedication and loyalty of our staff is one of our biggest strengths.

"Chris is a perfect example of someone who has committed his entire working life to providing for and looking after elderly residents in the local community and for that we would like to say a huge thank you to him.

"Our catering and maintenance teams are a vital element of the brilliant care provided in our homes and people like Chris, are the reason why we are able to consistently deliver to a high standard."

For more information about current vacancies and career opportunities visit <https://www.carehomejob.co.uk/>



Ben Allen and Richard Vickers

Real career change

When Richard Vickers left school at 16 his career path seemed clear - joining his father in the family joinery business.

But 15 years and a university degree later, he is celebrating his decision to change course and re-train as a quantity surveyor. He has just been promoted to the post of associate director with Telford-based company CQS Solutions.

Richard, of St George's, Telford, said that he had originally started his working life as an apprentice joiner with his father Andy Vickers.

"I realised after a couple of years that I needed more of a challenge. I was doing the formal part of my apprenticeship at Shrewsbury College, formerly Shrewsbury College of Art and Technology, and the tutors there offered me the chance to do a foundation degree course.

"That led on to my degree in Commercial Management and Quantity Surveying at Wolverhampton University. I spent the final two years of my degree working as a trainee surveyor with CQS Solutions as well as studying," he said.

Now Richard, 31, who has been with CQS Solutions for nine years, has been promoted to associate director by company owner Tim Lloyd.

Richard explained that his new role would include taking a more strategic view on the development of the business as well as continuing to manage the day-to-day business of the CQS Solutions Telford office and mentor new staff members.

"I'm really looking forward to focusing on the bigger picture for the business and helping the more experienced members of staff share their knowledge with those who are just starting their careers.

"I think having spent time 'on the tools' in the building industry has given me a massive advantage. Having the knowledge of how things work on a building site helps the planning and preparation," he said.

Richard is not the only one of the CQS Solutions team to have come to the company from a trade background.

Ben Allen, who originally trained in groundwork and drainage, has recently been promoted to senior quantity surveyor after six years with the company. Ben will be taking more responsibility for post-contract activity at the Telford office and supervise some of the younger staff members.

Company owner, Tim Lloyd, paid tribute to Richard and Ben

"As a company we believe very strongly in nurturing talent within the industry. I have no doubt that with their practical knowledge as well as their professional qualifications, Richard and Ben have a bright future," he said.





"It's time to dust off your lederhosen and get ready for real ales, cider, lager, wine, spirits and cocktails in our huge marquees," says Beth Heath of Shropshire Festivals

Shropshire Oktoberfest returns to Shrewsbury

Tickets are selling fast for Shropshire Oktoberfest, which will be held in Shrewsbury's Quarry on October 6th and 7th.

The beer festival from Shropshire Festivals has sold out on the Saturday of the event for the last 2 years. This year the organisers are adding a beer-tasting workshop from award-winning beer writer, Laura Hadland. Laura has been named as one of the top three drinks writers in the UK after being picked as a finalist for the prestigious Guild of Food Writer Awards. The beer aficionado will lead a beer tasting on the Friday evening of the festival, which will feature locally produced ales available at the event.

Beth Heath, Director of Fun at Shropshire Festivals, said she will once again be championing the region's best breweries, cider makers, drinks producers and distilleries. "As always, there will be no mainstream rubbish at Shropshire Oktoberfest! Instead, you can buy your beers, ciders and spirits directly from

the people who make it, soaking in their expertise as well as enjoying quality tipples."

CAMRA (Campaign for Real Ale) will be running the Hoppportunity Bar with their top picks and unusual choices, which usually include vegan and gluten free options. CAMRA will crown the best beer at the festival 'Shropshire's Choice'.

The live music stage hosts local bands performing singalong favourites and Vorsprung Durch Oompah will transport you to the German beer halls.

Friday's acts feature Touch Too Much, The Almighty Johnsons, Lucas D & The Groove Ghetto, and Ego Friendly. Saturday's lineup hosts Back to the Border, The Shire-ish Rovers, The Vertigo Band, Vorsprung Durch Oompah, Black Bear Kiss, Dirty Rockin Scoundrels, Five o'Clock Hero, Fee Fee & the Sentiments, and Skaburst. The stage will be hosted by BBC Radio Shropshire's Paul Shuttleworth.

On Saturday there will be barrels of laughs to go with the beers in the Comedy Club. Confirmed comedians include stand-up Roger Monkhouse, who is a regular writer on Jimmy Carr's panel show

– 8 Out of 10 Cats, 2017 Britain's Got Talent Finalist and golden buzzer winner – Daliso Chaponda, Britain's Got Talent semi-finalist – Noel James, all-round entertainer Sol Bernstein, winner of ITV's Show Me The Funny – Patrick Monahan, and Preston's funny man, Tony Vino, will be MC.

Festival goers can pick their own music in the silent disco tent, sponsored by Throgmorton Associates Wealth Management, and have 5 minutes of fame in Volvo Shrewsbury's Carpool Karaoke tipi.

Tickets have nearly sold out for the Chrisbeon VIP tent on Saturday, October 7th.

Beth adds, "It's time to dust off your lederhosen and get ready for real ales, cider, lager, wine, spirits and cocktails in our huge marquees. We promise you all the ingredients for a brilliant day and evening out, with bands performing singalong favourites, fun in the silent disco and karaoke tipi, hilarious comics, and delicious street food. Don't miss the county's best party – we'll see you there!"

Early bird tickets can be purchased from www.shropshireoktoberfest.co.uk

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To book or acquire further information
please call: 01952 677269, email: info@hadleypark.co.uk
or visit: www.hadleypark.co.uk



Pop along to mortgage surgeries

A Shropshire mortgage adviser is launching a series of pop-up advice surgeries across the county as people continue to struggle with industry changes and mortgage rates.

Nathan Blissett, founder and principal mortgage adviser at Dwello Mortgages in Telford, said people were struggling to understand the daily changes in the industry and many were panicking and often making regretful choices.

Mr Blissett, based in St James' House in Central Park, said people were reading the media headlines, receiving letters from their mortgage providers telling them of increased payments or that their fixed rate was coming to an end and trying to navigate through on their own with very little information.

He hopes that by bringing the personal, face to face, free advice surgeries to towns and villages across the county, people will be able to learn exactly what is right for them and the options to them.

The Dwello Mortgages team hope to work with estate agents across the county and other venues to host their pop-up mortgage surgeries. Nathan would like to include the more rural areas in his tour in order to avoid people having to travel.

"These surgeries could be held in a cafe, a town hall, a sports club or stadium, at a staff meeting or event, at a business premises such as an estate agents or a library or be held for a specific group of people - the majority of people in such places will either have a mortgage already and may not know what product is right for them at this current time; will be considering buying their first home in the future; will be considering upsizing or have a Buy To Let property or portfolio.

"Each individual scenario brings up its own set of questions, worries and anxieties and we want to help people understand what the market looks like for them, what options they have and why - understanding the why is so important for all involved," he said.

Mr Blissett has received an increasing number of enquiries from clients who have seen their perfect property and claim they don't think it is the right time to buy now or from landlords who think they need to sell their Buy To Let portfolio which has a significant impact on people who need to rent.

"These conclusions are usually based on one headline or one article or even on something a friend or family member has told them who has a completely different set of circumstances," Mr Blissett said.

"We know people are busy and struggle to find the time and therefore the 'mortgage' goes to the bottom of the



The Dwello Mortgages team hope to work with estate agents and other venues to host their pop-ups



Nathan Blissett, founder and principal mortgage adviser at Dwello Mortgages in Telford

to-do list - despite it probably being the most important and urgent thing on the list!

"We hope by being available face to face at a place where they are already and might have time on their lunch break or on a day off, then they will be able to learn so much more about the mortgage market and what is available to them and hopefully take some stress away from them.

"Mortgages aren't just numbers, they are dreams and ambitions waiting to be realised and we love helping people get there with as little stress as possible!"

The Dwello team has already hosted a pop-up clinic where they are based in St James' House for fellow workers at a range of businesses within the building. The session was deemed a huge success after staff said

they were glad to be able to get free advice whilst on their lunch breaks or at the end of the working day.

Mr Blissett said it was vital professionals within the industry worked together so homeowners and potential homeowners in Shropshire know they have a strong, trustworthy network to guide them and support them.

Any business or group organiser which would like to book Dwello Mortgages to host a pop-up surgery at their venue or to book Nathan as a guest speaker at their group should email Nathan@dwellomortgages.com or call Nathan on 0333 533 0051 or send a Whatsapp message to 07714 597 081. For more information about Dwello visit <https://dwellomortgages.com/>





Technology is a powerful tool but it is important not to forget about the other aspects of your business, including staff

How to use technology to grow your business

Technology is faster, cheaper and easier to implement than ever before and ambitious businesses should be constantly looking at how it can help them power ahead. James Dawson, Partner of Accounts & Business Advisory Services, discusses below.

1. Understand how technology can help your business

Technology-driven apps can help you collect and analyse business data which you can use to improve. It also provides information on whether your business and marketing plans are working and which employees are more productive.

- Technology can help to automate the likes of customer support/acquisition, production flow, inventory, sales fulfilment or administrative and accounting processes, meaning less manual intervention and time back to focus on growth.
- Technology such as Microsoft 365, Slack and Trello can improve business collaboration and connections.
- Certain tools can assist with customer acquisition. These include email automation or social media campaign and integrated CRM marketing systems that target specific types of customers.

2. Create an implementation plan

You need to think tactically about how using technology would improve your operations. Create a plan which starts with what your customers want and how you are going to deliver a compelling product or service, then consider what this means for your teams, processes and systems.

Make sure you understand strategically how you want to evolve your business model and then think about the technology implementation process.

3. Don't take your eye off the rest of your business

Technology is a powerful tool but it is important not to forget about the other aspects of your business, whether that is staff and how you are helping them develop, understanding your

customers, or the business' financial health. Businesses that are focused on being tech-enabled to the exclusion of everything else will not succeed.

4. Regularly monitor your technology requirements

Just like your business strategy, plan, and modelling, using technology is a continual process. Once you have decided how to use it, make sure you regularly measure and review its effectiveness. If it isn't, then fix the problem - either by reconfiguring the technology you have or by finding a better alternative.

Top tips

1. Whoever is in charge of the implementation needs to understand how to embed effectively through existing Technology, People and Process.
2. If in doubt about what kind of technology will work best for your business, seek expert advice. It is also useful to access technology funding or expertise through Regional and National BEIS (Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy) Support Networks.
3. Start with a clear plan addressing problems or opportunities you want to solve first. Don't try and fix everything at once.

For more information on how you can use technology to power up your business, contact James Dawson or visit the website azets.co.uk.



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Time to re-evaluate your IT landscape?

Greenfield IT Recruitment is offering a new Fractional IT Leadership solution to local businesses.

Smaller businesses can face challenges with their technology especially as tech evolves so quickly and senior level IT professionals can come at a salary premium.

Vicky Heard / MD at Greenfield IT Recruitment said – “We are really excited about launching our Fractional Leadership solution to existing and new clients, we’ve been operating in the Tech space for a long time now and have a great network of IT Leaders we can engage with.”

If you’re an SME business looking to re-evaluate your IT landscape, planning to move to new business systems like CRM, ERP, Cloud or implementation of a new tech strategy fractional IT leadership could be a good way to accomplish business goals without the need of hiring an IT Director / CTO or engaging a tech consultancy company.



Vicky Heard, MD at Greenfield IT Recruitment

Fractional IT Leaders are typically experienced IT execs who have worked for larger organisations or have similar Industry knowledge who can help SMEs navigate the complex IT landscape by providing strategic IT advice, Manage IT projects, oversee vendors

and technology investments. This is a cost-effective solution that can help SME’s save money whilst gaining the expertise needed. Our IT Leaders are typically paid on a day rate or project basis, so companies only pay for the time / services used.

Based in sunny Shropshire 14 years and counting, Greenfield IT offer Technology / Digital recruitment services to companies locally and throughout the UK.

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Telephone: 01743 234029

Solicitors join team at Oswestry office

A Shropshire law firm has expanded its private client team in Oswestry with the addition of two new solicitors.

Mai Lewis and Angharad Hird have joined Lanyon Bowdler, with the firm hailing the “experience and local knowledge” they are bringing to the team.

Head of Lanyon Bowdler’s private client team, Edward Rees, said Mai and Angharad were already proving to be valuable assets to clients and the firm as a whole.

He said: “Angharad and Mai have added to the team’s capacity to help clients with the preparation of Wills, give advice on inheritance tax, prepare and register Lasting Powers of Attorney, and assist with estate planning and administration.

“Angharad qualified as a solicitor in 2013, and worked in London and Cambridgeshire before moving back to Wales and working in Chester and Wrexham.

“Mai qualified in 2020 and is an affiliate member of the Society of Estate and Trust Practitioners (STEP), meaning she has been recognised for holding the very highest professional standards in her work.

“Both Angharad and Mai have joined us from a nearby firm, and between them have extensive experience and local knowledge



Angharad Hird and Mai Lewis

which will be hugely beneficial to our clients.

“I am delighted to welcome them to Lanyon Bowdler.”

Angharad studied law at Lancaster University, going on to do a Masters in Law at University College London, before completing the Legal Practice Course at the College of Law in London.

She said: “It’s really important to have

the right legal documents in place, such as a Will and Lasting Power of Attorney - whether you run a business or not - to ensure your wishes are carried out.

“I am really pleased to have joined the private client team in Oswestry, and am looking forward to continuing to help clients plan for their future.”

Mai comes from a farming background and graduated from the University of Sheffield with a history degree before completing the Graduate Diploma in Law and the Legal Practice Course and Masters at the University of Law, Chester.

She added: “I know from experience that preparing for the future is particularly important for farming families, and I am very happy to help clients avoid stress and heartache further down the line.

“The administration and ownership of a farm and its land can be complicated, so ensuring that everyone’s Will is up-to-date, as well as preparing Lasting Powers of Attorney, is vital to enable the business to function even if someone loses mental capacity for any reason.”

For more advice, contact the Lanyon Bowdler Oswestry office on 01691 652241 or visit the website at www.lblaw.co.uk





Shai Patel, Business Development Director at GCCS



Sales Director Kim Kelly is thrilled with the launch



Paul Naylor takes on the role of Marketing Director

Credit where it's due for three chamber members

A new Telford-based business has launched to help others recoup monies from outstanding sales invoices - and three of the directors represent businesses that are Shropshire Chamber of Commerce members.

Based in Telford, Granville Credit Control Services (GCCS) launched early September as a direct result of its founders spotting a gaping hole in day-to-day business life.

Kim Kelly, director at GCCS, said: "In my work as a bookkeeper, I could see that so many businesses were struggling because of late payment of sales invoices they'd issued.

"By not being paid on time, the owners of businesses are having to find other means to pay their way and it just doesn't sit comfortably with me."

Fellow GCCS director Shai Patel comes from a business planning background. He

could see a different problem.

"It was clear to me that many of the businesses I helped to apply for grants and loans were unable to give a clear picture of their financial position due to monies owed from others," said Shai.

It's true that outstanding sales invoices can be a headache for SMEs and beyond.

The late payment culture that exists between businesses in the UK means that:

- a third of payments to small businesses are late – the average value of each payment is £6,142
- 20% of small businesses have run in to cash flow problems due to late payments
- if small businesses were paid on time, this could boost the economy by an estimated £2.5 billion annually

Kim and Shai first met through a business networking group, BNI Thomas Telford, more than five years ago. They are joined in this new venture by fellow BNI'er Paul Naylor, whose background in design and marketing adds another dimension to the fledgling organisation.

"I see this as a really wonderful

opportunity to help businesses throughout Shropshire and further afield in obtaining what is rightfully theirs," said Paul.

As members of Shropshire Chamber of Commerce, you might already be familiar with Kim Kelly under her Granville Bookkeeping and P A Services brand, or perhaps you know of Shai Patel and his role at Spencer Hylton – specialising in personal and estate planning.

Paul Naylor has a lengthy connection to the chamber, designing and laying out the pages of the membership magazine through his design and marketing brand, Media & You.

Ami Patel and Sherry Barnard are also directors and the team is supported by operations manager Ruth Goss.

"We are not debt recovery in the traditional sense," said Shai.

"For us, credit control is as much about prevention as it is cure. We can put processes in place to help avoid future issues, but if you do have outstanding sales invoices, we can begin the process to recover monies over an agreed time scale and fee."





Grocott Group Managing Director Daniel McGowan (left) and Mark Jones (right), 4M's Operations Manager

Self storage facilities doubles its capacity

Prees-based 4M Portable Buildings has expanded its self storage division with the launch of 30 new indoor units to double its total capacity.

Available for both domestic and business storage, the rooms are located at 4M's site just off the A49 between Shrewsbury and Whitchurch.

Room sizes vary from 80 to 160 square feet meaning customers can store items such as machinery, vehicles, boats and furniture alongside paperwork or household items.

Customers have 24/7 access to the site with personalised entry codes. In addition there is a purpose-built off-loading bay and a sizeable car park from which to unload.

The company offers short, medium, and long-term rentals.

Explaining the decision to expand its self-storage division, 4M's Operations Manager Mark Jones said, "We launched our self storage division in 2021 which has been very successful and, due to increasing demand, we took the decision to invest in additional rooms.

"We are fortunate to have ample development space here at our site and after looking at a variety of development options, we decided to construct storage

units indoors which are really resonating with customers. Providing top quality rooms and a wide selection of different-sized units were high on our agenda.

"We are now working on the next phase of development as we have the potential to construct a further 40 indoor rooms."

Owned by the Grocott Group, 4M is celebrating its 30th anniversary this year.

For further information about self storage availability, call 01939 235203 or email info@4mportablebuildings.co.uk

Customers have 24/7 access with personalised entry codes and there is a purpose-built off-loading bay and a sizeable car park from which to unload. The company offers short, medium, and long-term rentals.

Robotic process automation

With staff recruitment and retention pressures affecting most organisations, business managers are wise to ask the question - 'how can tasks be done differently to boost productivity?' Successful businesses identify that the removal of manual and repetitive tasks can eliminate many HR issues and drive-up productivity.

Most people who have heard of artificial intelligence dismiss it as some weird technology that will never apply to their business. AI is the ability of machines to perform cognitive functions as humans do, such as perceiving, learning, reasoning, and solving problems.

AI is not far that far away

However, many business owners do not realise that the forerunner to AI is something called robotic process automation. RPA can be implemented in almost every business sector that has staff completing manual, often paper driven, repetitive tasks. In simple terms, RPA uses intelligent software, called cloudbots or 'Bots' for short, that make decisions based on pre-determined rules. The programming of Bots removes the need for any human input when on-going decisions need to be taken. The Bots follow a defined set of rules with complete accuracy that delivers the correct outcome.

What is an example of RPA?

A very simple example would be invoice processing. This is where inbound invoices, paper, and PDF, are diverted to a receiving centre. Using clever software the required data on the invoices (purchase order number, dates, values and so on) is extracted into a data

file. This data is compared with the client's purchase ledger. If the captured data meets pre-agreed criteria then payment authorisation is given. The approval decision is based entirely on the agreed criteria. There is no human involvement.

Can the benefits be measured?

The benefits are massive and can easily be quantified. From the example above, if an accounts payable function receives fifty invoices a day with an average manual processing time of over three minutes, the introduction of RPA would save over fifteen hours a week. This equates to over £11,700 a year!

The Potential is unlimited

The great thing is the amount of work the Bots do is highly scalable and they beaver away with zero intervention. The Bots can apply themselves to all business functions in most industry sectors – from legal and accounting through to manufacturing and logistics. The Bots are totally reliable, they never get sick, and they work 24/7 without holidays! Furthermore, they work remotely on a cloud and do not take up any office space!

Taking the innovative approach to boost productivity

Imagine if someone explained to you how a lot of the routine and repetitive tasks your staff undertake could be automated. Not only would many staff recruitment and retention challenges evaporate but you would save time, lower costs, enhance information security as well as drive up accuracy and productivity.

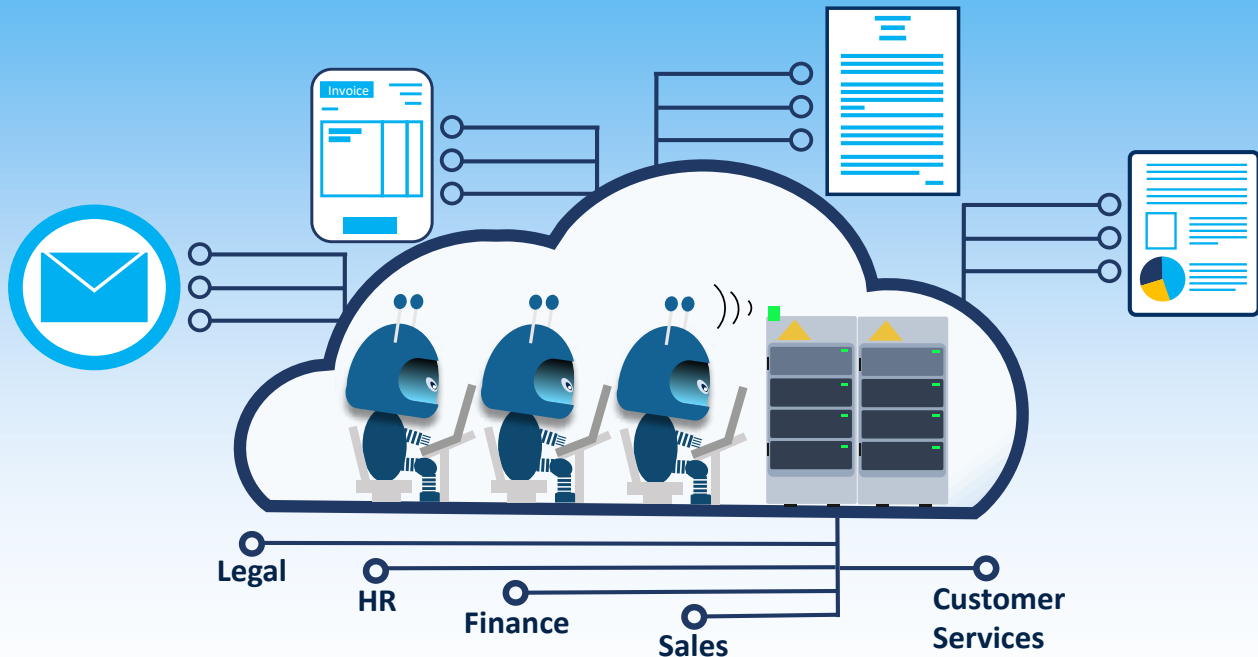
The great news is that you do not need to stretch your imagination as robotic process automation is a reality.

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Coveted accolade for culinary excellence



Martin Page with Weston Park head chef Anna Moore

An award-winning restaurant at a stately home on the Shropshire/Staffordshire border is celebrating the sweet taste of success after scooping a major accolade for culinary excellence.

The Granary at Weston Park has been awarded a highly sought-after AA Rosette after impressing the award inspectors.

The scheme, established in 1956 and the first of its kind in the UK, is an indication that the restaurant's food is a cut above its rivals.

Martin Page, General Manager, Food & Beverage at Weston Park, said: "We are over

the moon to be awarded an AA Rosette. It is brilliant news, and confirmation that the food we serve is amongst the best in the area.

"The Granary is going from strength to strength. We focus on offering excellent seasonal food in a relaxed atmosphere, using produce grown in our own walled garden and orchards or sourced from trusted artisan suppliers.

"Achieving this award is a testament to the hard work, vision and skill of our head chef Anna Moore and her team. I'm delighted that the inspectors have recognised the efforts of our fabulous team in this way."

Holders of the one rosette award 'achieve standards that stand out in their local area. They serve food prepared with care, understanding and skill.'

The restaurant will now be able to

proudly display the rosette on its menus and marketing materials and will also receive a commemorative porcelain plate. Only about 10 per cent of restaurants in the UK achieve the standards needed to qualify for an AA Rosette.

Martin added: "This is more great news for the restaurant, after picking up a silver award from the Enjoy Staffordshire Tourism & Good Food awards in March. We won't be resting on our laurels though and will work tirelessly to make sure we maintain these high standards."

The Granary is open every day for breakfast and lunch, offers dinner on Friday and Saturday evenings and afternoon teas from Wednesday to Saturday. Its Sunday lunches are a huge hit and it also caters for private dining parties and corporate events.

For more information and to book, visit www.weston-park.com/granary/



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Luxury travel should be a stress-free experience

Shrewsbury's multi-award-winning travel agency, Peakes Travel Elite, worked tirelessly at the end of August to get stranded customers safely back to the UK following the disruption from the air traffic control failure

Claire Moore, managing director at Peakes Travel Elite, said, "Part of our premium end-to-end service is supporting our customers every step of the way – including when things like the air traffic control glitch happen.

Holidays should be stress-free after all. As soon as the issue arose, we were communicating with passengers here and abroad with flights booked, speaking with airlines and operators, and getting our customers safely on their way."

Continuing their dedication to customer service, Peakes Travel Elite has created a new luxury travel lounge at their base on Madrol.

Claire adds, "The lounge will be an extension of our appointment service for customers wanting more time with an

expert and privacy away from the shop floor. You can relax in the comfort of our lounge, surrounded by everything you need to craft the perfect getaway. We can speak with operators on a video call, and you can relax with a glass of fizz or a cup of coffee to plan your next trip."

The Shrewsbury travel agency has also revealed they are bringing back their luxury travel event on Sunday, October 15th from 10am until 2pm.

"Our travel event was a great success last year with 15 tour operators and the whole Peakes team hosting the event at St Mary's Church in Shrewsbury, which was transformed into a travel show for the day.

"Attendees could soak up lots of travel inspiration, as well as sitting down with experts to discuss ideas more thoroughly. It's a much richer experience than searching for holiday ideas online. We are hand-picking trusted travel partners from the world of cruise, touring and adventure to attend.

"Make sure you save Sunday, October 15th for another fantastic travel event!"

To book a place at the show email sales@peakestravelite.co.uk, and to find out more about Peakes Travel Elite's services visit www.peakestravelite.co.uk

Do you need a newsletter producing? How about a magazine? Or maybe even a book? Then you need MEDIA & YOU . . .



Shropshire-born, Paul Naylor specialises in the creation of newsletters, magazines and books, Paul is equally at home putting together all manner of business essentials, including:

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- Posters
- Advertisements
- Brand Design/Redesign
- Roller Banners
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Further commitment to sustainability action



Recent developments at Telford International Centre include the replacement of all lighting in its 10,000sqm of exhibition halls to LED lights

Telford International Centre has announced its latest investments as it continues to work towards a more sustainable future.

Recent developments from the Midlands-based events venue include the replacement of all lighting in its 10,000sqm of exhibition halls to LED lights – estimated to save over 70% in electricity – as well as providing more superior light quality.

It has also installed new fast-charging (22kWh) electric vehicle charging points, which are open for anyone visiting the centre or staying at one of its on-site hotels.

The latest developments show how Telford International Centre is meeting – and in some cases exceeding – the Association of Event Venues' (AEV) sustainability principles for its member venues.

Telford International Centre is a member of and actively contributes to a cross-association sustainability working group comprising the Association of Event

Venues (AEV), the Association of Event Organisers (AEO) and the Event Supplier and Services Association (ESSA).

The group brings together venue and wider event industry representatives to share best practice and plans for delivering on carbon neutrality, Net Zero and social responsibility ambitions.

Progress across the working group's members is self-assessed against the AEV's criteria, where 12 principles are outlined under three focus areas: environment, education and collaboration.

Telford International Centre has been a member of the sustainability group since 2019 and is using the principles as a guide to evolve its action plan and to help prioritise sustainability projects.

The new investments are in addition to actions already implemented by Telford International Centre to become more sustainable – from energy-saving appliances and water-saving taps, to event-by-event utility usage monitoring and 'switch off' policies for facilities. It has also removed all single-use plastics from across its venue.

Duncan Rae, Group Food and Beverage

Director at Telford International Centre said: "Our latest investments show we are progressing towards our target to be Net Zero by 2050 by targeting key operational areas. Embedding a sustainability plan is a step-by-step, long-term commitment supported by prioritised financial investment and team engagement. It is driven by our responsibility to all our clients, attendees and employees to develop systems and processes that put this at the heart of our operational and reputational practice.

"For example, we've already partnered with local suppliers for some of our food and beverage services.

"This is something we're extremely proud of, especially considering the quality of local produce in and around Shropshire."

At the beginning of Fiscal Year 24 (April 2023) Telford International Centre completed an initial assessment of progress already made towards the AEV's sustainability principles.

This has formed part of a submission to the AEV in Summer 2023 and is the baseline from which TIC is looking to develop and improve over the coming years.





Alasdair Hobbs, left, managing director of Human Results, said the day helped four charities: Maninplace, Access to Business, Telford & Wrekin CVS and The Haven

Golf day celebrates 20th anniversary of business

Businesses from across Shropshire and the West Midlands got together for a successful golf day to celebrate a special anniversary and raise funds for charity.

Employment law and HR specialists, Human Results, based in Telford, held the event as part of the firm's 20th anniversary celebrations, and welcomed nine teams to Oxley Park Golf Club for the day.

Alasdair Hobbs, managing director of Human Results, said the day was a major success and helped raise vital funds for four charities: Maninplace, Access to Business, Telford & Wrekin CVS and The Haven.

He said: "We were delighted at the turnout and everyone really enjoyed themselves throughout the whole day.

"As Human Results marks its 20th anniversary this year, we have been keen to hold a number of events to thank our clients and raise money for some charities close to our hearts.

"All of the proceeds from the golf day are being split between The Haven, which helps women and children affected by domestic abuse, Maninplace, which works with the homeless in Telford, Access to Business, which supports people looking for employment, and Telford and Wrekin CVS, which provides vital support to charities and organisations in the area.

"I would like to say a big thank you to



Nine teams took part in the event at Oxley Park Golf Club as part of the celebrations

Oxley Park Golf Club for hosting us, and all of the teams who joined us and were so generous with their donations for such worthwhile charities.

"It was also wonderful to welcome the Mayor of Wolverhampton, Michael Hardacre, who met us on the final green, and we are very grateful he was able to come along."

Teams included Tansoo Investments, Route 39, Azets, BSS Accounting, Access To Business, The Malt Shovel, Spotlight Accounting and IT-Works.

Overall winners were The Malt Shovel,

with Tony Nash from Tansoo Investments winning the nearest the pin contest, Jack Caddick from Route 39 hit the longest drive and Ben Mason from Azets had the best individual score.

Richard Heath, of Human Results, won the 'Beat the Pro' challenge and collected a £50 cash prize.

The Human Results anniversary celebrations will continue later in the year with a Bingo and Family Fortunes evening at Oxley Park Golf Club on October 19.

For more information about Human Results, visit www.humanresults.co.uk





Ben Morris-Jones and Jack Evans of Telford-based engineering company iconsys were recognised for their outstanding achievements at Telford College

Praise for progress of company's apprentices

Congratulations to two high achieving apprentices, Jack Evans & Ben Morris-Jones of Telford based engineering company iconsys. Both Jack & Ben have been recognised for their outstanding achievements as they have progressed throughout their academic year with Telford College.

They were both nominated, by iconsys, for their success in the category of "Mechatronics Maintenance Engineering Technician" and presented with their certificates at an awards ceremony held at Telford College.

Both Jack and Ben are studying at Telford College and are at different stages in their apprenticeship.

Jack has been working at iconsys for just shy of 2 years. He exudes such maturity for a young man of his age.

This is what Jack has to say about what he enjoys about working at iconsys:

"I really enjoy working at iconsys and have done so since the day I first joined. Working at iconsys is never dull, always diverse, with different jobs coming and going. The people are friendly and supportive. iconsys gives me the opportunities to further develop my skills and industrial experience."

Ben joined iconsys in October 2022 and has had a great start to his apprenticeship. His true potential is starting to come through and he has started to make a valuable contribution at work and is a popular member of the team.

This is what Ben has to say about why he decided to join an apprenticeship with

iconsys: "From a young age, I have always been interested in how things work and was curious about whether I could take things apart and put them back together again. Taking the apprenticeship route with iconsys allows me to get my foot in the door as I learn new skills and gain knowledge while getting my hands dirty!"

Cliff Sedgley, Production and Service Manager, commented on the two apprentices "Both Jack and Ben fully deserve the recognition of this award. They are both respected and highly valued members of the company. Engineering apprenticeships make great business sense for iconsys because they help develop skills in accordance with both the needs of the individual and our business, which, in turn, creates a sustainable talent pipeline for us. We have had great success in partnering with Telford College in this respect and thank them for their ongoing support".

Visit www.iconsys.co.uk for more details.



New associate lawyers

A Shropshire law firm has promoted six lawyers to the position of associate - the first time so many promotions have been made at once.

Brian Evans, managing partner at Lanyon Bowdler, said the promotions recognised the hard work and commitment of those involved and highlighted the strength in depth of talent at the firm.

Four of the six – Ruth Edwards, Katie Baker, Emma Deering and Jennifer Edwards - work out of Lanyon Bowdler's Conwy office in North Wales while Emma Jones is based in Telford and Stephanie Barton works at the firm's office in Ludlow.

Brian said: "I am delighted to announce the six new appointments, each one has made a significant contribution to the firm and has a commitment to the highest level of customer service expected of Lanyon Bowdler.

"It's important that these efforts are recognised and rewarded and I wish our new associate lawyers all the best in their new roles.

"The promotions reflect the ongoing success of the firm as we continue to build an increasing client base.

"One of the things I enjoy as managing partner is seeing people develop in their roles, and progress within the firm.

"We are committed to supporting career development and strongly believe that this level of continuity can only benefit the firm and our clients.

"I believe this is the largest number of associate promotions we have ever had in one go, which is wonderful to see."

Ruth Edwards is a very experienced property lawyer who joined Lanyon Bowdler to be the residential property team leader in Conwy, after several years at Gwynedd Council.



Lanyon Bowdler has six new associate lawyers – Ruth Edwards, Katie Baker, Emma Deering, Jennifer Edwards, Emma Jones and Stephanie Barton

Chartered legal executive Emma Deering specialises in wills and estate administration, Katie Baker works in the dispute resolution department, and Jennifer Edwards has been building up the firm's corporate and commercial work in North Wales.

The other two new associates are both team leaders in the firm's residential property department: Emma Jones runs the team in Telford, and Stephanie Barton is the Ludlow team leader.

For more information on Lanyon Bowdler's services, visit the website at www.lblaw.co.uk or call 0800 652 3371.

Life just got sweeter for homeowners

Homeowners will enjoy a sweet treat after securing their dream home thanks to a partnership between two Shropshire businesses.

New mortgage advisory firm, Dwello Mortgages, has teamed up with Planet Doughnut in order to design their own bespoke doughnuts to deliver to clients once they have received their much wanted "yes" to their mortgage application.

Nathan Blissett, founder and principal mortgage adviser at Dwello based at St James House in Telford, said it was important to recognise the success of securing the right mortgage for the client and also the client's happiness of being able to buy the property they really wanted.

Mr Blissett said they knew the team at Planet Doughnut, based in Shrewsbury, obviously "created fantastic doughnuts" and were also proud fellow county-based business owners.

"When people walk through that door they will be able to treat themselves to a doughnut or treat any children they may have when they come home to their new home for the first time.

"We will also be sending them to clients who have remortgaged because that is just as important as it may mean they are able to carry out home repairs which they have



Nathan Blissett and Duncan McGregor

always wanted to do," Mr Blissett said.

"Working with Duncan and the team at Planet Doughnut really has been a fantastic experience - from personalised doughnut toppers to bespoke designed boxes. We hope our orders help support another local

business - even if it is in only a very small way. Their journey is inspirational and Dwello hopes to follow a similar path of serving customers all over the UK."

Duncan McGregor, owner of Planet Doughnut, wished the team at Dwello well in their new venture and thanked them for their support.

"We do thousands of corporate doughnuts every week - each with their own personalised design, colours and even flavours.

"They are a great way for businesses to be able to thank clients or reward staff for all of their hard work.

"It has been great to welcome Dwello as a new client and we look forward to seeing lots of happy homeowners enjoying their doughnuts as they celebrate securing their mortgage."

The Dwello team includes Nathan, and a team of experienced non-executives including Mike Rose, Simon Lloydbottom, Manuel Heinke and Oliver Wadlow, who all bring a wealth of business knowledge and expertise.

To find out how the Dwello team can help you email Info@dwelломortgages.com, visit the website www.dwelломortgages.com or follow them on Facebook and LinkedIn @dwelломortgages



Protect, care and invest
to create a better borough



Fashion show to highlight collections at new stores



Helen Knight, head of fundraising at Lingen Davies, pictured with Debbie Carvell at Carvell on the square

Models took to the catwalk to celebrate the launch of two independently owned rebranded designer fashion and lingerie shops in Shrewsbury whilst also raising money for charity.

Newly named Carvell on the square was bought by Debbie Carvell in November last year when it traded as Carol Grant.

Debbie acquired her first venture, Mystique Lingerie and Swimwear in 2019 and she said “when the chance arose to purchase a second independent business it was an opportunity not to be missed”.

Now the two shops have both been rebranded with new signage designed and installed on both Market Square’s Carvell on the square and Carvell Lingerie and Swimwear on the corner of Butcher Row.

New websites for both Carvell branded shops have been designed by Shrewsbury

based agency Source, alongside the rebrand, and will be launched soon.

Debbie Carvell, who is supported in the business by her husband and businessman Paul, wanted to celebrate her new brands with a fashion show which will raise money for local cancer support charity Lingen Davies.

The event, held at The Albright Hussey on September 6th, saw guests enjoy bubbly on arrival, a delicious Argentinian Asado for dinner, a performance from a world class entertainer and of course clothing, lingerie and swimwear modelled on the catwalk.

A selection of designer fashion, lingerie and jewellery made by local business Linda Sheils at Feretia was available to purchase on the night.

Debbie and the team behind the event looked for models and held a raffle to boost Lingen Davies funds.

Debbie Carvell, owner of the businesses, said: “I am so delighted to finally see my two shops renamed. It has been a thoroughly exciting process and I wanted to celebrate that with a charity fashion show.

“In addition to our established brands, we are pleased to be introducing some new designers, notably Ralph Lauren, Pepe jeans and Gustav.

“We have also expanded our range to include accessories such as shoes, boots, handbags – always with an eye on value for money and sustainability.

“The fashion show was a fabulous night out, with wine, food, entertainment, friendship and shopping all under one roof!

“As everyone knows being on the high street is a challenge for many business owners but I am passionate about the personal service you get with that – trying on clothes is so important and on-line shopping just doesn’t give you that experience.

“We have introduced a range of new brands into Carvell on the square and Carvell Lingerie and Swimwear and our customers are really enjoying the fresh looks.”

Helen Knight, head of fundraising at Lingen Davies in Shrewsbury, said: “We would like to thank Debbie and Paul for choosing Lingen Davies as the charity of the night at the fashion show. I



Wage Rises Fuel Inflation...

“
**INFLATION
RISES**
...worries continue

“
**INTEREST
RATES**
...which direction

“
**FUEL
COSTS**
...rising again

“
**STAFF
VACANCIES**
...the mismatch

Recruitment Mismatch...

Skills shortages are still biting.

However, due to inflation hitting households this is, in part, helping to alleviate the skills shortages and unfilled vacancies in some sectors as the need to work, in whatever degree, becomes more important.

Matching recruits to vacancies is proving difficult. More recruits are looking for part time or flexible work, yet most vacancies advertised are full time and traditional in approach. Changing times and changed attitudes are forcing employers to look at new ways to attract staff.

“ Matching recruits to vacancies is proving difficult...”

Brits are also among the least likely to say work should always come first, according to a recent global study by King's College London's Policy Institute. Findings showed that the younger the person, the stronger the sentiment.



We want to hear your views...

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

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

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

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

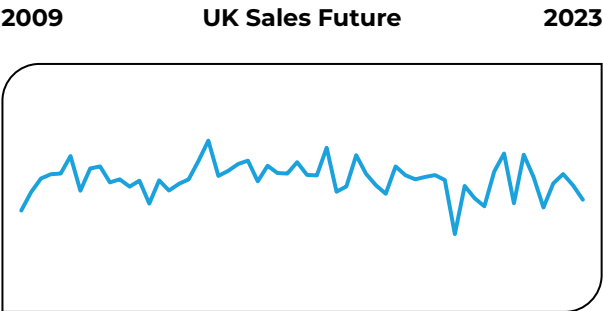
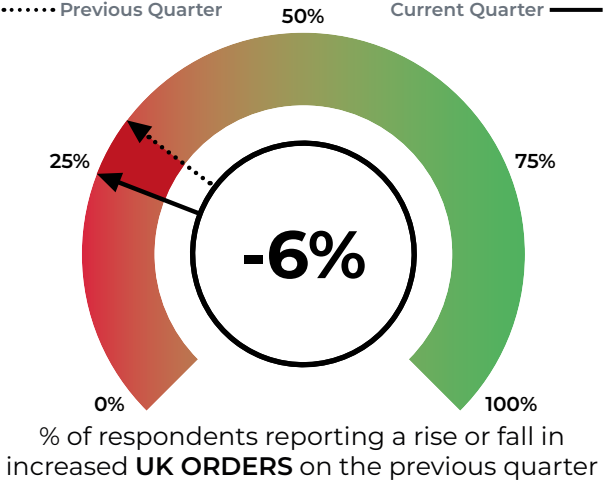
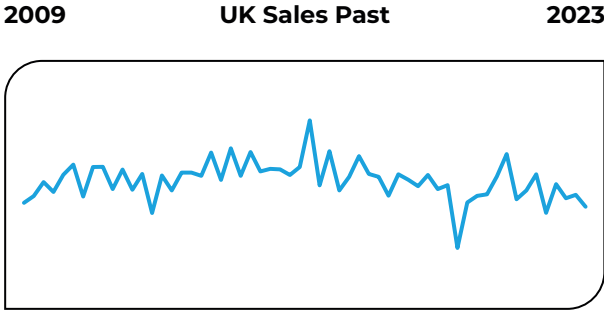
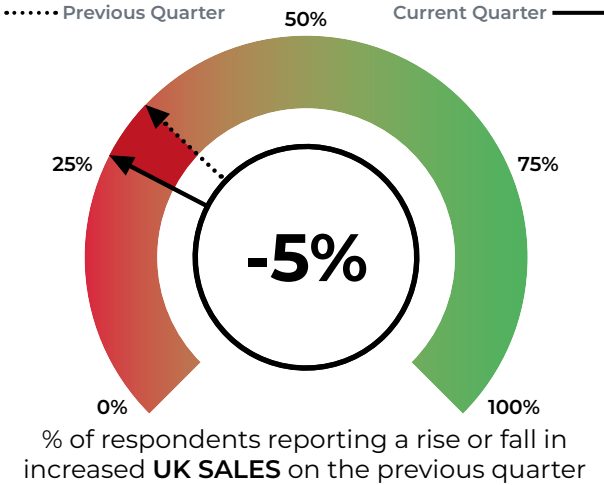
DOMESTIC (UK) SALES INCREASES

UK Sales Past:

"Sales have decreased due to a poor summer."
Retail/Wholesale Sector

"Fears of high cost of living remaining in place for longer than originally expected is definitely starting to feed through into a lack of certainty with future orders."
Marketing/Media Sector

Only 26% saw improved sales this quarter compared to 31% last quarter.



UK Sales Future:

"Due to the current property market we see a current and future reduction in business."
Professional Services Sector

"Slight downturn expected, so we must focus on new products to reduce this."
Manufacturing Sector

47% feel that their sales will remain static over the next 3 months.

EXPORT SALES

INCREASES

Export Sales Past:

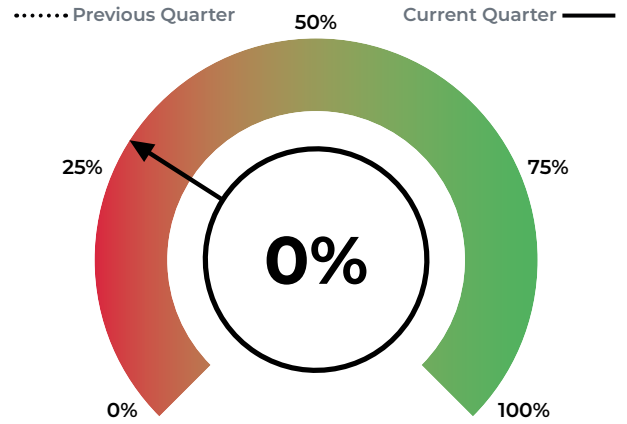
"Brexit deprived us of business in Europe which, followed by Covid and the Ukraine war, continues to affect our business."

Retail/Wholesale Sector

"Brexit has had a huge impact on our business in terms of both importing and exporting goods, it has been extremely costly."

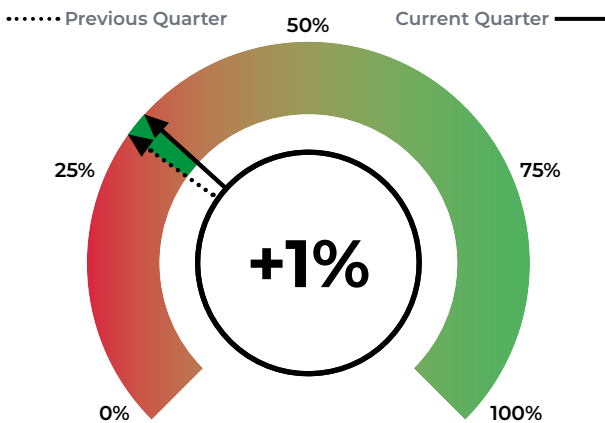
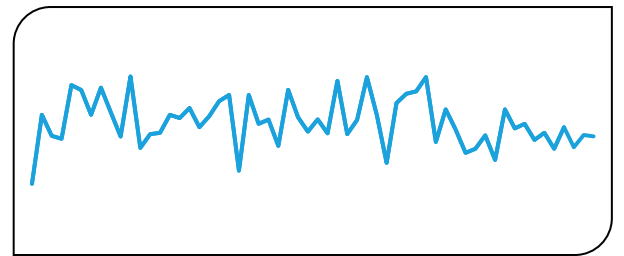
Retail/Wholesale Sector

Those seeing increased export sales remained the same as last quarter at 28%.



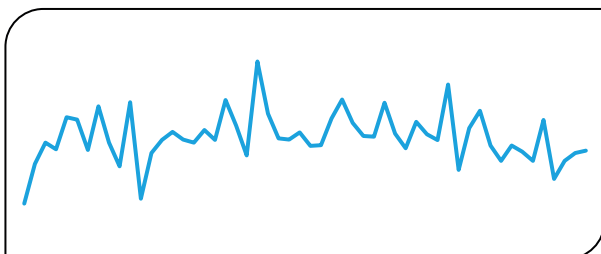
% of respondents reporting a rise or fall in increased **EXPORT SALES** on the previous quarter

2009 Export Sales Past 2023



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

2009 Export Sales Future 2023



Export Sales Future:

"We continually hope for an upturn but continue to tread water with sales significantly down on pre-pandemic rates."

Retail/Wholesale Sector

"We lost Europe - all 27 States overnight with Brexit and since then the burden of paperwork and mistakes have proven so infuriating we have written off that business, which represented around 30% of annual sales."

Retail/Wholesale Sector

37% of exporters expect a decrease in sales over the next 3 months.

WORKFORCE PAST & FUTURE

INCREASES

Workforce Past:

"We're trying to recruit a further apprentice, but recruitment across the board is difficult."

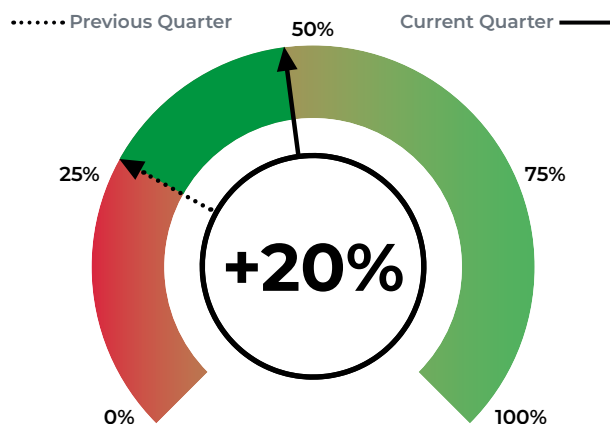
Manufacturing Sector

"Applicants believe that they have experience when doing the job role for less than 12 months. We have had a recruiter onboard and they have been unsuccessful in finding candidates."

Professional Services Sector

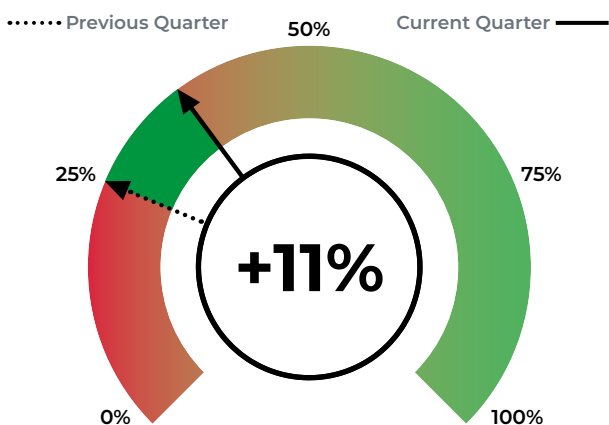
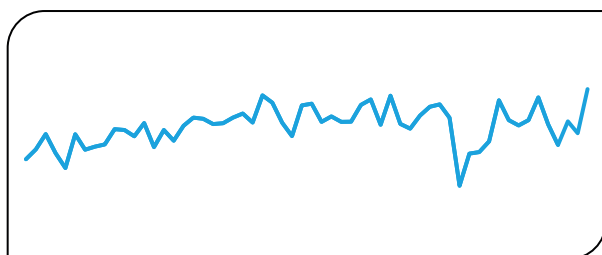
"We have had an opportunity for an apprentice, candidates have not been willing to do the role."

Professional Services Sector



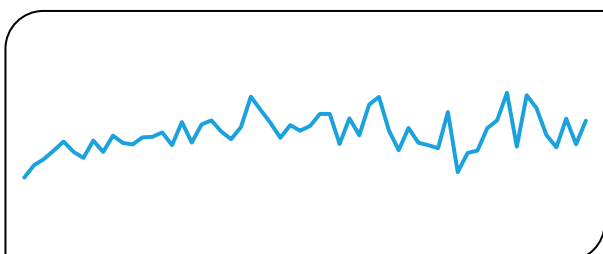
% of respondents reporting a rise or fall in **WORKFORCE** numbers on the previous quarter

2009 Workforce Past 2023



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

2009 Workforce Future 2023



Workforce Future:

"Recruitment is a real challenge and continues to be."

Public Sector

"Our main member of staff has been on maternity leave for a year and we did not take on cover. She has now decided not to come back and we have yet to decide whether to replace her. Finding the right person will be difficult."

Retail/Wholesale Sector

Only 3% expect to decrease the size of their workforce in the next three months.

SKILLS & RECRUITMENT

Companies Recruiting:



“Lots don’t complete the applications and only about 25% turn up for interview.”

Public Sector

“If you get someone to interview, getting them to turn up on the day is also not as predictable as pre Covid pre Brexit.”

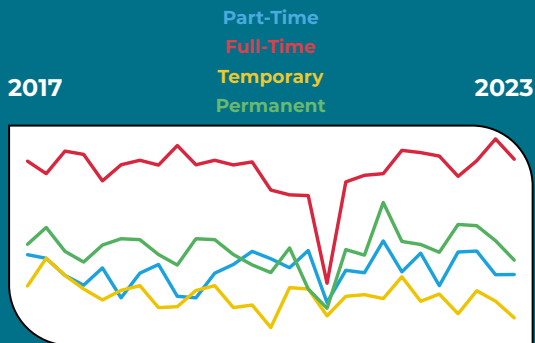
Manufacturing Sector

“Sales Executives - they all want gold-plated packages with company cars and benefits which we are not in a position to offer.”

Marketing/Media Sector



Staff Types:



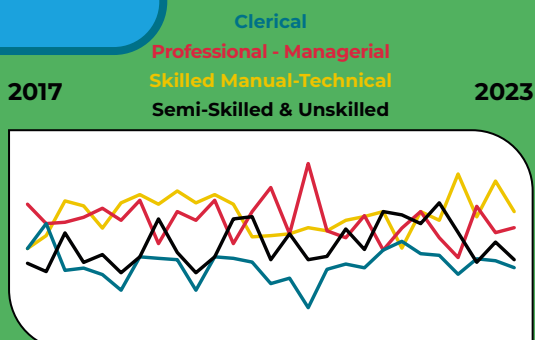
“Fork Lift Drivers - limited choice despite competitive pay.”

Manufacturing Sector

“Shortage of experienced Commercial Insurance Account Handlers and Executives.”

Professional Services Sector

Post Types:



“Recruiting for a Recovery Driver / Roadside Assistant Drivers.”

Other Services

“Many roles - including Business Development, Assembly and Warehouse & Office Admin.”

Manufacturing Sector

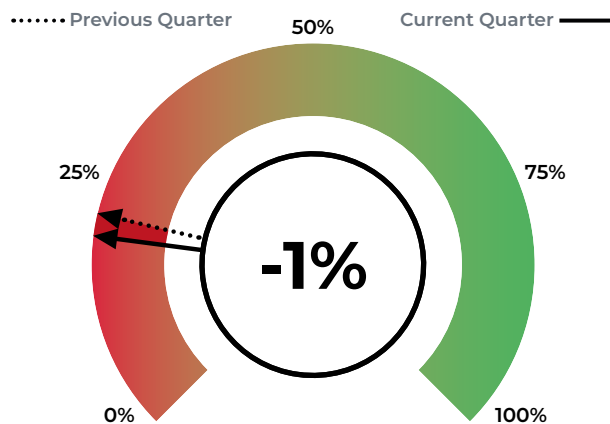
CASH FLOW INCREASES

Cash Flow:

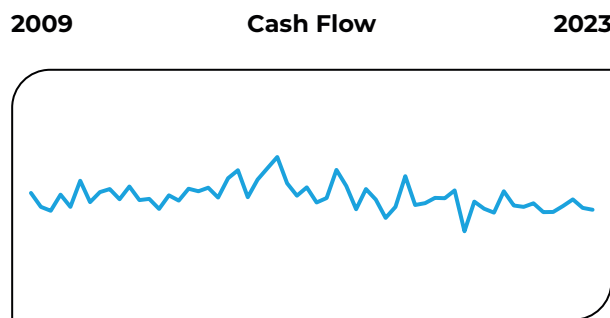
"Cash flow - we have a healthy balance sheet but as a micro business we are crippled by slow payments from large companies. We need legislation to protect SME's."
Service Sector

"It is becoming increasingly difficult to chase money owed."
Manufacturing Sector

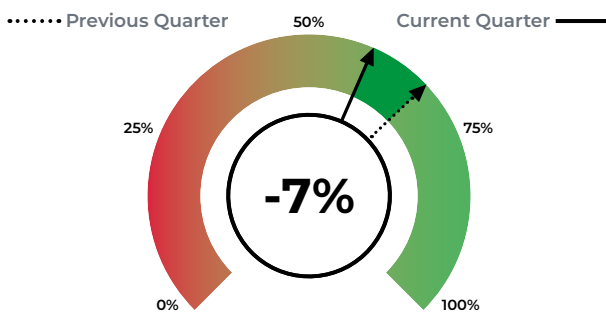
59% of respondents stated that their cash flow had remained static over the past three months.



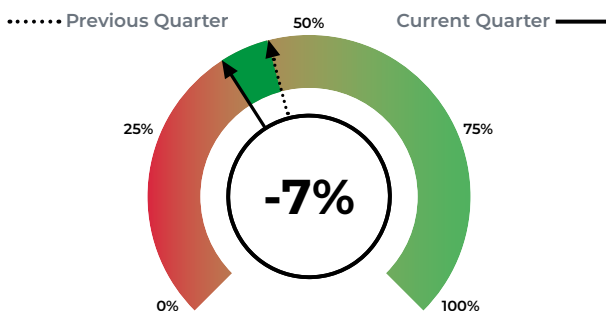
% of respondents reporting a rise or fall in increased **CASH FLOW** on the previous quarter



FEAR FACTORS



% of respondents seeing **INFLATION** as a fear factor compared to last quarter



% of respondents seeing **INTEREST RATES** as a fear factor compared to last quarter

Fear Factors:

"We had hoped the GBP/EUR rate would settle but it remains constantly high, as does the dollar. We have no choice but to pay our suppliers when stock arrives and even buying currency ahead of deliveries is pointless as the rates remain consistently disadvantageous."
Retail/Wholesale Sector

"Our biggest issue is probably corporation tax, the hike in that is hitting the small to medium size growing businesses, removing any fat that could be used for investment and future growth."
Manufacturing Sector

INVESTMENT INCREASES

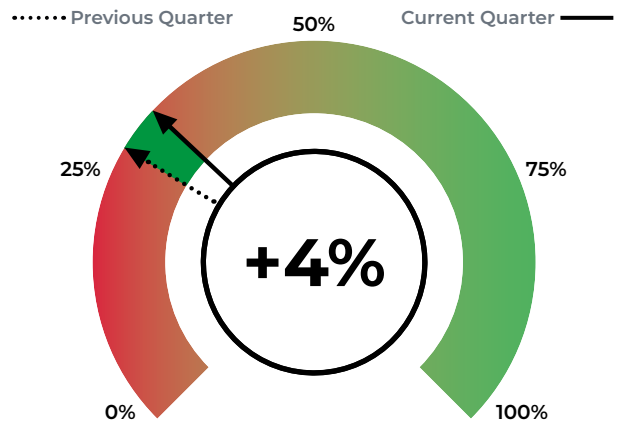
Plant & Machinery:

"We're investing in training in order to be able to rise to the increased economic challenges, as well as improve retention as recruitment is very challenging."

Manufacturing Sector

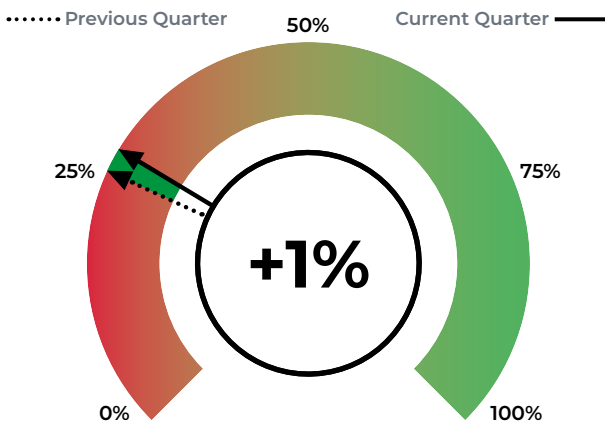
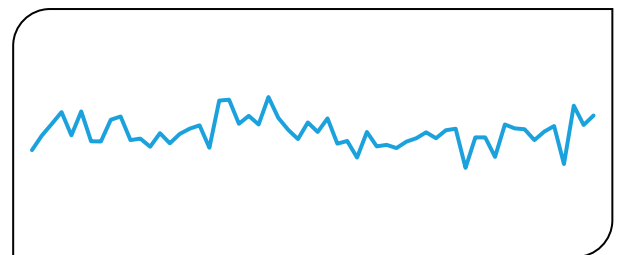
"Due to lack of suitable candidates for positions, we have decided to take a long term approach and invest in automation and high speed equipment that does not require high skill levels."

Manufacturing Sector



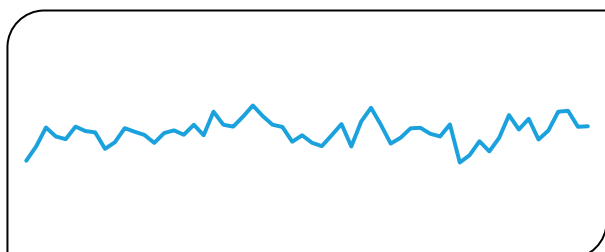
% of respondents reporting a rise or fall in increased **P&M INVESTMENT** on the previous quarter

2009 **Plant & Machinery** 2023



% of respondents reporting a rise or fall in increased **TRAINING INVESTMENT** on the previous quarter

2009 **Training** 2023



Training:

"We now do in-house training and also have 2 apprenticeship lads."

Service Sector

"Part time construction courses that were on a Monday or Friday to allow 4 day working weeks away from home."

Construction Sector

"We are struggling to get good reliable staff, we can teach skills but it is hard when they don't turn up or come in late."

Manufacturing Sector

**CONFIDENCE
INCREASES**

**Turnover
Confidence:**

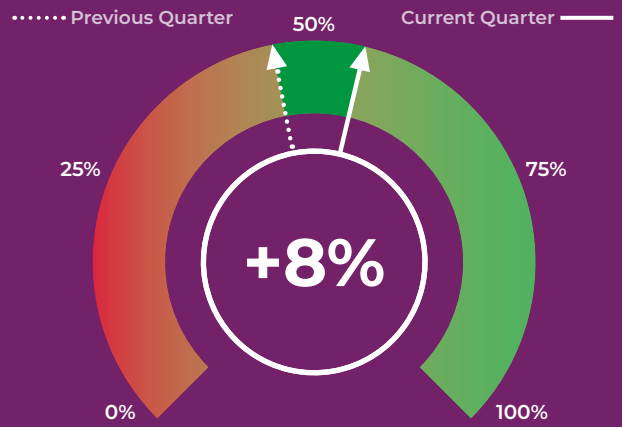
"No point in investing in machinery or workforce when profits are being taxed more."

Manufacturing Sector

"The first tranche of capital investment in faster, more productive equipment is starting to pay off."

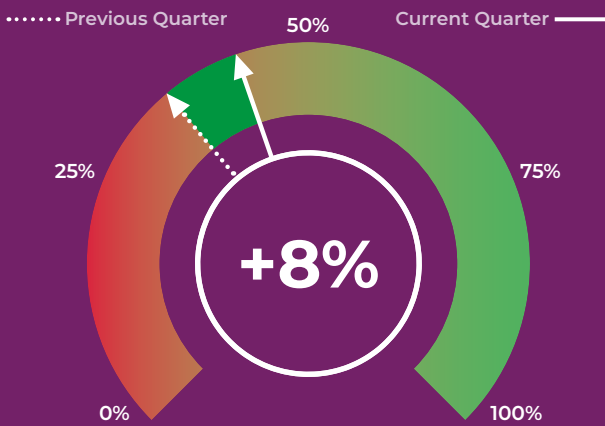
Manufacturing Sector

53% stated increased turnover confidence, above actual sales expectations.



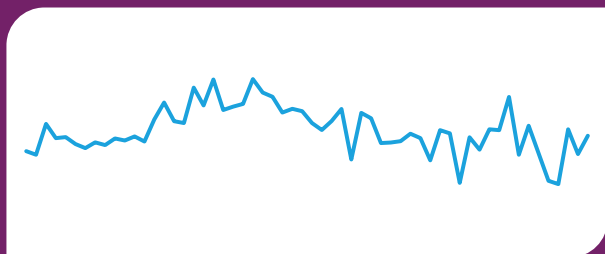
% of respondents reporting a rise or fall in increased **TURNOVER** on the previous quarter

2009 Turnover 2023



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

2009 Profitability 2023



**Profitability
Confidence:**

"Turnover will be driven by good customer service and targeted marketing. Profitability will be driven by making significant economies, e.g. giving up 50% of our current warehouse space and not replacing our full timer."
Retail/Wholesale Sector

"Costs are up, whether staff costs or materials, even with a predicted increase in income the profit ratio will be hit due to rising costs, more effort, less reward."
Service Sector

43% have confidence in increased profitability, up from 35% last quarter.

CAPACITY | PRICE vs COST

Capacity:

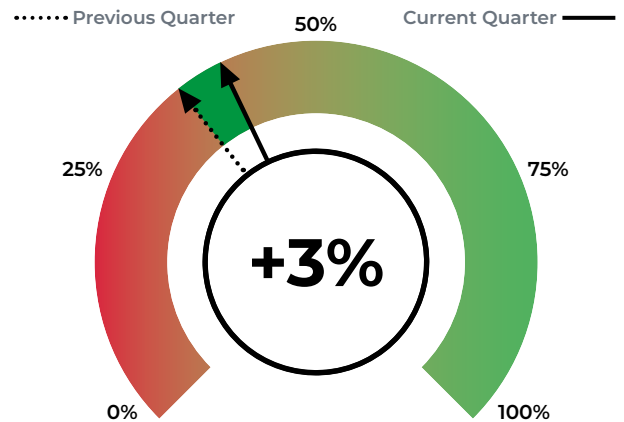
"We're looking at driving into newer markets and strengthening our sales drive to deal with the challenges we're facing in some of our current markets."

Manufacturing Sector

"We lost Europe - all 27 States overnight with Brexit."

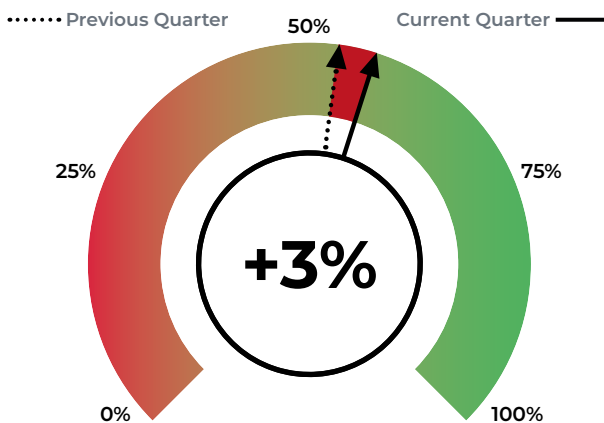
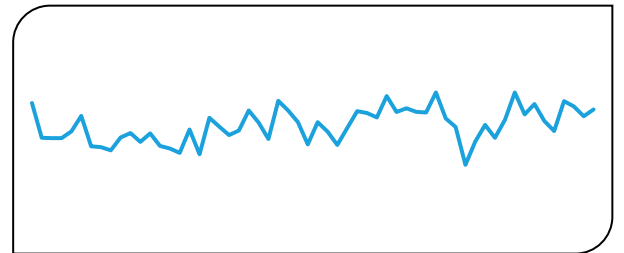
Retail/Wholesale Sector

Slight improvement in those working to capacity at 38% Q3, against 35% in Q2.



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

2009 Full Capacity 2023



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

Price vs Cost:

"We're being hit by 7.5% increase in corporation tax - it simply hasn't been possible to cut costs elsewhere to contribute this, so we will be passing this onto our prices."

Manufacturing Sector

"With everything going up our prices will need to increase to give our staff a pay rise."

Service Sector

"Our concern is fuel costs but we are trying to counter this by becoming energy independent - although car transport remains a problem cost."

Manufacturing Sector



ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS

Business Pressures:

1

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

2

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

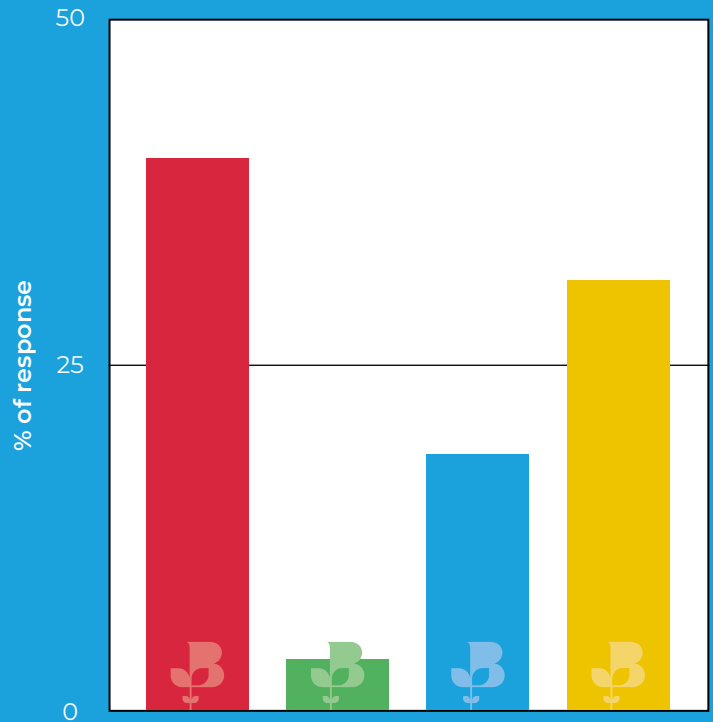
3

Are your credit terms getting worse?

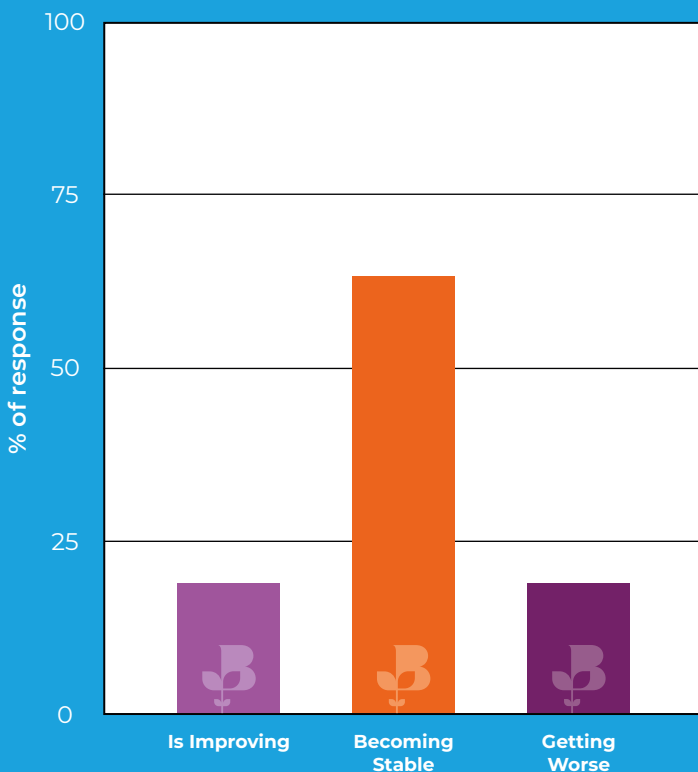
4

Are bad debts increasing?

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



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



Supply Chain:

"Our supply chain is relatively stable. We manufacture goods in our directly controlled facilities overseas. However if an election campaign is fought promoting xenophobia... much like the Brexit one then this could disrupt us further. In my opinion to make Britain great again... whatever that means... we need to value partnerships throughout the world and look to foster those as we live in an interdependent world."

Manufacturing Sector

"Raw material costs seem to be holding steady at last."

Manufacturing Sector

your voice MATTERS!

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

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- ✓ Highly Respected
- ✓ Informs Government

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TODAY!

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

About the QES

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

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

Every Single Business Voice Matters!

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

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



Celebrating completion of Duke of Edinburgh's Awards

Derwen College students celebrated achieving an impressive 72 Bronze, Silver and Gold Duke of Edinburgh's Awards at a dedicated ceremony this summer.

Students at the specialist further education college, near Oswestry, were joined by families, staff, sponsors and local dignitaries to mark completion of the arduous national youth achievement awards.

Shropshire's Vice Lord-Lieutenant, Jenny Wynn, and Oswestry Deputy Mayor, Councillor Mike Isherwood, also attended, along with representatives from supporting organisations, including Roger Pemberton, Provincial Grand Master of Shropshire Freemasons Provincial. Shropshire MP, Helen Morgan, was unable to attend, but wrote a letter of congratulations to each of the award winners to congratulate them on their achievements – these were handed out with certificates during the ceremony.

The audience was treated to performances by the College's Derwen on Tour (DOT) song, sign and dance group. Their performance of Queen's Don't Stop Me Now, was the perfect theme for the day. Hospitality and Food students served visiting VIPs with a buffet lunch and drinks.

Student certificates were handed out by the Vice Lord-Lieutenant, Roger Pemberton and Mike Isherwood.

The Duke of Edinburgh's Awards offer participants, with a wide variety of special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), the chance to develop skills for life, fulfil their potential and have a brighter future. Each section of the award gives the students an opportunity to be independent, to grow in confidence and to be challenged as an individual – something we actively promote at Derwen College.

To date, Derwen College has been offering the awards for nine years. We have celebrated 146 Bronze awards, 116 Silver awards and 48 Gold awards. This year, a phenomenal 23 students and graduates attended a reception at Buckingham Palace to receive their Gold awards.

For 2022/23, for the first time, students with profound and multiple learning disabilities (PMLD) were given the opportunity to complete their Bronze Duke of Edinburgh's Award. Students with limited mobility and communication were enabled to spend time in a tent and



Students from Derwen College receiving their awards at the ceremony earlier this year

complete skills, volunteering and physical aspects of the award. They rounded-off the experience with an expedition on the Llangollen Canal, near Ellesmere, on the Shropshire Lady canal boat, provided by The Lyneal Trust – experts in offering accessible canal holidays to people with disabilities.

The College is proud to offer Duke of Edinburgh's Awards to all students who want to take part in the awards. The DoFE team are incredibly proud of each and every student who showed the strength of character and commitment to take on these demanding challenges.

The annual Kirstin Royle Trust Award, which recognises a student who has shown endeavour and personal achievement, went to student Harry Rowson. Horticulture student Harry has mobility issues which mean he needs a wheelchair for most activities. However, nothing was holding him back when it came to the three-day canoeing expedition which was part of his Silver award.

Students accepted a charity donation from the Shropshire Freemasons from

Gold Duke of Edinburgh's Awards students Ciara McKenna and Anna Redding, who are also proud members of Derwen on Tour,

A cheque for £1,800 was presented by generous supporters Peter Robinson from the Shropshire Masonic Charitable Association; Rick Gerrard, from St Oswalds Lodge; and David Towers, St Oswalds Lodge. This will ensure continued support for students wishing to take on the most challenging Gold award.

Duke of Edinburgh's Awards Central England Operations Officer James Minor, sent a special video message to students and attendees.

He said: "You have shown others how we can all overcome challenges. You should be very proud of yourselves. During expeditions you may have wanted to give up, but despite this you pushed on and supported each other. There was positivity and strength of character demonstrated at every stage. Congratulations to you all. This is your day. Keep reaching for those stars!"

Find out more about Derwen College's Duke of Edinburgh's Awards programme at <https://derwen.me/DoFEDerwen>



Life and learning: both vibrant and innovative



Recently rated 'Excellent in all areas' by the Independent Schools Inspectorate, Prestfelde School offers a highly progressive and inclusive education

Tucked away in the heart of Shrewsbury, Prestfelde School is one of the UK's leading co-educational private schools for children aged 3-13 years old.

Recently rated 'Excellent in all areas' by the Independent Schools Inspectorate, Prestfelde School offers a highly progressive and inclusive education, a wealth of pastoral care initiatives, co-curricular programs and top-class facilities.

Opened in 1929 and set in 30 acres of superb grounds, Prestfelde is a thriving and forward-thinking coeducational day school for boys and girls.

At Prestfelde, more than 350 children and their parents' benefit from first class facilities in a happy, safe, and secure environment.

A spirit of enquiry and a love of learning permeate the classrooms and playground; lessons are engaging, challenging and inspiring and pupils are encouraged to develop a broad range of intellectual, creative, practical, physical and social skills.

Parents' busy lifestyles are supported with outstanding wraparound childcare that is responsive and unique to modern family needs. Prestfelde's flexible boarding offers pupils the opportunity to develop their characters, have fun, and build lasting

friendships for life. Academic highlights are bolstered by the level of success and quality of scholarships gained by pupils in the final year group. Consistently, Year 8 pupils achieve high pass rates at common entrance and are successful in gaining places at their first-choice senior schools.

Prestfelde has an outstanding sporting reputation and whilst many pupils maintain high levels of competitive sport in their disciplines, Prestfelde recognises the importance of children enjoying the challenges of team sport at school.

The co-curricular offering at Prestfelde is extensive and designed to build on pupil's experiences with the aim of improving outcomes in all areas of their learning.

Purposefully building on pupil's interests, Prestfelde aims to light that spark for learning and developing talents. Encouraging pupils to find their passions, the School works to nurture any interest that a child may have.

The Music department at Prestfelde is particularly popular, with children free to enjoy experimenting with a wide selection of musical instruments. Combined with the creative work happening within drama lessons, which take place in the school's 280 seat theatre, the Creative Arts at Prestfelde School are an impressive string to the school's bow.

There are first-class facilities at Prestfelde. Enabling the children at the school to reach their full potential, Prestfelde

boasts an array of exceptional facilities that have been purposely built to support education.

From Prestfelde's indoor swimming pool and Music School, through to the beautiful Art and Design rooms, Cookery School, IT Suite and Gym, Prestfelde's pupils enjoy learning in environments created specifically for the job. Additionally able to very comfortably accommodate pupils overnight, in their newly refurbished Boarding House, Prestfelde School's facilities complement the School's high educational standards.

Providing opportunities for businesses and the community to benefit from the facilities at the School, Prestfelde hires out the venue, the rooms within it and the grounds, during the school holidays and on evenings when not in use, for training, conferences, concerts, meetings and for group residential stays.

For further information on this, please contact the Business Manager on 01743 245400.

Families are invited all year round to take a tour of Prestfelde, to experience for themselves the very special environment and community.

To book an appointment to have a private tour, or to be a part of the School's next Open Morning, please contact admissions@prestfelde.co.uk.

Further information can be found at www.prestfelde.co.uk or by following the school on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter.



PRESTFELDE

Discover Prestfelde

Come and see what makes us one of the UK's leading
prep-schools for 3-13 year old boys and girls

Private tours available throughout the year

admissions@prestfelde.co.uk | 01743 298541

www.prestfelde.co.uk

Courses to upskill county's workforce

Telford College has launched a series of new degree-level courses, specifically designed to help upskill the local workforce.

They include a level five HND business programme, and a level five HND in healthcare professions' support.

It's all part of the college's ongoing campaign to work more closely than ever with the local business community to plug skills and recruitment gaps.

The level five business HND is a full-time, two-year course for those looking to develop knowledge of business beyond level three qualifications, or seeking to expand their skillset to help gain promotion.

Working with experienced Telford College tutors, you'll gain a higher understanding of specialist areas of business such as marketing, human resource management and finance.

Teresa Hughes, director of business, digital and professional at Telford College, says: "Employers are looking for staff with a real knowledge of working in industry, so whether you're already in employment or about to leave full-time education, this course will help you advance your career.

"The learning process need not stop there. Completing this course opens up a wide range of further options. For example, you can progress to further studies at university, link up with professional bodies in your sector, or commit to continuing professional development."

The HND healthcare professions' support is designed to address a growing demand for high-quality, professional and technically skilled staff within the healthcare sector.

It has been designed for those working as, or seeking to become assistant practitioners in healthcare.

The college, which has a healthcare training academy at its Wellington campus, works closely with the NHS to help train high-quality, professional and technically-skilled staff.

Abigail Allen, programme manager for higher education and access at Telford College, added: "Care, compassion and commitment are the core values needed to learn all the practical skills required for a range of careers from care assistants to health visitors, midwives, nurses, therapists, or nutritionists.



The level five business HND is a full-time, two-year course for those looking to develop knowledge of business beyond level three qualifications, or seeking to expand their skillset to help gain promotion



The HND healthcare professions' support is designed to address a growing demand for high-quality, professional and technically skilled staff within the healthcare sector

"Our new level five HND qualification for healthcare professions' support is being launched to meet a real need in the healthcare sector.

"This is a full-time, one-year top-up for students who already hold the level four HNC Healthcare Professions' Support.

"It will prepare you for a variety of roles within the health and social care sector by covering the knowledge, skills and behaviours within relevant occupational standards including integrated health and social care, healthcare management, public health and health promotion, and healthcare and nursing assistant practice.

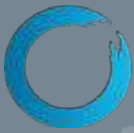
"The course can lead onto so many exciting clinical-based roles, like operating department practitioners, pre-registered nurses, jobs in therapeutic radiography, in-

patient assessment, occupational therapy, mental health support... and much more."

Telford College principal and chief executive Graham Guest says: "We firmly believe the future of education is about the development of well-rounded individuals with useable, transferable skills in keeping with the modern working world.

"We work more closely than ever with business to ensure our students are viewed as employable. Many companies are already involved in our growing range of employer hubs, helping us to shape our curriculum."

● To find out more about Telford College's new courses, and the rest of the higher education curriculum, see www.telfordcollege.ac.uk/join-us/our-courses/higher-education/



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Picturesque Cae Glas Park in Oswestry



The town was a finalist of Britain in Bloom



The Derwen team during the day of judging

Proud to be part of Britain in Bloom

Derwen College's green-fingered horticulturists were among the team showcasing Oswestry's gorgeous floral displays to Britain in Bloom judges.

Paul Moss, the nursery production manager at Derwen College's garden centre, with horticulture helpers and Derwen clients, Anton Berry and Thomas Donaldson, met Britain in Bloom judges when they visited Cae Glas Park, in Oswestry.

The Derwen team joined Oswestry in Bloom chair Natalie Bainbridge, Oswestry Mayor Cllr Olly Rose, Cae Glas park keeper Sue Cameron, Oswestry BID's (Business Improvement District) Adele Nightingale, and Louise Humphreys from Oswestry Council when they met with RHS Britain in Bloom judges Rae Beckwith and Roger Burnett in the splendid town park on Wednesday.

Paul Moss, who has been instrumental in sourcing, designing and planting the park's bedding, borders and planters, spoke to judges as part of their tour of the town. Paul has worked at the park with Derwen College students – who visit the gardens every Monday – as well as with some of Derwen's long-term clients, such as Anton and Thomas.

Despite a week of wind and rain, the sun shone for the judges, and the plants had survived the elements well.

This year's planting was about more than simply stunning displays of bedding plants. As well as colourful bedding plants, such as begonias and salvia, around town and in the central bed at the park, Paul sourced a variety of pollinator-friendly perennials. These more sustainable options were planted around the edges of the park to encourage bees and butterflies.

As part of the process, judges also spoke to pupils from Woodside Primary School, who showed off sunflowers that they'd planted for a competition in the park, before being introduced to the hard-working team of Oswestry in Bloom volunteers.

The two judges were even treated to a surprise marriage proposal when a visitor to Oswestry popped the question to his girlfriend on a visit to the park.

The day of judging included visits to many areas around Oswestry where the community has come together to make Oswestry bloom.

Derwen College was proud to part of this process. Find out more about Derwen College's commitment to offering real-life work experience to students with special educational needs and disabilities at www.derwen.ac.uk

Serving up skills for the future

A hard-working Derwen College student has gained valuable experience in the hospitality industry, thanks to a partnership with The Wrekin Housing Group.

Supported intern, Maisy Cadwallader, who has learning difficulties, has made a huge impact at Ashwood extra care scheme, in Oswestry. She has been honing her hospitality and customer service skills

at Shire Living's Ashwood on a weekly work placement, for nearly a year, and is delighted to have progressed to a job there.

Maisy is a 21-year-old supported intern at specialist further education college Derwen, on the Hospitality and Food pathway. She is keen to pursue a future career in Hospitality, and is also looking forward to further independence as she is moving into a new flat with friends after College.

Maisy has been working in the café and kitchen at Ashwood every Wednesday for nearly a year as an intern through a partnership with Wrekin Housing. She is one of two Derwen College students who enjoy vital work placements thanks to Wrekin Housing. She is accompanied by Derwen job coach Amy Wilkinson, who has been able to gradually withdraw support, and now only visits for regular check-ins.

Residents say that Maisy is a well-liked member of staff who has grown in skills and confidence during her time at Ashwood.

Gill Price, Social Value Co-ordinator at The Wrekin Housing Group said: "Maisy has been doing very well and I have had good feedback from the team she works with to say so and how much they enjoy having her here.

"Wrekin has been offering work experience and placements to young people for some time, as we believe it's our responsibility as a part of the community"



Maisy Cadwallader has been popular at Ashwood

Work Experience and Supported Internships Coordinator Abi Baker thanked Wrekin for enabling supported interns to gain valuable work experience at Shire Living.

"Our Supported Interns experience the world of work at regular placements in the community. They attend with Derwen job coaches such as Amy. As students gain independence we withdraw that support, with a long-term view of allowing them to work independently."

Maisy, whose family are from Bridgnorth, will be moving into shared accommodation with friends near Oswestry. She has been learning travel training to help her to travel to work on her own from her new home.

Maisy says: "At Ashwood, I've learnt knife skills and peeling vegetables. I clean the surfaces and kitchen, mop the floor, brush the floor. I take food and drink to the tables. My favourite thing is serving the food to customers. I can work independently now, and love it."

As part of her internship, Maisy works at Derwen College's The Orangery Restaurant, in the Walled Garden Café, and in Tip Top Takeout. She also has external work placements at Cambrian Coffee and Cakes, Oswestry, and Hummingbird Café in Telford.

Find out more about vocational learning at Derwen College via the website at www.derwen.ac.uk



Protect, care and invest to create a better borough





Academic achievement

The team at the Marches Academy Trust are elated to announce another remarkable year of academic achievement across the whole year group as it celebrates the exceptional performance of its students on GCSE results day.

The Trust's commitment to fostering an environment of growth and excellence, underpinned by its unwavering student support system, has once again yielded outstanding results.

Amidst the challenges posed by the ever-evolving educational landscape, the Trust remains dedicated to providing support to its students. From learning plans to dedicated mentoring, the school's approach is centred on ensuring that each and every student is empowered to reach their full potential. This commitment to individual growth is a driving force behind the remarkable GCSE results achieved this year.

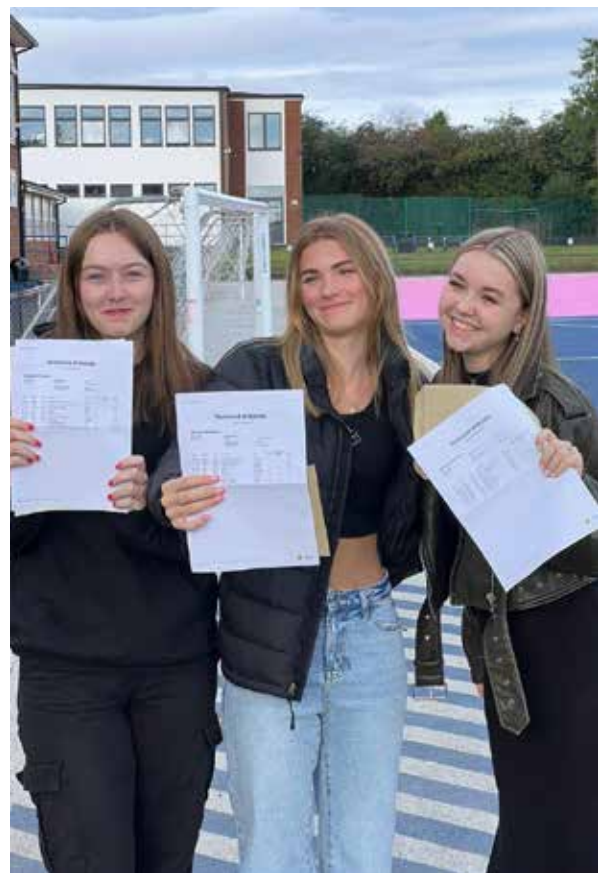
The Marches Academy Trust believe that every student's journey is unique and are immensely proud of the exceptional achievements of all students. The results reflect not only their hard work and dedication but also the comprehensive support system that surrounds them.

The impressive results achieved by the Trust schools' students highlight not only their academic prowess but also their resilience and adaptability in the face of challenges. The Trust's emphasis on a well-rounded education, combining academic excellence with personal development, is a cornerstone of its success.

As part of its commitment to supporting students, all schools across the Trust implemented various initiatives including additional tutoring, one-on-one mentorship, and a robust online learning infrastructure. These efforts have proven instrumental in ensuring that students receive the guidance they need to excel academically and holistically.

The Marches Academy Trust remains steadfast in its mission to nurture future leaders, innovators, and responsible global citizens. The exceptional outcomes of this year's GCSE results underscore the dedication to creating environments where students thrive not only academically but also personally.

For more information, please visit marchesacademytrust.co.uk



Marches Academy trust students celebrate their results



Is a new career on the cards for you?

A new career support initiative has been launched in Shropshire to inspire pupils to consider careers across the spectrum whilst being supported by county employers.

Career Cards has been launched by Andy Goff, who boasts decades of worldwide experience in teaching, technology in education and media training in schools.

Andy, based in Shrewsbury, has already won the support of many leading businesses across the county which have signed up as sponsors for Career Cards and are included on the cards.

The Career Cards' stations have 12 individual cards which each feature an industry, role, photo and background of the person, with a scannable QR code to take the pupil to a video on the Career Cards' website, recorded by that person, to find out more.

A range of videos are available to watch, informing more about what that person does, what they like about their job and the different pathways to it, including university, apprenticeships and other avenues.

Andy, who is already working with a number of schools in the region, said: "The Career Cards project is all about connecting businesses with the exceptional young talent we are fortunate enough to have here in Shropshire.

"We have phenomenal businesses in the county which are not exempt from the national recruitment crisis.

"Skills and recruitment is a massive nationwide problem across many industries so together we aim to discover and engage the future talent out there and ensure they know the vast opportunity presented by Shropshire employers.

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

"I have been overwhelmed by the support of Shropshire businesses so far and it has been wonderful to see the students' reactions - picking up Career



Andy Goff with some examples of the career cards available

Cards and taking them home to discuss with their parents.

"We so often hear of young people leaving education still totally clueless of what they want to do - that isn't their fault - they just haven't been exposed to the opportunity early enough.

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

"The project will expand month on month and I am so excited to see the network of businesses already throwing

their support behind the project."

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

The Career Cards project officially launched on Friday September 15th at a venue to be confirmed.

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

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More support at work for domestic abuse survivors

Many people within the Telford, Wrekin and Shropshire region will have been subjected to domestic abuse at some point in their lives.

But there is still a huge way to go in terms of raising awareness of domestic abuse, and understanding the signs when someone is being subjected to it.

What is Domestic Abuse?

Domestic Abuse can include, but is not limited to, physical or sexual abuse, psychological or emotional abuse, coercive control (such as taking control through intimidation and isolation), financial or economic abuse (such as taking control of a person's finances), harassment and stalking, or online/technological and digital abuse.

Domestic abuse can have a huge impact on all areas of a person's life, from their work and relationships to their self-esteem and independence.

Anyone can be subjected to domestic abuse including:

- Any gender
- Any sexual orientation
- Any age including children and young people and over 55s
- People from any town, region, country
- Those with health issues and disabilities who may rely on carers
- In any job or industry sector
- Different socio-economic groups

Did you know:

- At least 1 in 4 women and 1 in 6 men will be subjected to domestic abuse in their lifetime
- Around 1 in 5 children have been exposed to domestic abuse

- The Crime Survey for England and Wales year ending March 2022 estimated that 5.0% of adults aged 16 years and over (2.4 million) experienced domestic abuse in the last year (www.ons.gov.uk)
- Domestic Abuse costs businesses £1.9 billion each year through reduced productivity and performance

It doesn't matter what industry you are in or how many employees you have, the statistics show that you will have people working for you that have been subjected to domestic abuse historically, or are now, or know someone who is or has been. They may have grown up with domestic abuse in their household.

By doing training in your workplace or giving employees the opportunity to access support you will show everyone you are a zero tolerant organisation when it comes to domestic abuse.

Ask yourself, would you recognise the signs of domestic abuse and know how to support? Do you have a workplace Domestic Abuse Policy and supporting processes?

Is there a friend, colleague or family member you feel is at risk of domestic abuse and you want to raise your awareness?

If you are interested in accessing free domestic abuse training in Telford and Wrekin, Haven Training are offering Awareness and Workplace Ambassador training.

Visit www.havenrefuge.org.uk/training or you can contact them by email via training@havenrefuge.org.uk

Domestic Abuse can include, but is not limited to, physical or sexual abuse, psychological or emotional abuse, coercive control (such as taking control through intimidation and isolation), financial or economic abuse (such as taking control of a person's finances), harassment and stalking, or online/ technological and digital abuse. Domestic abuse can have a huge impact on all areas of a person's life...



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Parkour instructor Reece Lindsay shows a SYST Beneficiary the course created at Telford Town Park

Youth trust introduce a new parkour activity for NEETs

Shropshire Youth Support Trust (SYST) is taking a bold step towards engaging and empowering the region's young population by introducing a new Parkour activity in Telford Town Park.

Aimed specifically at young individuals aged 16 to 30 who are not in employment, education, or training (NEET), this initiative seeks to provide an opportunity for personal growth, physical activity, and community connection. The best part? These sessions are entirely free of charge.

Parkour, often referred to as urban acrobatics, is a discipline that involves navigating through various obstacles in the environment using movements like running, jumping, and climbing. It's not just a physical activity; it's a way of creatively interacting with the surroundings.

SYST recognises the potential of Parkour to inspire and motivate young people while fostering a sense of accomplishment and self-confidence.

Starting from August 1, 2023, the Parkour sessions will be held twice a week - on Tuesdays from 3:30pm to 4:50pm and Thursdays from 4:30pm to 5:50pm. The venue for these exciting sessions is within Telford Town Park, near the climbing wall.

To secure a spot in these invigorating Parkour sessions, interested individuals can

reach out to the Shropshire Youth Support Trust. Booking a place is as simple as contacting them via phone at 01952 299214 or through email at hello@systbusiness.co.uk.

As Shropshire Youth Support Trust steps into this new venture, they continue to be a beacon of support for the local youth. For more information about Shropshire Youth Support Trust and their diverse range of programs, visit their website at www.systbusiness.co.uk.

Parkour, often referred to as urban acrobatics, is a discipline that involves navigating through various obstacles in the environment using movements like running, jumping, and climbing. It's not just a physical activity; it's a way of creatively interacting with the surroundings.

Heading out on a trail raises funds for charity

A brand-new hiking event is being offered by the region's main cancer charity – to raise awareness about breast cancer and give everyone the chance to shake their maracas!

Organisers are calling for colleagues to join in the fun and help to raise awareness.

The Shropshire Titty Trail is the latest event from Lingen Davies Cancer Fund and is being held on Saturday, 14th October around the South Shropshire hills. It is being organised as part of Breast Cancer Awareness month to highlight the disease which is the UK's most common type of cancer. Around 55,000 women and 400 men are diagnosed with breast cancer every year in the UK.

Lingen Davies have teamed up with expedition leaders Sky Blue Adventures to host the event, with local marketing agency Reech Media as headline sponsors.

The 10-mile trek will start in Church Stretton's Carding Mill Valley, heading onto The Burway, and will take in Pole Bank – the highest point of

the Long Mynd – and make the most of Shropshire's finest views.

Lingen Davies Cancer Fund fundraises to enhance and support cancer services for patients from throughout Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin, and Mid Wales. The charity also delivers a cancer awareness and prevention service, LifeLive, promoting the signs and symptoms of cancer, and the importance of early diagnosis in the wider community.

Lizzy Ellis, Fundraising Events Lead for Lingen Davies, said everyone at Lingen Davies is very excited to be bringing this new event and awareness initiative to local people.

"Breast Cancer is the UK's most common cancer and affects everyone,



Emilie Kerr from Lingen Davies and Faye Hudson from Reech Media at the launch of the trail

men and women. We want to highlight the importance of being breast aware and thought what better way to do that than by getting the community together for a fun, enjoyable, relaxing hike in the beautiful South Shropshire hills.

"We want to encourage people not to be afraid to discuss signs and symptoms or attend their screenings. We hope lots of people who have been impacted by cancer, either themselves or a loved one, will feel empowered to join us, and bring along friends and family to make the event a really special day.

"We're very grateful to the team at Reech who loved the ideas as much as we did and have joined us as headline sponsors for the event," she added.

Faye Hudson, Head of Client Marketing at Reech said: "We are really excited to be sponsoring this fantastic new Lingen Davies fundraising event. It's something brand new for the charity and is going to raise vital funds to support more of the amazing work that Lingen Davies do. We've loved working on developing some high-impact and bold branding and can't wait to see it out there in the world. Our team are looking forward to representing Reech at the Titty Trail in October!"

The Shropshire Titty Trail is open to anyone over 10, participants must pre-register to take part in the trail through the charity's website www.lingendavies.co.uk/ events the entry fee includes a t-shirt and a finishers medal.

Snowdon sunrise challenge success



The Aico team had to ascend 3,199 feet and travel a total distance of nine miles to complete the challenge and raise vital funds for The Movement Centre

Aico and HomeLINK colleagues completed the Snowdon Sunrise Challenge raising over £7,000, which is to be doubled to £15,000 by Aico, in support of The Movement Centre.

55 colleagues set off by bus from Aico's headquarters in Oswestry, at 11.30 pm on Wednesday 28th June to Snowdon. The team started their trek with Mountain Leaders from Sky Blue Adventures, at 2:00 am and travelled through the night to reach the summit of the tallest mountain in Wales, just in time for sunrise at 5:25 am on Thursday 29th June.

The journey was challenging, as the team had to ascend 3,199 feet and travel a total distance of nine miles. However, they were all determined to complete the challenge and raise vital funds for The Movement Centre. They had a well-deserved breakfast at the Padarn Hotel after completing the descent.

The Movement Centre is a UK charity and specialist treatment centre that helps children who have Cerebral Palsy, Down Syndrome or increased strength and control of their movement. They do this through the use of Targeted Training, a specialist therapy that is currently only provided by The Movement Centre, within the UK.

Curtis Langley, Fundraising and Marketing Officer at The Movement Centre, commented "Over the last few years, I have really tried to diversify our fundraised income at The Movement Centre, especially through the addition of new events. The Snowdon (Yr Wyddfa) Sunrise Challenge seemed an obvious event

to add to our calendar after speaking with Paul from Sky Blue Adventures. I was delighted when the team at Aico agreed to take on the mountain at night and raise vital funds for our charity. The support we have and continue to receive from Aico is incredible, and we really appreciate the support their staff offer.

Snowdon (Yr Wyddfa) is tough enough in the day, but to complete this challenge at night was a huge task. 55 members of staff from Aico, took on the challenge starting their ascent at 2am in the morning, and were led up by Mountain Leaders in various groups depending on experience and fitness, with the aim of reaching the top in time to see sunrise. I was lucky enough to join them on this challenge, and was excited to experience Snowdon (Yr Wyddfa) at night. A huge thank you to the team, who have raised over £7,000 so far with donations still coming in."

The donations raised by colleagues have been doubled by Aico to £15,000. These funds will help The Movement Centre to continue providing life-changing support to children and their families living with movement disabilities.

Aico has a longstanding relationship with The Movement Centre, showing continued support through fundraising activities and donations, organised as part of their Corporate Social Responsibility programme, Aico in the Community.

"We are absolutely delighted to have completed the Snowdon Sunrise Challenge," said Ryan Evans, Sustainability Lead at Aico. "This was a challenging but rewarding experience, and we are proud to have raised vital funds for The Movement Centre. We would like to thank everyone who supported us, and we look forward to continuing our support for this amazing charity."

To learn more about The Movement Centre, please visit: www.the-movement-centre.co.uk





Who needs wings? Sally, back safe and sound on the ground



There's no hiding the euphoria – Sally raised more than a £1,000

Sally's skydive raises funds for The Haven

A fearless fundraiser has helped a domestic abuse charity in its 50th year by braving a 14,000ft skydive.

Sally Bromley, Partnerships Manager at Paycare, has raised more than £1,000 for The Haven Wolverhampton by taking part in their anniversary skydive celebration.

After taking the plunge, Sally – who lives in Shropshire – said it was something she'd always wanted to do, and she was thrilled to have been able to support a sadly much-needed charity while also ticking off a 'bucket list' experience.

"Sadly, two women a week in the UK are killed by a current or former partner, amounting to 104 women every year," she explained.

"The Haven Wolverhampton receives about 1,000 calls to their emergency helpline every month, with each call costing the charity £2. That's why fundraising is so vital, to help women take that first brave step away from abuse, knowing that call will be answered and that they're not alone.

"It's sad that domestic abuse still happens and we still need a charity whose mission is to provide support for women and children going through this trauma – but I hope the skydive has helped raise more awareness for The Haven alongside crucial funds.

"It was an amazing day – I was so excited and the team at the airfield including my instructor Kayleigh were fantastic. It was a surreal experience – the first half is the free fall, which is like being in a tumble drier and a complete adrenaline overload! Once



Sally Bromley, partnerships manager at Paycare, pictured during the 14,000ft skydive

the parachute is out, it's just serene and mesmerising. You go from free falling at 120 mph for 50 seconds to 20 mph for the final 6,000 feet!"

The charity's Fundraising Manager Jade Secker said: "We were absolutely thrilled to have Sally as part of the team for The Haven's Jump 50 Skydive challenge. The event was held to mark our 50th anniversary as an organisation and so we set out to find 50 brave skydivers to join us, one to represent each year of The Haven's support.

"Of course it wouldn't be right if we didn't have a Paycare representative in the team as they have been such a wonderful and important part in our journey as a charity. And who would be more fitting than Sally?! She did absolutely amazingly and

brought so much energy to the day.

"Taking on a skydive at 14,000ft is an immense challenge and Sally should be so super proud of what she has achieved; all whilst doing something amazing for The Haven at the same time. We are so grateful to everyone who has sponsored her and helped her raise such an amazing total which will help so many vulnerable women and children fleeing abuse. Thank you as always to Sally and to the Paycare team for their ongoing commitment and support of the work we do at The Haven"

Visit www.havenrefuge.org.uk for more information on the charity, or find Paycare's blog at www.paycare.org/about-us/blog for updates on the organisation's community work.



Wing walking for children's charity



From left to right - Bekki Fardoe (Hope House), Jack Fallows (Financial Adviser), Becky Wall (Mayor of Shrewsbury), Rachel Davey (DMOS People) and Richard Canfer-Taylor (Reclaim Tax UK)

A Shropshire-based financial adviser's daring wing walk raises £2,175 for Hope House Children's Hospice.

Jack Fallows, took to the skies in a heart-stopping wing walk to raise funds for Hope House and Tŷ Gobaith.

The daring stunt captured the attention and hearts of the community, resulting in an impressive total of £2,175 raised to support the vital work of the hospice.

Mr Fallows, known for his charitable work with both Severn Hospice and SYA Youth Club, embraced the challenge with enthusiasm saying: "Hope House and Tŷ Gobaith is an incredible charity that does so much for local families in need. I wanted to do something to make a difference in the lives of children and families supported by them."

"The wing walk was an exhilarating

experience, and I'm grateful for the overwhelming support from friends, family, and local businesses."

The fundraising campaign gained significant traction thanks to the generous contributions of Reclaim Tax UK and DMOS People. Richard Canfer-Taylor from Reclaim Tax UK, along with Stuart Danks from DMOS People, organised a spirited darts tournament on a Friday afternoon.

Staff members from both businesses faced off against the formidable Sean Goodman, Regional Development Director at Reclaim Tax UK, in a series of intense games.

If a challenger managed to defeat Goodman, Reclaim Tax UK and DMOS People pledged to donate £50 to the wing walk cause. However, if the challenger fell short, they were encouraged to contribute whatever they could.

The tournament, held on July 7th, was filled with laughter, camaraderie, and a wide range of dart-throwing abilities.

Participants gave it their all, some coming incredibly close to victory, while others were content to land their darts on the board rather than the wall.

Reclaim Tax UK and DMOS People demonstrated their commitment to this wonderful cause by donating a generous £1000 towards the fundraising efforts for Hope House and Tŷ Gobaith.

The success of Jack Fallows' wing walk fundraiser highlights the power of community support and collective action.

Jack expressed his gratitude to everyone involved, stating: "I'm overwhelmed by the generosity and encouragement I've received throughout this campaign. Together, we have made a meaningful impact on the lives of the children and families supported by Hope House and Tŷ Gobaith."

To contribute to this worthy cause, please visit Jack Fallows' JustGiving page - <https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/jack-fallows3>

Golden anniversary joy for accountants

A Shropshire company is celebrating a major milestone this year and is marking the occasion with a new corporate image, website and office refurbishment.

Stanton Ralph Chartered Accountants, of Bridgnorth, was formed 50 years ago by Richard Dyas, with Adam Stanton joining him soon after. Originally in premises in the High Street before moving to St Leonards Close in 1984.

The company has grown considerably over the years with 32 people now working in the team and in 2011 moved to the former Old Police Station in Whitburn Street, Bridgnorth, where, following large investment, the building was completely transformed to provide suitable office space.

There are four directors, Adrian Ralph, Philip Wood, Ann Hill and Darren Foot, with Philip Wood, commenting: "We still have several original clients who have been with us over all these years, and we now look after a huge range of clients including sole traders and partnerships, together with a large agricultural base and sizeable corporates who are based locally and throughout the UK."

"To mark this special anniversary, we have had a new brand created, with a fresh website under construction, and have a few events planned for old and new clients over the coming year. This will help in further raising our profile, including attending agricultural shows, together with networking and business events as part of our membership of Shropshire Chamber of Commerce."

"Looking to the future, we are making improvements to the offices to provide an open space working environment, together



Philip Wood (front right) and Ann Hill (centre) and just a few of the team members with the company's new brand

with new conference room and staff room. We have also welcomed a new director who is local to Bridgnorth, Ann Hill. She brings a wealth of experience in accounting and audit - and we are now looking to employ two new trainee accountants this year as the company continues to grow and move forward."

Stanton Ralph Chartered Accountants can be contacted on 01746 761717 or email info@stantonralph.co.uk

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We are looking to introduce an entry-level advertising opportunity in the next issue of Your Chamber, Your Voice. The concept is to replicate the information from your business card in print – as part of a handy directory. Each slot is priced just £50* and will be collated with other businesses taking up this great deal. *Subject to VAT.
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Owners Gareth and Emma Glynn at Ellesmere-based The Shropshire Distillery have introduced a cocktail masterclass

Distillery is pinpointing the latest cocktail trend

Ellesmere's small-batch distillery has identified a growing trend with cocktails in the local drinks sector. The popularity of cocktail drinking has prompted them to start holding cocktail masterclasses at their distillery event space.

The 2 hour cocktail masterclass includes a welcome drink, a talk on cocktails, a workstation briefing, and demonstrations. The distillers are on hand to offer guidance, while the pupils create and mix three

different cocktails at their own workstations, which can be consumed at their leisure. The masterclasses run on selected Saturdays and can be booked via the website, or purchased as a gift voucher.

Emma Glynn, one of the UK's few female distillers, said, "Now we have expanded into producing liqueurs and our Spring Vodka, the number of cocktails we can create using our award-winning small batch spirits has grown.

"Cocktails have been a definite trend in 2023, so expanding our experiences to include a cocktail masterclass was a natural progression.

"We're happy to report they have been a great success so far, attracting a new customer base to the distillery.

"Our ethos with cocktails is to keep them uncomplicated and faff free so that

they can be easily recreated at home, but still impressive enough to wow your friends and family. We want our customers to go home inspired to get creative with mixology!

"It's great to see how much fun our visitors have at our masterclasses, gin school, and gin-tasting sessions. We like to create a relaxed and friendly atmosphere, where quality Shropshire spirits can be enjoyed."

The distillery has had a successful year so far, being named as a finalist for Brewery/Distillery of the Year at the Midlands Food Drink & Hospitality Awards 2023 and scooping the award for 'Best Small Business' at the Shropshire Chamber Business Awards in June.

To book one of their experiences, visit www.theshropshiredistillery.co.uk



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Sponsor needed to help showground fireworks night go with a proper bang



Ian Bebbington, the Shropshire and West Midlands Agricultural Society's chief executive, said: "Our bonfire and fireworks spectacular in November is always eagerly anticipated and we have a fantastic opportunity on offer for someone to be this year's main sponsor."

The bonfire night and fireworks spectacular at Shrewsbury's West Mid Showground is on the horizon and Chamber members are being urged to consider supporting the event by being this year's main sponsor.

Chamber member The Shropshire and West Midlands Agricultural Society does an amazing job each year by putting on one of the biggest and best bonfire night displays in the area. Last year's event attracted more than 6,000 visitors.

It's one of the highlights of the year and will be taking place on Saturday, November 4, with the evening once again featuring the two fireworks displays that have become such a popular tradition at the showground.

Ian Bebbington, the Shropshire and West Midlands Agricultural Society's chief

executive, said: "Our bonfire and fireworks spectacular in November is always eagerly anticipated and we have a fantastic opportunity on offer for someone to be this year's main sponsor.

"Putting on an event of this size requires support and we are looking for someone who can partner us in putting together another great Bonfire Night experience for the thousands of people who will be attending this year.

"Main sponsorship costs £3,000 and provides an excellent opportunity to get your company's name front and centre at an amazing event which appeals to people of all ages. Our sponsor and their guests will get exclusive access to a VIP area on the evening, providing the opportunity to watch the firework displays from the President's Pavilion.

"Our sponsor will be able to brand the site ahead of the event and feature in a photocall and press release announcing the sponsorship partnership. It also comes with six annual corporate memberships of the Shropshire and West Midlands Agricultural Society for 2023/24 – which includes entry

to next year's Shropshire County Show.

"Becoming the main sponsor at this year's event is a great opportunity and this sponsorship will help us to create another wonderful evening of memories for so many people. For more information or to indicate your interest, please call us on 01743 289831."

The bonfire night will feature two firework displays - the earlier one is aimed more at people with younger children and comes with a reduced noise level. This is followed by a louder display later in the evening.

People are welcome to attend both displays for the same admission fee and there will be other entertainment available during the evening along with food and drink vendors.

All proceeds from the evening will go to the West Midlands Agricultural Society's Rural Charity, which allows the society to support a number of groups and organisations through donations over the year and helps to maintain the showground as a vital part of the local community.



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Websites are not so Komplex for expanding care company



Helen Culshaw, director of Ascendancy, with Arron Zaib, managing director of Komplex Group

Web sites not so Komplex for expanding care company.

A suite of websites for a Shropshire-based care company were developed in record time to match the firm's rapid growth.

Digital marketing agency, Ascendancy, worked with Komplex Group, which provides care services across the country, to publish four websites in the space of six months.

The websites covered the group's different divisions: Komplex Care, Komplex Community and Komplex Health, as well as the Komplex Group itself.

Helen Culshaw, director of Ascendancy, said the short timescale was a challenge which was met head-on by the team.

"Clients and web designers often have differing opinions about how long it takes to create a website, but we are always keen to find solutions to a challenge," she said.

"In this case, the client required four websites which could stand alone but clearly linked together by using common themes and branding.

"After talking through the brief in detail, we opted to develop a bespoke WordPress theme for the sites, which could be easily adapted to fit the brand guidelines of each individual division. We introduced a top navigation bar that would enable visitors to explore other parts of the Group as well as finding about the specific part of the business they are interested in. Using the same base theme for all four websites enabled us to turn around the websites very quickly and also demonstrated the synergy between the different divisions.

"It was a very quick turnaround, and we are delighted to have got all of the sites up and running to the client's satisfaction."

Komplex Care is one of the leading care providers in the UK, providing care packages for adults and children with a wide range of conditions.

The organisation works together with patients, their families and medical teams to deliver a completely bespoke service, as well as running their own in-house training facility offering specialist courses to practitioners.

Arron Zaib, managing director of Komplex Group, said the positivity from Ascendancy was integral to the success of the project.

He said: "We were very aware that our timescales were ambitious, but with the business growing so rapidly, we had a number of deadlines which needed to be met.

"The Ascendancy team had a refreshing 'can do' attitude, and rather than listing all of the reasons why we couldn't get four websites built in just six months, came up with ways that we could.

"We are really pleased with the results and look forward to working with Ascendancy as we continue to grow and develop over the coming years."



Proud to have made the awards finals list



Mutneys is a market-leading company that has been manufacturing and supplying high quality, professional pet grooming equipment for nearly 30 years

Award-winning suppliers & manufacturers of dog grooming equipment, Mutneys Professional Pet Care, were named as finalists for 'Best Small Business' in the Shropshire Chamber Awards 2023.

The Market Drayton based company, known for its high-quality, locally made dog grooming products, celebrated their success at the 2023 Shropshire Chamber Business

Awards. The glitzy awards ceremony was held at Telford International Centre and welcomed more than 600 guests from businesses across Shropshire. Launched in 2001, the Shropshire Chamber Business Awards are known as one of the largest and longest running business awards event in the UK.

Stephanie Roberts, Director of Mutneys said: "It's a privilege to be recognised alongside other incredible businesses in our local area. We pride ourselves on being a family-run company, who are approachable, friendly and known for promoting education within in the industry. We would like to thank all of our customers who have supported us over the years. Congratulations to The

Shropshire Distillery who won Best Small Business, as well as all the other winners of the event".

Mutneys is a market-leading company that has been manufacturing and supplying high quality, professional pet grooming equipment for nearly 30 years, supplying to both professional groomers and pet owners across the UK and worldwide.

To find out more about the full range of products that Mutneys offers, please visit online at www.mutneys.com, call their team of grooming experts on 01948 841470 or visit the Mutneys showroom in Market Drayton, Shropshire (opening times are Monday – Thursday: 10am – 4pm).

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Donation made to 'Stars Appeal'

Shrewsbury based Internet Service Provider SWS Broadband has donated £1,000 to Bishop's Castle Community Land Trust's (BCCLT) newly launched £50,000 Stars Appeal.

The Appeal is to fund BCCLT's transformation of the former Stars Newsagent shop on Church Street into two upstairs flats for local people, and a ground floor space for local enterprises, charities and not for profit organisations to use.

The Trust bought the building using some of the £250,000 bequeathed to them by philanthropist Bill Bainbridge who had rescued the Three Tuns Brewery in Bishop's Castle in 2003 and died in 2014 at the age of 63.

The works are also being funded by a mortgage from the Ecology Building Society and a grant from Shropshire Council.

Jonathan Brown, BCCLT company secretary, said: "We need to raise around £50,000 towards the building work and hope that many residents of Bishop's Castle and further afield will want to help us to reach that target."

The two flats being created will be let by the Trust at an affordable rent (at least 20 per cent below private sector rents), and are for local people in housing need who may not be eligible for a housing association property. The Trust's criteria for applicants is:

- Level of housing need
- Connections to the town or its immediate area
- Ability to pay the rent



Rachel Corner, sales director at SWS, pictured with Jonathan Brown company secretary of Bishop's Castle Community Land Trust

Meanwhile, the business space downstairs will be let on a flexible, short term basis.

Jonathan added: "Making it an adaptable space is more flexible and less onerous on us a Trust, while still offering a 'shop window' to people and enterprises who wouldn't normally have such an opportunity."

BCCLT recently secured planning permission to convert a disused abattoir at the rear of the premises into a food bank and community hub, a facility currently run from the Church Barn.

Rachel Corner, sales director at SWS, said: "Like SWS, Bishop's Castle Community

Land Trust is rooted in the local community so when we visited the project this week, and saw the amazing transformation that is underway, we were eager to donate to the Star's Appeal.

"We've also pledged to provide the hub with a superfast fibre broadband connection when it is up and running, which we hope will in turn benefit the community."

The primary purpose of the Trust is to provide affordable housing for local people in need of somewhere to live.

It is owned by 286 members shareholders, most of whom live in and around Bishop's Castle.

Celebrating 10 successful years

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

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

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

possible with the least hassle possible".

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

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

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



Paul Mansell of PSM Kitchens



Construction firm's charity of choice is a real life saver



Marketing manager Sarah Jones, health and safety officer Alex Taylor, commercial director Victoria Lawson and design manager Jason Bryan

A Shropshire construction firm has adopted a lifesaving service as its latest charity of the year.

Staff at Pave Aways will be fundraising during the next 12 months to raise vital funds for West Mercia Search and Rescue. The charity, which works across Shropshire, Herefordshire and Worcestershire as well as providing mutual assistance to other teams across the wider Midlands, is one of the go-to organisations in searches for missing people and flood and river rescue. Staffed entirely by volunteers, the charity is funded purely by donations.

The team at Pave Aways, which chose the charity through a staff vote, are planning a series of events to boost the charity's

offers including activity challenges and fundraising at its annual Christmas party.

Managing Director Steven Owen said: "Supporting the community is one of the key pillars of Pave Aways and our annual charity of the year is an important part of this.

"West Mercia Search and Rescue is a band of unsung heroes who do incredibly important work. They are volunteers who give up their own time, 365 days of the year, 24 hours a day, to help out in often lifesaving scenarios.

"The costs of running the charity including training and equipment are vast and we're delighted that we will be able to make a difference in a small way by fundraising for it over the next year."

Andy Neal, Head of Fundraising at West Mercia Search and Rescue, said: "We are

all volunteers and receive no funding for the vital equipment we need to help us on searches or the training we need to keep our skills up to date.

"We are wholly reliant on donations and the generosity of businesses like Pave Aways that fundraise on our behalf. We are very grateful to be the charity of the year and look forward to seeing what adventures they get up to in the next 12 months."

Pave Aways, which celebrates 50 years in business this October, recently won the Community Champion – Business in the Community award at the Shropshire Chamber Business Awards, recognising its work supporting the community.

Past charities it has supported include the Midlands Air Ambulance, Severn Hospice, Cure Leukaemia and The Harry Johnson Trust.



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Priestgate Garden Specialists Ltd has been awarded 'Full Service Garden Experts of the Year 2023 for Shropshire' and 'Most Trusted Lawn Care & Garden Specialists'

Award-winning gardens

Bradstone, a leading provider of high-quality garden products, has crowned Priestgate Garden Specialists Ltd the 'Full Service Garden Experts of the Year 2023 for Shropshire' and 'Most Trusted Lawn Care & Garden Specialists 2023'.

Priestgate Garden Specialists is a family run business, established by Mary and Roger Birtwhistle in 1982.

Serving the Shropshire region for more than 40 years, their son Phil is chiefly responsible for driving the business to become a Limited Company and the varied awards that have come their way, and this recognition is testament to their combined expertise in all aspects of garden design, as well as their commitment to progressive landscaping via sustainable materials and practices.

Phil said: "We never like to stand still. We always seek to stay ahead of the latest trends in garden design and landscaping, as well as embracing new technology and cutting-edge products such as TikTok for marketing and Bradstone's Old Town ECO concrete for paving."

"We are committed to providing our clients with the best possible experience, and we are confident that we can help our clients create the outdoor space of their dreams."

Peter Montgomery, National Sales Manager for Bradstone, said: "We are delighted to see Priestgate Garden Specialists recognised in this way in



Top, members of Priestgate Garden Specialists Ltd, and above, an example of a manicured lawn

their local area. It is a testament to their exceptional skills and dedication to providing outstanding service in the field of garden design and landscaping.

"By choosing a Bradstone Assured Installer like Priestgate, customers gain peace of mind, knowing that their garden

project will be completed to the highest professional standards.

"We applaud the Birtwhistle family and the whole of their team on their remarkable expertise in landscaping and look forward to seeing many more garden transformations to come."





Event in a Tent made sure there were plenty of sheltered events and activities



Aico would also like to thank all the volunteers who made the day possible.

Festival raises £10,000+

The Family Fundraising Festival hosted by Aico was a huge success, raising over £10,000 for two local charities, The Movement Centre and Little Stars. The event took place on Saturday 15th July at Brynkinalt Estate in Chirk.

Despite the changing weather, there was a great turnout from the local community, with over 600 visitors attending the festival. Event in a Tent made sure there were plenty of sheltered events and activities, including live music, circus performances and workshops. There were a variety of outdoor children's activities and attractions for all ages, including local food and drink, Nerf Wars run by SYA, giant games and crazy golf.

Aico has a longstanding relationship with The Movement Centre and Little Stars, showing continued support through fundraising activities and donations, as part of their Aico in the Community initiative. Both charities provide valuable resources and support for the community and the Family Fundraising Festival was a brilliant opportunity to showcase the essential services they deliver.

The Movement Centre, is a specialist treatment centre, that helps children who have Cerebral Palsy, Down Syndrome, or other diagnoses to achieve new skills through increased strength and control of their movement. While Little Stars, provides families who need support with essential items to help keep babies and children clean, clothed, and safe.

Curtis Langley, Fundraising and Marketing Officer at The Movement Centre commented "The Movement Centre are delighted to have been involved with Aico Family Festival, and can't thank the team enough for including us. When we were asked to join a committee, and started talking about this 12 months ago, who would have thought we would end up with such an amazing event. The thought and effort put in by everyone from Aico was amazing from the very start. The event had something for everyone, with Circus acts entertaining the crowds, giant garden games including 9-hole crazy golf, lots of music, food and drink for everyone to enjoy.

It means a lot to The Movement Centre to be involved in such an incredible event, not only raising awareness and vital funds but to help bring a community together. With over 600 people attending it was incredible to see everyone having such a good time. A big thank you must also go to all of the vendors and companies



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

bringing activities to the festival and Brynkinalt for allowing us to hold the event on their beautiful grounds. One last thank you to all of the volunteers, the event wouldn't have run as smoothly as it did without the volunteers on the day. The feedback I have received so far has been great, and we can't thank everyone enough for the kind support shown."

7video were also in attendance on the day, capturing all the festival fun against the beautiful backdrop of the Brynkinalt Estate. They were interviewing visitors, Aico's Managing Director Neal Hooper, the charities and the fantastic team behind the event about their experience and some behind-the-scenes details. The team from J&PR took over Aico's social media for the day, covering all the action and keeping visitors updated.

Leanne Simcoe, Founder and Chief Executive of Little Stars added "I want to say thank you to Aico for hosting the Family Fundraiser and selecting Little Stars to be one of the charities for the event. It was great to see so many from the community come together and enjoy the day. We are incredibly grateful for the years of support from Aico and this event was really special to be a part of."

Aico would like to extend a massive thank you to the vendors: Bonni's Pizza, Urban Grillhouse, Knock & Snitch Oswestry, Super Whipped, Crunch to Crumb and the Oswestry Cambrian Rotary. All the vendors have been very generous in their support of the event, and have each pledged a donation towards the final total.

Aico would also like to thank all the volunteers who made the day possible. The Family Fundraising Festival was a great success with all the money raised on the day going directly to support The Movement Centre and Little Stars.



Collaborating for holiday club fun

The Aico headquarters in Oswestry has recently welcomed 40 Year 5 & 6 students at their Summer Club; an initiative formed by Aico in the Community alongside the Shropshire Youth Association (SYA). SYA are a registered charity that helps youth clubs in Shropshire to get set up and keep going. The charity's focus is to make sure these clubs can give the best opportunity and experiences to youth and provide the suitable provision needed.

Aico expanded by collaborating with SYA to offer a Summer Club week in August 2023. The week aimed to encourage the educational development of future generations and alleviate the pressure families may face during the summer break. The Summer Club was led by experienced and qualified leaders from SYA and supported by Aico colleagues across departments, who are fully safeguard trained and DBS checked.

The Summer Club ran from Monday to Friday and included activities such as sumo football, nerf wars, pyrography and crepe making. The group also participated in tag archery, unihok and a music workshop. The music workshop brought the children together in Aico's auditorium where they experimented with ukeleles, samba drums and various other instruments. The group also visited Aico's chicken coop, where they helped feed the chickens and collect the eggs.

On Friday morning, the children arrived at Oswestry Leisure Centre for the choice of a roller disco or inflatable aqua challenge. This was a fantastic activity and the group then departed to arrive back at Aico's headquarters for a silent disco and just dance games. To end the day, the children were given goodie bags and certificates for completing the Summer Club.

Jess Williams one of the Youth Workers from SYA commented on the week, "SYA have had a fantastic time working with Aico this week. It has enabled us to give the young people of Oswestry and surrounding areas a chance to take part in activities and socialise with groups they may not normally be able to. It would be wonderful if more corporations could offer this opportunity to their local community and support young people's development. Thank you again to Aico for providing a great venue and supportive volunteer team."

The activity schedule was designed to encourage creativity, teamwork, and personal development within the group. The week also saw the children making new friends as the group was made up of people from a variety of schools.



Aico expanded by collaborating with SYA to offer a Summer Club week in August

Jane Pritchard, Community Liaison at Aico added "We are delighted to have partnered with SYA to offer a Summer Club for children in Oswestry and the surrounding area. The children all said how much they enjoyed the week. We are grateful to all of our volunteers and to SYA, who helped to make the week a great success."

Aico are proud to have brought smiles to the children in attendance and are hopeful that they have enjoyed their week at the Summer Club, learning new skills.

College upgrade includes new office furniture galore



Craig Hughes from Chrisbeon pictured with Telford College's director of estates, Dave Candlin, in the new business and accounting suite

Telford College has taken delivery of dozens of new desks and chairs as part of a campus upgrade for the new academic year - a project which has been a collaboration between two Patrons of Shropshire Chamber.

Around £800,000 has been spent on improving classroom and computer suites throughout the Telford College campus this year, including the creation of a new business and accounting suite for higher education students.

The college seeks to use local suppliers wherever possible, and has teamed up once again with Chrisbeon, based at Stafford Park in Telford, which has been providing furniture to the college for around 30 years. Telford College and Chrisbeon are both Patrons of Shropshire Chamber.

Dave Candlin, the college's director of estates, said: "We're very proud of our university-standard facilities, but the world of education is changing fast.

"With new T-Levels coming on stream

here in September, new courses in our A level centre, and our higher education offering too, we've been busy getting the campus upgraded and renovated for what we're sure will be another exciting year."

He added: "We have a long and happy partnership with the team at Chrisbeon, who always provide a terrific service and know exactly what sort of products to recommend to meet our needs."

The latest renovation has included the creation of a conference and meeting area for up to 50 people, to be used by students on the HNC and HND business, and level four accounting courses.

Teresa Hughes, director of business, digital and professional at Telford College, said: "We were able to secure funding through the higher technical education skills injection fund for the project.

"It has allowed us to create a university-style classroom with a big boardroom in the middle where students can come together and collaborate.

"We also have comfortable breakout spaces where they can make the environment their own, and a nice little study area to work independently with high-spec computers."

She added: "We're delighted with this

sleek new-look university-style delivery model, which will be extremely beneficial to our students."

For this latest project, Chrisbeon supplied the college with more than 130 chairs in various configurations, plus stools, soft seating areas, desks, office and conference tables, writing tablets and power modules.

The company has previously provided furniture for the college's Haybridge restaurant, Rendezvous, Orange Tree, Willow Tree Centre, plus the construction and discovery centres at the Wellington campus.

Partner Craig Hughes said: "We're proud of our long and happy relationship with Telford College, and were delighted to win this latest tender.

"We've been working on concepts and designs with the college for the new suite since February, and are really pleased with the results.

"When you are providing equipment for a task like this, you need a balance of practicality, durability, and modern inspirational designs."

Chrisbeon supplies furniture which is suitable for heavy use in classroom or common room settings to a large number of schools, colleges and universities across the region.

New trainees join accountancy team

A Shrewsbury accountancy firm has welcomed a group of new faces on its latest annual training programme.

Four new starters have joined Dyke Yaxley Chartered Accountants, in Old Potts Way, and they have been appointed as audit accounts trainees.

Lee Thomas, Molly Morgan, Alex Peterson and Sam Holwill are now already working at the firm's head office, and they will be joined by Freddie Whites in September who will be working initially in the payroll team.

All five will follow Dyke Yaxley's programme of technical and practical training

The training will be co-ordinated by Human Resources Manager Keith Higgins, who said the trainees were the latest intake to benefit from the support and advice of experienced and knowledgeable colleagues.

"We are delighted to once again welcome a new group of trainees to the team, and we're looking forward to working with them as they take the first steps on their career in accountancy.

"Their programme began with induction training, and once they have completed the course, the aim is for them to move forward to study for formal accountancy qualifications."

Lee is a former Shrewsbury Sixth Form College student who lives in Much Wenlock and also attended Chester University. Alex also studied at the sixth form college and lives in the county town.

Molly lives in Telford and she was a pupil at Haberdashers Adams' Grammar School in Newport. Sam is from Newtown where he studied at the local high school, and he graduated from Cardiff University.



Trainees – Lee Thomas, Molly Morgan, Alex Peterson and Sam Holwill

Keith said: "Training and apprenticeships are crucial to the success of our management team – in fact, five of our current directors – Managing Director Marie Bramwell, Helen Bruce, Mark Griffiths, Andrew Young and Hayley Price, all began their careers through our training scheme.

"We pride ourselves on the high standards we set for all our staff, including our trainees, and we believe that training is a vital part of our company structure that pays real dividends for our clients and the service they receive."

New company secretary

The announcement of a new company secretary at McPhillips is rarer than the announcement of a new Pope! In the past 50 years only two people have held the position. Following David Wauchope's recent retirement, McPhillips are delighted to welcome Val Hardy to the role.

Val joined McPhillips's accounts team in 1995 to work on the monthly accounts and sales ledger. Over the years Val has been involved in all aspects of finance at McPhillips and has been instrumental in negotiating finance contracts, in particular for the purchase of high-investment construction machinery.

Where possible McPhillips like to appoint from within. The role of company secretary is paramount to the smooth running of McPhillips, Val has taken an active role in board meetings over the past 6 months alongside David, ensuring a seamless transition took place.

Managing Director Paul Inions commented: "On behalf of all the directors, I would like to welcome Val to the board. Val knows our business inside out; she brings a new perspective and valuable insights to our board; we look forward to Val's consultancy and safe stewardship of this vital role at McPhillips."

Val Hardy added: "This is an exciting chapter in my story with McPhillips. I am grateful to the directors for giving me the opportunity and I am looking forward to building on the great work of David Wauchope. Like most businesses, we've had to battle



Val Hardy joined McPhillips's accounts team in 1995 to work on the monthly accounts and sales ledger. She is now company secretary.

against COVID and the cost-of-living crisis, I'm delighted how resilient we have been and with a healthy orderbook I believe we're through the other side. The future looks very promising."



Protect, care and invest to create a better borough





Telford College deputy CEO Janet Stephens with award winners Carl Davies, Harry Rumbles, Chelsea Bowler, plus Robbie Pickles of Keele University, and Telford College CEO Graham Guest

Awards night celebrates the achievements of star students

Telford College celebrated the achievements of more than 100 star students at its end-of-year awards night.

Certificates and gifts were presented in recognition of their outstanding achievements or significant improvements during the current academic year.

The college's highest accolade, the Victor Ludorum trophy, went to 18-year-old creative media student Carl Davies.

The former Telford Priory School student's designs have been chosen to appear at a fashion show at Enginuity in the Ironbridge Gorge later this year, and staff said: "He really does have a unique talent and passion for costume design."

Two other special awards were handed out on the night, with former Erccall Wood School student Chelsea Bowler winning the Principal's Special Award, and Harry Rumbles – who attended Newport's Burton Borough School - being named Apprentice of the Year.

Chelsea is a public uniformed services student described as 'a model student who continues to be a fantastic ambassador for the college'. Her commitment to hard work has been recognised with a job in the military police.

Harry is on a mechatronics maintenance engineering apprenticeship with Market Drayton dairy company Muller. Staff said: "He always strives to deliver the highest



Carl Davies – Victor Ludorum Award winner



Chelsea Bowler – Principal's Special Award winner



Harry Rumbles – Apprentice of the Year

standards, and takes pride in his ability to develop others along the way. Everyone that comes into contact with him oozes positivity."

Telford College principal and chief executive Graham Guest said it had been 'another fantastic year of achievement' for the college, with a record number of students put forward for awards.

"This is our opportunity to recognise the outstanding achievements and progress of our students throughout the year - and to celebrate their success.

"I am incredibly proud of the way in

which staff and students continue to show such teamwork, commitment, pure hard work and tenacity."

The awards were presented by two members of the college's senior leadership team – vice principal of curriculum Rachael Wilson, and assistant principal for student experience and safeguarding, Magdaline Glynn.

Robbie Pickles, director of global student recruitment and admissions at Keele University which is working in partnership with the college, was invited to present the Victor Ludorum award.





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