

YOUR CHAMBER YOUR VOICE

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2021



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Cover photo courtesy of Peter Lowbridge taken at Oktoberfest, Shrewsbury

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Media & You
paul@mediaandyou.co.uk



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

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



Businesses facing new challenges

With travel opening to warmer climates and people thinking of beaches and gentle waves, spare a thought for business owners and managers who have faced wave after wave of challenges, increased costs, and recruitment difficulties.

Our recent research lays bare the ongoing issues that businesses face. Inflation is now a significant concern as the costs of doing business grow by the day and as they do, the brakes begin to come on our economic recovery, Government must listen.

Despite our teams feeding into ministers, the unprecedented shortages of labour since early in the year, there seems to be a significant resistance to acknowledge the issue and therefore act. Our Policy work continues to ensure the voice of Shropshire business is heard within the Westminster corridors of power; true, it is a hard slog, but we continue to fight for what our members tell us they need.

Skills remains a truly gargantuan problem with a genuine need to upskill the existing workforce through high impact short sharp delivery that is currently hard to find, we are committed to supporting this need.

Your Chamber continues to expand its International Trade support with the team closing in on supporting £100m of import and export in 2021, making a massive contribution to our county's economy and job creation.

September heralded the return to physical events and whilst there remains a degree of caution, the pent-up demand for social interaction is clear to see. Our events calendar gets stronger by the day, all in response to what our members are asking for.

As a Gateway for the Government Kickstarter program, we are all very proud to have placed over 210 young people into the world of work. With another 230 live vacancies still available, each one of these is a positive impact and a life changing experience, none would be possible without the staggering response from Shropshire business to support this.

2021 has been an extraordinary year, with at times overwhelming pressures on the mental health of many, we continue to provide support through our Mental Health Charter and the launch of our recent Mental Health and Wellbeing newsletter is a must read, are you signed up to both? You owe it to your staff, you owe it to yourself to do so.

Richard Sheehan
Chief Executive Officer,
Shropshire Chamber of Commerce

Up, up and away for a new patron



Celebrating the new partnership are, from left, Matt Jones, Rachel Owen, Richard Sheehan, Maria Wilkinson, and Mia Carter

Shropshire Chamber of Commerce has welcomed high-flying business Virgin Balloon Flights as its latest Patron.

The company was launched back in 1994 in the wake of 'ballooning mania' following Sir Richard Branson's record-breaking flights across the Atlantic and Pacific oceans.

The world's largest and the UK's only national passenger balloon rides operator, the Telford-based company has now taken life higher for more than a million passengers.

Passenger hot air ballooning was grounded due to Covid-19 in 2020, but Virgin Balloon Flights has seen business rapidly take off once again since its balloons returned to the UK skies in May.

Matt Jones, managing director of Virgin Balloon Flights, said: "We are honoured and delighted to have been invited to join Shropshire Chamber as a Patron.

"Virgin Balloon Flights first launched back in 1994 and over the past 27 years have become the biggest and best-known passenger hot air balloon rides operator in the world.

"Our iconic big red balloons are a regular sight over Shropshire and across the country, where we have more than 100 launch sites over England, Wales and Scotland.

"Take Life Higher is not only our motto, it is our company's 'purpose', with everything we do aimed at bringing that pure joy and encouraging people to make the most of every moment."

Maria Wilkinson, head of marketing for Virgin Balloon Flights, added: "Virgin Balloon Flights is a national company and an internationally recognised ballooning brand but the heart of our company is and always has been right here in Shropshire.

"We have had offices right here in Stafford Park since the beginning. We're thrilled to have become a Patron and look forward to working closely with Shropshire Business Chamber, fellow patrons and members to promote the amazing business opportunities our county offers.

"We're seeing such an amazing enthusiasm among our passengers to take to the skies with us this year, with a real 'let's get living again' ethos after 18-months of Covid restrictions.

"It really is fantastic to see and has been a real boost to all our pilots, who are over the moon to be back in the air again after so long grounded."

Mia Carter, Shropshire chamber of Commerce's director of membership, said: "Being a Patron of Shropshire Chamber is a mark of excellence and integrity, and demonstrates a firm commitment to the Chamber, the wider business community and the success of Shropshire's economy as a whole.

"Patrons understand and engage with one another and aim to identify opportunities, trade with and obtain introductions for and each other wherever possible.

"The objective is to generate ideas, enthusiasm and dynamic business opportunities and to feed this back through Shropshire Chamber and onwards to the county's businesses as a whole.

"Through their attendance as Patrons at appropriate events, networking forums and business expos, they demonstrate their belief in the programme and through on-going membership they commit to maintaining the highest standards."

More information about Shropshire Chamber's Patron programme can be found at www.shropshire-chamber.co.uk/about-us/shropshire-chamber-patron-programme.

Virgin Balloon Flights first launched back in 1994 and over the past 27 years have become the biggest and best-known passenger hot air balloon rides operator in the world

New members for

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0333 444 7365
2 Castle Barn
Castle Hill Road
ALTON
Staffordshire
ST10 4AJ

Aquarius
0121 622 8181
236 Bristol Road
Edgbaston
EDGBASTON
Birmingham
B5 7SL

MSD Law Ltd
01952 825050
Adams House
9 High Street
NEWPORT
Shropshire
TF10 7AR

Accelerated Success
01952 510807
Mill Bank House
Harley
SHREWSBURY
Shropshire
SY5 6LP

Lingard Styles
01743 233961
9 College Hill
SHREWSBURY
Shropshire
SY1 1LZ

UK Centric Supply
Chain Programme
07792 911421
Aston University
Aston Street
BIRMINGHAM
B4 7ET

Hopton Court Estate
07551 444 681
Hopton Court
Cleobury Mortimer
Near Ludlow
KIDDERMINSTER
DY14 0EF

Oswestry Golf Club
01691 610535
Aston Park
Queens Head
OSWESTRY
Shropshire
SY11 4JJ

Headway Shropshire
01743 365271
Holsworth Park
Oxon Business Park
SHREWSBURY
Shropshire
SY3 5HJ

Pass The Keys
07720 058596
6 Shrewsbury Road
Hadnall
SHREWSBURY
Shropshire
SY4 4AN

Great British Trading Ltd
01746 218711
Unit 3 Stanley Lane
Industrial Estate
BRIDGNORTH
Shropshire
WV16 4SF

PALZ UK
07762 215008
Yew Tree Cottage
LONGNOR
Shropshire
SY5 7PP

Apley Estate
01952 582770
The Old School
Norton, Near Shifnal
SHIFNAL
Shropshire
TF11 9ED

Heal Planning
01743 369911
11 St Marys Place
SHREWSBURY
Shropshire
SY1 1DZ

Shrewsbury Food Hub
07794341353
5 Bryn Road
SHREWSBURY
SY3 8PQ

Morris, Corfield & Co Ltd
01952 881000
Benthall Works
Benthall
BROSELEY
Shropshire
TF12 5BB

Nu-Gnu
07837 301390
32 St Margaret Road
LUDLOW
Shropshire
SY8 1XN

80 Voices
07568 077653
Emstrey House North
S'bury Business Park
SHREWSBURY
Shropshire
SY2 6LG

Hencote
01743 298444
Hencote Farm
Crosshill
SHREWSBURY
Shropshire
SY4 3AB

Shropshire Cycle Hub
07485 212320
Unit 40 R
Riverside Hall
SHREWSBURY
Shropshire
SY1 1PH

Zaptec UK Ltd
07399 081324
5 Barber Street
BROSELEY
Shropshire
TF12 5NR

Tickwood Care Farm Ltd
01952 882394
Tickwood Farm
MUCH WENLOCK
Shropshire
TF13 6NZ

A1 Training Ltd
01823 475707
Grange House
Lancaster Road
SHREWSBURY
SY1 3JF

LBB Project
Management Ltd
07594 663475
128 Monkmoor Road
SHREWSBURY
SY2 5BN

Stafford Bye Products
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Unit 5
Battlefield Ind Est
SHREWSBURY
SY1 4AP



you to engage with

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8 & 9 Victoria Mews
St Austin Friars
Victoria Quay
SHREWSBURY
SY1 1RY

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Hortonwood Campus
Hortonwood 30
TELFORD
Shropshire
TF1 7YD

Resin Floors
01952 878615
Unit 22-23 Tweedale
Industrial Estate
Madeley
TELFORD
TF7 4JZ

The Tree Doc
01952 587130
18 Riverside Avenue
Coalport
TELFORD
Shropshire
TF8 7HY

Cardboard Bedding
Solutions Limited
01353 771238
Unit 9 Prees
Industrial Estate
WHITCHURCH
SY13 2DJ

AviRamp Ltd
01952 291220
Unit A1-A5
Stafford Park 15
TELFORD
TF3 3BB

Exotic Zoo Wildlife Park
01952 591164
Telford Town Park
Hinksay Road, Dawley
TELFORD
TF4 3GZ

Telford Christian Council
Supported Housing
01952 291904
Meeting Point House
TELFORD
TF3 4HS

Transicon Ltd
01952 605515
Unit 1D
Queensway Business
Park, TELFORD
TF1 6AL

Adept Security
Systems Ltd
01902 786780
Pendeford Business
Park
WOLVERHAMPTON
WV9 5HO

Cee-Norm UK Ltd
01952 212700
Unit 2 Highbridge Court
Stafford Park 1
TELFORD
TF3 3BD

Granville Bookkeeping
Services
01952 402632
112 Teagues Crescent
Trench
TELFORD
TF2 6RF

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Association Ltd
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Helping Danielle to 'kickstart' a bright new career

Shropshire Chamber of Commerce has been praised for its role in helping a graduate to land a job with one of the county's leading insurance brokers.

Danielle Crowe, from Shrewsbury, joined specialist insurance broker Cox Mahon Limited through the Government's Kickstart scheme, which offers subsidised work placement opportunities.

But she has now been taken on permanently by the Shrewsbury-based company on an apprenticeship, after impressing the team with her skills and attitude.

Danielle graduated from the University of Manchester with a geology degree in 2017 and had since worked primarily in administration.

But she felt her love of data was never satisfied, so she described joining Cox Mahon through the Government's Kickstart scheme earlier this year as 'a very exciting prospect'.

Danielle said: "I found out about Kickstart through my work coach. What attracted me was the idea of being able to join any industry in which I had no prior knowledge, with no cost to the organisation.

"The Government essentially funds six months of training, at 25 hours a week - there is no loss to any organisation and every gain.

"This part-time basis can be reassuring for anyone who has been unemployed for a long time or perhaps experienced uncertainty through the Covid pandemic, as it will gently ease you back into the workplace, which is really good as you have so much support.

"Without the Kickstart programme, it is



Danielle Crowe

highly unlikely I would have had the chance to break into the insurance industry - and in fact, it is likely not to have been something I would have considered for myself!"

Cox Mahon Limited is a privately owned insurance broker with very distinct areas of expertise, including professional indemnity insurance, estates & private clients and commercial.

Office manager Yvonne Hilton said: "This is the first Kickstart employee we have taken on, and it has been a great success. Cox Mahon wanted to support the scheme and felt it was a great opportunity to train and develop Danielle who would also bring excellent skills to our business."

Finance manager Ruth Lewis added: "This really is a success story - an extremely

favourable union for both Danielle and Cox Mahon, made possible with the help of Shropshire Chambers of Commerce. So thank you!

"Cox Mahon is now supporting, and funding, an apprenticeship scheme which will provide both an NVQ as well as Chartered Insurance Institute qualifications for Danielle - this is a real career pathway, and all as a result of the Kickstart programme."

The company also currently has a vacancy for an admin assistant through the Kickstart programme.

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

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

Shropshire Chamber chief executive Richard Sheehan said: "I want to say a big thanks to the Shropshire business community for the way it has stepped up to engage with Kickstart. We are extremely proud to be able to play our part in creating opportunities which really can be life-changing for young people."

Anyone wanting to find out more can register at www.shropshire-chamber.co.uk/kickstart-scheme. More information is available by emailing kickstarter@shropshire-chamber.co.uk

We hope to avoid a winter of discontent

Businesses will be encouraged by the Government's latest steps to protect people from a spike in Covid cases during the winter, according to Shropshire Chamber of Commerce.

But there is still concern at a perceived inability of Westminster's leaders to provide specific details about the circumstances which could trigger a return of potentially damaging restrictions.

"As we prepare to move into the winter season, businesses are acutely aware that there is a danger of a sharp rise in Covid cases," said Shropshire Chamber's director of business Ruth Ross.

"What businesses really need to know is the threshold for the return of any restrictions - and most importantly of all, the type of support they might reasonably expect to get if it happens.

"For example, will it be possible for companies to re-activate furlough in the event of another lockdown, as other countries are offering?"

"With employers already wrestling with the implications of the changes in National Insurance announced by the Government last week, they need to know there are no nasty surprises around the corner."

She added: "We are not expecting the Government to try to predict the future - merely to give businesses the confidence that if the pandemic does return with a vengeance, they won't be left behind."

The latest economic forecast from the British Chambers of Commerce suggests business investment is falling, indicating a very patchy and brittle level of current confidence.

Claire Walker, co-executive director, said: "Many businesses have adapted and adjusted to keep our economy moving forward.

"They have been getting on with the job, despite a lack of clarity around guidance which means they are still negotiating a legal minefield.

"A proper contingency plan should give businesses the confidence they need to move on from just surviving to growing, thriving and leading the way out of the coronavirus crisis."



Director of business, Ruth Ross

How to avoid your communications becoming extinct

Just like cassette players, floppy disks and pagers, ISDN and PSTN circuits are going to be a thing of the past soon too.

As of 2025, the UK is set to discontinue traditional ISDN and PSTN phone lines (the circuits that power traditional business phone systems) meaning customers will need to move over to VoIP (Voice over Internet Protocol) telephone systems instead. While the 2025 deadline is approaching, certain areas are having their exchanges are being added to discontinue lists from 2022 suggesting business are better to move away from traditional phone systems sooner rather than later.

Unified Communications provider Enreach, offers complete cloud solutions that make switching to VoIP as easy as pie. Not only do VoIP solutions remove the worry of the ISDN switch off and futureproof your communications, but they replace traditional phones with faster, more cost-effective solutions that make working from anywhere at any time a doddle.

Duncan Ward, Chief Executive Officer of Enreach UK, said: "I urge all local businesses to begin looking into alternative options sooner rather than later. If the pandemic taught us anything,

it's that we never know what is around the corner so switching to VoIP ahead of the 2025 ISDN switch off is crucial.

"We're here to help any local business with free, impartial advice on the best solution for them, with that all important longevity."

The Enreach team are on hand to help you switch to VoIP through the Chamber Telecoms Solution.

Simply email chamber.uk@enreach.com or call 0195 2310 750 and, not only will you get the best deal to suit your needs, but Enreach will pay up to £450 towards your Chamber membership.

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Plans for 'bigger than ever' awards celebration in '22

Shropshire Chamber of Commerce has decided not to hold its annual business awards this year – and instead concentrate on expanding it into a 'bigger than ever' two-day celebration next summer.

The annual showpiece, which has traditionally taken place in June for the past 20 years, was originally postponed until November this year in the wake of the Covid crisis.

But the Chamber has now decided it would be more sensible to reinstate the event to its traditional slot on the June calendar and focus all its efforts on delivering its biggest and boldest event yet for 2022.

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

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

"So, rather than trying to shoe-horn a celebration into the calendar at the back-end of 2021, we have decided it makes much more sense to return bigger than ever in the summer of 2022.

"Alongside our traditional categories like company of the year, best new business and best small business, we will be introducing new categories which reflect the challenges Shropshire businesses have faced over the past 18 months.

"There will be a significant focus on managing change in our economy, wellbeing in the workplace, and celebrating the key role being played by young business people.

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

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

Last year, during Covid lockdown, the 20th anniversary awards were instead staged in virtual format, live streamed from the Yarrington TV studios in Shrewsbury.

The Chamber also held a 'Chamber Champion' virtual awards event in 2020, celebrating and recognising companies and individuals who went the extra mile to help the county through the Covid crisis.

For more details about the 2022 Shropshire Chamber showcase, conference and awards contact Kelly Roberts at awards@shropshire-chamber.co.uk



Richard Sheehan, chief executive officer

Networking throughout the county

Our bi-weekly Network Clubs are thriving as businesses around Shropshire are realising and utilising the benefits of networking! We run three regional Network Clubs in Shrewsbury, Oswestry, and Telford, where our members enjoy networking alongside presentations and a full English breakfast! Every business who is a member of the Chamber is entitled to six guest Network Club visits, so why not get in touch with Josh to see how best to utilise these, or to discuss full and permanent membership of one! You've nothing to lose, and a lot of business to gain! Testimonials for the Clubs alongside more information can be found on the events calendar of our website.

For any queries, please email Josh via j.carpenter@shropshire-chamber.co.uk



Josh Carpenter

Raise a glass for charity

Shropshire businesses are being urged to get behind a festive fundraiser with a twist – of beer or gin!

Abbeyfest is a drinks festival with a difference – taking place in the iconic surroundings of Shrewsbury Abbey, there will be live music, food choices, and the chance to give back at Christmas by supporting the area’s main cancer charity – Lingen Davies Cancer Fund.

Oswestry-based Aico, and the team at Rix Petroleum have already given their support to the fundraiser which is being held on Friday and Saturday, 26-27 November for people to enjoy some pre-Christmas fun and festivities. Organisers now want to hear from other businesses keen to lend their support by sponsoring a beer barrel, or placing an advert in the brochure. Corporate VIP packages to attend the event are also available.

Lizzy Coleman, Events and Fundraising Officer for the charity, said everyone involved was very excited to be working in partnership with Darren Tomkins from Gindifferent in Shrewsbury Market Hall, as well as the staff at The Abbey.

“It’s great to be able to organise events again,” she said. “We are very pleased at this collaboration and AbbeyFest will be a great event for the town.

“I’d like to say a big thank you to Aico and Rix Petroleum for their brilliant support, and I hope more businesses are eager to get involved by sponsoring a barrel, or just coming along with friends for a night out.

“There’s a real appetite for people to do things again and it’s great people can get together in this way again and enjoy some festive fun, while raising funds for cancer patients in Shropshire and Mid Wales.

“We will be running on Friday, 26th from 5pm, and on Saturday 27th, from 2pm. People can either turn up on the day or book tickets through our website www.lingendavies.co.uk/events where there’s more information available,” she added.

For information on sponsorship packages email Helen Knight at helen.knight@lingendavies.co.uk



Lizzy Coleman and Darren Tomkins at the launch of Abbeyfest





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Internship programme is invaluable opportunity

Bethphage are delighted to be working with Philippa Richardson and Alice Whitehouse from Keele University and benefitting from the university's internship programme. This programme is an invaluable opportunity for students to gain 'hands-on' experience of working with a local charity or business.

Bethphage's CEO Stef Kay said: "The support we have had from Philippa and the Student Knowledge Exchange Team has been excellent, with quick responses and decisions, enabling us to map out and plan the project and have answers so that we could push forward with the project for all concerned."

"Bethphage is a social care charity, supporting adults with learning disabilities and mental health. We know only too well how many challenges the sector is facing from a lack of funding. Urgent reform is needed to address uncertainty for social care businesses up and down the country who are supporting some of the most socially disadvantaged and at risk in our communities. The Covid Pandemic has created increased significant risks for the people we support and added an inordinate amount of pressure and uncertainty for our staff, whilst changing the way our non-frontline staff work. Plus, the additional Covid funding pressures that we continue to endure."

"It's been greatly beneficial to be able to work with Philippa and the Student Knowledge Exchange Team and utilise the skills and knowledge of two exceptional computer science students in their final year



Alice Whitehouse



Stef Kay



Philippa Richardson

of their course. In addition, Philippa and the team have agreed an additional, short-term grant to enable the students to continue working with us before they return to their studies."

Keele University's Employment Engagement Advisor, Philippa Richardson said: "The Student Knowledge Exchange Project exists to bring students and businesses/charities together for mutual benefit. For businesses of any size or sector it is a chance to implement solutions quickly and effectively in rapidly changing times.

"The internship with Bethphage is a valuable example of what can be achieved" Keele University's Experiential Learning

Advisor, Alice Whitehouse said: "During the last 18 months, students all over the country have found it challenging to secure work experience opportunities.

"We've been thrilled to be able to engage our students in a range of internships, giving them the chance to apply their academic knowledge in a practical setting, whilst staying safe and getting paid."

Bethphage's workforce will benefit from the student's IT knowledge as they roll out a new Care Management System, which will improve data processing, creating efficiencies, improving quality, and delivering best value, enabling the charity to continue investing in the care sector.

Businesses club together

Keen golfers from a range of corporate supporters teed off at the JCB Golf and Country Club to help make vital, lifesaving missions possible for Midlands Air Ambulance Charity's pre-hospital emergency service.

Midlands Air Ambulance Charity's annual corporate golf day returned for 2021 with 21 teams from a number of supportive businesses that swung into action. The sold-out event, supported by event partners, Phoenix Group, saw participants enjoy a day of golf at JCB Golf and Country Club in Uttoxeter, Staffordshire.

Pam Hodgetts, corporate partnerships manager for Midlands Air Ambulance Charity, said: "We are extremely lucky to have a strong network of corporate supporters who attend events like our golf day.

"Not only do these events provide the opportunity for local businesses to network, but it also allows them the chance to be in the business of saving lives and helping to make future missions possible."

Andy Moss, Phoenix Life CEO and group director of Heritage at Phoenix Group, added: "We're delighted to have sponsored this year's Midlands Air Ambulance Charity golf day in support of the vital lifesaving work that the charity does and the ongoing demands for their services.



The Phoenix Group supported the sold-out event

"Phoenix Group's purpose is to help secure a life of possibilities and supporting our local communities is an important part of that. We're thrilled to hear that the event was a sell-out and we got to see some great rounds of golf on the day while raising all important funds."

The event was further supported

by Glide UK for Business and Leamore Windows Limited. Find out more about being in the business of saving lives with Midlands Air Ambulance Charity and visit midlandsairambulance.com/corporate and follow the organisation on social media.

To find out more about Phoenix Group, please visit thephoenixgroup.com

Our People Your Team

Here to Help

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

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1-2-3 new appointments

A Shropshire digital marketing firm has expanded its operation with the appointment of three new members of staff.

Ascendancy Internet Marketing has added a new web developer, junior web developer and digital marketing assistant to its team to meet the ongoing increase in demand for digital services following the pandemic.

The company recently moved to new premises in Newport to help facilitate its growth and is working closely with a growing number of businesses, following the COVID-19 lockdowns and subsequent restrictions, to help them step-up and meet their e-commerce needs.

Helen Culshaw, Ascendancy founder, said: "These are exciting times for the company and we are delighted to welcome Karen Naylor, Tom Mitchell and Mary-Jane Harris to the team - three important additions which will help us meet our commitment to an ever-increasing client base.

"The increase in the use of digital and online activity following the March 2020 lockdown and the past year has been exponential and we are working with a variety of clients to ensure their marketing is where it should be to meet this need.

"Another aspect of our work at the moment is providing a series of webinars to support e-commerce businesses across the UK. This is proving extremely important for firms coming out of the pandemic and covers a range of topics from how to improve product photography to creating a system to ensure a streamlined returns process."

Web Developer Karen Naylor has worked for a number of different agencies, directly for small companies on in-house projects as well as running her own e-commerce business. She has previously done some freelance work for Ascendancy.

She said "My job at Ascendancy involves turning website designs into fully functional websites. I'm really into what they call the 'back-end' technologies, so that's integrating websites with other software to ultimately make things more efficient.

"This can range from different payment systems, shipping solutions, accounting software, stock management, booking systems or CRM software.

"I'm absolutely delighted to have joined the team permanently and love the variety of projects that I have seen lined up already. All e-commerce websites might seem like they are the same, but each business has different problems they want to solve and behind the scenes they can be very different.

"I hope that I can help Ascendancy grow their web team even bigger and better. This feels like an environment where I can spill out ideas on how to use new technologies to solve business problems."

Away from work, Karen is a keen gardener and grows lots of fruit and vegetables on her allotment - and enjoys turning her produce into jams and pickles.

Junior Web Developer Tom Mitchell joins the company straight out



Karen Naylor, Tom Mitchell and Mary-Jane Harris have joined the Ascendancy team

of sixth form and previously completed work experience at Ascendancy.

He said: "My job involves many different activities in web development and I am currently involved in training and work such as updating WordPress to take some of the load off more senior members of staff and to help develop my skills further.

"I love how my job actually goes towards something meaningful as opposed to school where the work you are given is just part of a course. Working at Ascendancy is a great opportunity for me to learn how to build sophisticated websites from scratch and also help the business to grow."

In his spare time, Tom has an interest in history and particularly in World War II and the cold war. He also enjoys computing and has built his own PC.

Digital Marketing Assistant Mary-Jane Harris completed work experience in managing and marketing the social media and website for a London fashion brand earlier this year, which she thoroughly enjoyed - it was this experience that made her decide to pursue a career within digital marketing.

She said: "My job involves creating content for firms as well as promoting their business to gain new customers online. My favourite part of the job is the creative side such as writing blogs and content for landing pages as I have always enjoyed writing.

"I really enjoy working for Ascendancy and one day hope to be high up within the digital marketing industry, specialising in creating and developing content for brands."

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

Accountancy firm appoints a new apprentice

Shropshire accountancy firm Turas Accountants has appointed a new apprentice to its team.

Zoe Case, aged 20, has joined the Telford-based company as a trainee accounts technician.

Zoe had previously completed a finance apprenticeship with a Shropshire retail company but her ambition was to work within an accountancy practice.

"I live on a farm where my mum does all our book keeping and I used to help her with it. I think that's where I first became interested and decided that it was the career I wanted to go into.

"I always knew that I wanted to work within an accountancy practice but there were no openings available when I left college so I went into business to do an apprenticeship in finance," said Zoe who lives at Kenley, near Shrewsbury.

Now she has joined the Turas team

where she will be working towards her Level 3 Association of Accounting Technicians qualification. It will allow me to learn and gain experience in this sector of accounting," she said.

Turas director Helen Columb said she was delighted Zoe had joined the team as a trainee.

"Our training programme is really important to us. Other members of the team are also working on accountancy qualifications and it means we are all keeping up to date with the constant changes in tax rules and procedures.

"It's particularly vital that we take on young people such as Zoe and support them in their chosen career path," she said.

Turas Accountants is based at Hall Court in Telford Town Centre. The company works with clients across the country covering VAT, company accounts, bookkeeping and payroll.

Further information on the team and its services is available online at www.turasaccountants.co.uk or on 01952 882434.



New trainee Zoe Case

Residential property team grows

A law firm with offices across Shropshire has welcomed two new faces to its residential property team as property sales continue to soar in the county.

Lawyers at Lanyon Bowdler say the expansion reflects the growing demand for property - both across Shropshire and into Wales.

Emma Wilson and Joanne Thomas have joined the firm's Oswestry office, bringing a wealth of experience in residential property law.

Emma Wilson is an experienced residential conveyancing solicitor, working for firms in London, Chester and Liverpool before joining Lanyon Bowdler as the residential property team leader in Oswestry.

She said: "It's been well-documented that the property market is extremely busy across the country, and none more so than here in Shropshire.

"Rural areas like ours have really surged in popularity during the pandemic, as many people now see working from home as a viable long-term option, so no longer need to live in large towns and cities.

"I qualified as a solicitor in 2001 and have many years of experience assisting with all aspects of residential conveyancing, including sales and purchases of both freehold and leasehold properties, remortgages and leases.

"I have acted on behalf of commercial developer clients, as well as private individuals, and am really looking forward to



Emma Wilson



Joanne Thomas

assisting a variety of clients in Oswestry and the wider area."

A recent addition to Emma's team is Joanne Thomas, a specialist in residential property who has worked in Shropshire since qualifying as a solicitor nearly 10 years ago.

Born and raised in Shrewsbury, Joanne said she enjoyed helping people with the sale or purchase of their home.

"Moving house is a hugely important part of someone's life, and I am proud to be able to help them make that step with as little stress and worry as possible," she said.

"Communication is key to ensuring a property exchanges hands quickly and efficiently, so I always make an effort to avoid using legal jargon and keep my clients updated throughout the whole process."

For any residential property advice, contact the Lanyon Bowdler team on 0800 652 3371 or visit www.lblaw.co.uk

The firm has offices in Shrewsbury, Telford, Oswestry, Ludlow, Conwy, Hereford and Bromyard.



Keefe Williams, Sophie Griffiths, Daniel Oakes and Charlie Home

Meet the fantastic four

A Shropshire accountancy firm has welcomed four new trainees as they take their first steps towards a career in the industry.

The new recruits have joined the team at Dyke Yaxley Chartered Accountants, in Old Potts Way, Shrewsbury, and they will now begin a two-year training scheme of technical and practical training.

Human Resources Manager Keith Higgins welcomed the trainees and said the Dyke Yaxley team was very pleased to see this year's intake settling in so well already.

"This year we have four trainee audit and accounts clerks and they will now get the chance to experience working in a busy practice alongside our experienced team who will help them to navigate their initial steps in the industry."

The new starters this year are:

- Keefe Williams, who joins Dyke Yaxley from Thomas Telford Sixth Form
- Daniel Oakes, who studied at Aston University before completing an industrial placement in audit at Deloitte
- Charlie Home, who completed his studies at Loughborough University
- Sophie Griffiths, who was a student at Shrewsbury College and completed her work placement at Dyke Yaxley

They have finished their induction training and have now been assigned to work with various teams across the business.



PRESTFELDE



Aico's managing director, Neal Hooper, welcomes Her Royal Highness Princess Anne to the head offices of the Oswestry-based company

Aico receives a Royal visitor

Aico were honoured to receive Her Royal Highness Princess Anne to their headquarters on Friday 8th October, in recognition of their impact as a prominent business in Shropshire.

Her Royal Highness The Princess Royal arrived at Aico headquarters in Oswestry, Shropshire and was met by Aico's Managing Director Neal Hooper, alongside local dignitaries Mandy Thorn, Deputy Lieutenant of Shropshire, Councillor Vince Hunt, Chairman of Shropshire Council, Owen Paterson, North Shropshire MP, Councillor Mark Jones, Mayor of Oswestry and Ruth Jones, Mayoress of Oswestry.

Neal Hooper then commenced an in-depth tour of Aico's building and facilities, providing Her Royal Highness with an insight into the company's history, their pioneering innovations within home life safety and their award-winning Corporate Social Responsibility programme. Each of Aico's four bespoke

Mobile Training and Demonstration Units were on display, as The Princess Royal was informed of how the company's ethos of education, quality, service and innovation drives all that they do; enabling the delivery of their mission statement as the leaders in home life safety, promoting best practice and engaging with communities to deliver safer homes.

After meeting with all Aico | HomeLINK colleagues and discussing the significant work the company does for the UK housing sector, as well as the support they afford the local and wider community, Her Royal Highness was presented with a gift – a horse headcollar adorned with an Aico monogram. Her Royal Highness The Princess Royal concluded the visit with the unveiling of a commemorative plaque that will reside in Aico's dramatic atrium.

Managing Director of Aico Neal Hooper commented "At Aico, we are committed to providing the highest quality in all that we do and this is evident in our passionate people, continued innovation, exceptional service and unrivalled support. Our philosophy has provided a foundation for growth, constantly driving forwards, seeking novel ways of

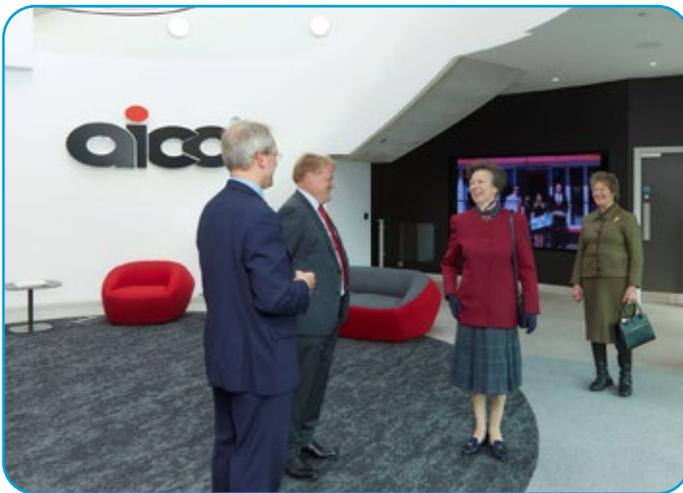
doing things which has proved to be the essence of our approach to Corporate Social Responsibility. To receive this recognition from Her Royal Highness is nothing short of an absolute honour, we are privileged to have been able to share Aico's ethos with The Princess Royal."

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

In 2020, Aico expanded their Connected Home offering with the acquisition of leading Internet of Things (IoT) solutions provider, HomeLINK.

HomeLINK are a multi-award-winning high-tech software team within Aico that leverage cutting edge home integration and analytic technologies to address the needs of social landlords and their residents.

For more information about Aico, please visit www.aico.co.uk



Magical day – a selection of photographs taken during the visit, where Her Royal Highness Princess Anne unveiled a commemorative plaque



Lines between work and home blur

With remote working in high demand, and greater flexibility surrounding when work can be completed, research has suggested the lines between the home and the workplace have become blurred, as the working day creeps into personal leisure time.

Ireland in response to the pandemic implemented a code of practice for all employees. The three key rights enshrined in the code are:

- The right of an employee to not have to routinely perform work outside their normal working hours
- The right not to be penalised for refusing to attend to work matters outside of normal working hours
- The duty to respect another person's right to disconnect

Other countries including France, Italy, Spain, Slovakia and the Philippines, already have right to disconnect rules in place, which essentially protect a worker's rights not to respond to communications outside of working hours and not be penalised for doing so.

Union's are now calling for greater protections for workers in the UK, proposing for a new legislation that would create a 'right to disconnect'. The proposal states employers should "not

require a worker to monitor or respond to any work-related communications, or to carry out any work, outside the agreed working hours, or subject the worker to any detriment for failing to do so". There would be proposed exemptions for industries where this is not feasible and where the employer has made all reasonable steps to minimise working outside agreed hours.

Deputy Leader of the Labour party, Angela Rayner, recently supported the move, stating "Alongside the right to flexible working, there must be the right to disconnect. It is only fair that workers can establish healthy boundaries, switching off and disconnecting from work outside working hours. We cannot find ourselves in a place where workers are expected to compromise their families, responsibilities or hobbies in order to meet employer expectations".

So, whilst it may seem beneficial that staff are regularly working out of hours, this can be damaging long term. Workers who are not able to 'switch off' can become burned out, less productive, and disillusioned in their roles. The right to disconnect looks to counteract this, encouraging switch off when not working.



Jenna Tarry

Joining forces forms group of recruitment specialists

Three flourishing recruitment brands are going to sit under the newly launched DMOS group name. The group encompasses DM Recruitment for temporary workers, Opus Vitae for permanent positions and Simply Interview for hassle free hiring.

Three flourishing recruitment brands are going to sit under the newly launched DMOS group name. The group encompasses DM Recruitment for temporary workers, Opus Vitae for permanent positions and Simply Interview for hassle free hiring.

The group name takes the first letters from each brand name – DM, O and S. The new tagline for the company group is 'Recruiting the work-life balance' reflecting their mission to match people to jobs that create happy workplaces and content lives.

All of the brands work from the Shrewsbury Head Office, under Director Stuart Danks, who has worked in recruitment for over 14 years.

He said, "The business began with DM Recruitment six and a half years ago. Over that time we have won and retained some prestigious clients. We have also identified gaps in the market, which has led us to launch other services. We now have three thriving brands, all offering something different, so it felt the right time to unify them with one group name."

In 2019 Stuart started sister company, Opus Vitae, to source skilled professionals in the commercial, industrial, and FMCG sectors for permanent positions. Opus Vitae is Latin for 'Life's Work', and creating a work-life balance for candidates was key.

In March this year Simply Interview was launched as a streamlined HR solution for finding staff, which promises to cut the hassle out of hiring. The no-nonsense concept sources pre-vetted candidates for an affordable one-off fee.



Stuart adds, "Simply Interview fills the gap between DM Recruitment and Opus Vitae – for companies that need staff, don't necessarily have the time or resources to source them directly, but also don't want the full package a traditional recruitment agency offers. We provide them with suitable candidates and they take it from there – it's simple, straightforward and it works. We are inundated with enquiries.

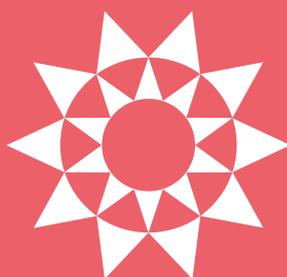
"For any prospective new clients or candidates who aren't sure which brand aligns with their needs, they can approach DMOS as a group, with everything under one roof. We can advise them on which brand to go with, and the team can tailor a solution that is perfect for them."



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The harder you work, the luckier you become

Beth runs the award-winning events business - Shropshire Festivals, and successful marketing agency - Shropshire ThinkTank. Shropshire Festivals are responsible for some of the biggest local events, including Shrewsbury Food Festival, Shropshire Kids Festival, and Shropshire Oktoberfest.

1. Who is someone you admire, and why?

Readers would probably expect me to list a top UK entrepreneur like Karren Brady or Ella Mills, but I have to say the person who tops the list for me is my Mum! She is 74 and single-handedly runs a farm with no machinery and still finds time to help her kids and grandkids and makes the most epic cakes. She is my sounding board and life counsellor, and keeps me on track.

2. Tell me three pet hates?

1) Pessimistic people who drain the life out of the space around them. I thrive off positivity and optimism to work our way through any challenge. 2) When people think they're 'above' others. Take it from me - the person you see changing the toilet roll at an event could be the owner of that business. Just be nice! 3) Slow walkers - I have too much 'get up and go' for dawdling!

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

Back in my younger days I was crowned champion 'chicken de-boner' in a young farmers competition. I was also in a county tug of war team and was pretty good at trampolining. Unfortunately, I don't seem to be utilising any of these key skills!

4. Who would be your 3 dream dinner guests?

1) Richard Branson - a man who knows what he wants, dreams big and gets it! 2) My old Uncle George who taught me everything I know about selling (he was a horse dealer!) 3) Clive Woodward - I've heard him speak and the lessons have stuck with me.

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

A fruity mocktail - I'm not a huge drinker but I am a sucker for a flavoursome cocktail.

6. What is your favourite holiday destination?

Right now, that could be just about anywhere with my family! My favourite place we've visited is Gambia, just for the sheer cultural wake-up call it gave us about how lucky we are.

7. Name three words that best describe you?

Tenacious, Lucky, Ambitious.

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

1) My Kindle as I am an avid reader. 2) Some cable ties as they hold my world together and I'll bet I could build a raft with them and some

wood to escape on! 3) Some pink paint to turn my new home in to a pink paradise! I'm a firm believer in strong branding as a cornerstone for marketing. For anyone who has worked with Team Pink or visited our office, you'll understand why the pink paint will be needed!

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

I want more time with the family - it's a huge lesson I learnt during Covid. I simply love my job and everything I do but the biggest goal is to make memories with my awesome kids and wonderful husband.

10. What was the last book you read?

Start With Why by Simon Sinek - I have just re-read it as I needed to re-focus where the business is going and why.

11. What is your favourite aspect about your career?

The fact that every single day is different. I get to think of an idea and just do it - nothing is unachievable as we simply invent a world in which the idea fits. From 100m water slides to dragon trails, huge festivals, and goat playgrounds - it really is the best job in the world.

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

No, I am not sure my career advisor even knew this existed... I wanted to be a primary school teacher when I was growing up and then at the point of making the decision for university, I chose agricultural marketing, as all I really knew is I didn't want to sit in an office everyday doing the same thing, day in day out - so in that sense, I have the perfect job!



Beth Heath

13. What are some causes you care about?

As a business we support charities that are based locally, including The Harry Johnson Trust, Climbing Out and Self Help Africa. I am also always keen to support charities that support families dealing with Parkinson's, Cancer and Leukaemia, as they affect so many of us.

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

I love to walk - it gives me time to chat to my friends which helps me to relax. I just love this gorgeous county where we live. I am also a sucker for musical theatre, and I love to eat out whenever possible.

15. What would be your personal motto?

'Funny how the harder you work, the luckier you get' - it's on the wall of the office so every single day I remember it's not luck, it's pure hard work that makes this all possible!

Reconomy counts down to COP26

The COP26 Summit brings together heads of state, climate experts and campaigners to agree action to tackle climate change. This year the UK is hosting the Summit in Glasgow. The UK is determined to demonstrate its leading stance on climate change, already committing to cut carbon emissions by 78% by 2035 and achieve net zero by 2050.

As a business, our focus is on the sustainable management of resources for our customers. We fully understand the importance of taking action ourselves and helping others to do the same. This year we are proud to have launched the second element of our Sustainability Plan, our Reconomy Environmental Action Plan (REAP). This follows the successful launch of our social value programme (RSVP) in 2018.

We are already making progress with our targets and can report the following achievements so far since we launched the plan in May:

- Planting of 60 trees and hedgerows being planned for Telford Office site in November



The Reconomy offices based in Telford



- 56% of our fleet have now been moved to hybrid models, with the first fully electric also being introduced
- Installation of 16 charge points at our Head Office plus 12 at our Valpak Offices
 - Supply Chain
- Sustainability School learning pathway courses for our internal teams across Group are at 50% completion
- We launched our 5 Steps to Circularity Resources Playbook that assists businesses with their journey towards zero waste and a circular business model
 - Supplier sustainability assessments are underway
 - Carbon reporting via our Portal is available and being developed further

In addition to this, we are making a big drive internally to embed and reinforce sustainable behaviour. We have established a Sustainability Steering Group to ensure Governance and leadership for introducing effective initiatives and policies across the entire Reconomy Group. This month, in aid of the countdown to COP26 campaign, we are also recruiting a network of Net Zero Heroes to be 'our boots on the ground' ambassadors that will help drive our environmental plans across the business teams and encourage people to not only think about sustainability at work but also introduce changes personally. More on this will be released this month.

If you are interested to find out more about how Reconomy can help your business to be COP26 ready find out more at <https://www.reconomy.com/reconomy-and-cop26/>

Reconomy

The countdown to **COP26**

IT'S TIME TO ACT

As a business, our focus is on the sustainable management of resources for our customers. This year we are proud to have launched the second element of our Sustainability Plan, our Reconomy Environmental Action Plan (REAP).

Let us help **you** achieve **net zero waste**

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[reconomy.com](https://www.reconomy.com)

Grow greener together and save energy costs with businesses in the Marches

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

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

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

Reducing energy usage

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

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



BUSINESS ENERGY
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Case Study

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Old Moulding Machine



New Moulding Machine

CV Rollers (TPP) Limited

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

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

- Project Net Value was £68,380.
- BEEP grant awarded £23,220.00 in January 2021.
- Monetary savings of £17,294, from their previous all fuel usage of £33,077.
- Carbon savings 38.7CO2e tonnes.
- Payback of 2.8 years.

Additional benefits would involve increased productivity. Company maintains sustainability and invested 164 solar panels previous to grant request.

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

Growing Greener Together.



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



Part of the government-supported growth hub network

Grant examples:

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

Eligibility

To qualify, your business must:

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

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

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

The Business Energy Efficiency Programme is a partnership between:

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

Find out more at www.business-central.co.uk/BEEP
Email info@business-central.co.uk or call 01905 677888



Clean Growth
Worcestershire

Derbyshire – the first county to host the knife angel twice

The National Monument Against Violence and Aggression, otherwise known as The Knife Angel, has arrived once again in Derbyshire. It is on display in Chesterfield throughout October and can be seen at Rykneld Square, next to the famous Crooked Spire church.

Last year Derbyshire saw a record high in reported knife crime incidents, and as such Derbyshire police wanted to host The Knife Angel, to urgently raise awareness and education on anti-violence and anti-aggression.

Importantly the sculpture also serves as a memorial to families affected by violent crime and carries hundreds of inscriptions and blessings.

Designed and created by The British Ironwork Centre in Oswestry, The Knife Angel has been sculpted using over 100,000 seized knives collected from all 43 British Police Force Constabularies.

The county previously hosted The Knife Angel in October 2019, exactly two years ago, at Derby Cathedral. Derbyshire police have pulled out all the stops in order to host The Knife Angel once again, as there was a gap in the UK's National Anti-Violence Tour Programme for October.

Derbyshire Council and Derbyshire Police have committed themselves to host workshops and to increase community and educational youth engagement on anti-violence during its hosting period. On October 2nd, "A Walk Against Knife Crime", a protest against knife crime, took place in Derby City Centre, to herald the start of the month long countywide effort to reduce violent behaviour.

Along with community engagement, Chesterfield Police will also have a knife bank alongside The Knife Angel, supplied by The British Ironwork Centre, for knives and weapons to be surrendered.

Clive Knowles, Chairman of The British Ironwork Centre, says, "Derbyshire has certainly gone beyond any other county presently, by having the National Monument twice.

They've committed to undertake a second 30 days of intensive youth educational workshops and initiatives, which to date is unparalleled.

Only Powys in Wales is mirroring this level of effort with a second host location coming about hopefully being Aberystwyth in 2022.

This momentum with which towns and cities are coming forward to host across the UK is very uplifting.

We are intent on ensuring every location maximises the opportunity to capitalise on its presence within their community."

Following Chesterfield, the next stop for The Knife Angel on its National Anti-Violence Tour Programme will be Blackburn Cathedral in Lancashire, where it will be throughout November.

If you would like to find out more about The Knife Angel and the



Powerful image – The Knife Angel

UK's National Anti-Violence Tour Programme, please visit the website <https://www.britishironworkcentre.co.uk/show-areas/the-knife-angel-official>, or contact The British Ironwork Centre directly.

Top award for the Severn Valley Railway

For the second year running, the Severn Valley Railway has scooped a TripAdvisor Traveller's Choice Award.

The prize puts the heritage attraction in the top 10% of all visitor attractions worldwide, based on reviews and feedback from visitors submitted via the online platform.

Over the last 12 months alone, the Railway has received more than 300 5-star reviews and has boosted its ranking in the Kidderminster, Worcestershire and West Midlands categories.

Alongside the SVR as a whole receiving the award, its local sites at

The Engine House Visitor Centre at Highley and The King & Castle pub in Kidderminster were also recipients of the accolade; celebrating success across the full length of the 16-mile line.

Michael Dunn, Head of Visitor Experience at the Severn Valley Railway, celebrated receiving the award for the second year running: "The Severn Valley Railway has always been synonymous with a quality service, from our customer service team to our dedicated volunteers. Our TripAdvisor reviews show that customers are enjoying each and every visit they make to the Railway.

"We continue to improve all areas of

the Railway and value customers' honest feedback to help us deliver the best experience we can.

Whether you're visiting us for a beer, a meal, an event or a family day out on a heritage loco, you know you're guaranteed a quality service, every time."

The award comes on the back of the SVR announcing the remainder of its 2021 season, including Halloween services and a range of Christmas services, including the Enchanted Express, narrated by Dame Julie Walters.

You can find out more about the Severn Valley Railway, see its TripAdvisor reviews and purchase tickets at svr.co.uk

Work smarter and be more productive with a smart meter

Are you seeking smart solutions for your business? A smart meter could be just the ticket for you.

Smart meters are the new generation of gas and electricity meters which can be an invaluable asset for firms in Legal services, Accounting and bookkeeping, Marketing consultancy, Architecture, IT services, and more.

Businesses across Great Britain are already reaping the rewards by gaining better control of their energy bills. Are you ready to join them?

What can smart meters do for your business?

1. Provide accurate bills enabling better cashflow
2. Make your bills simpler saving time for other tasks
3. Help you to do your bit for the environment

Say goodbye to estimated bills and hello to your new smart meter

Estimated bills can be inaccurate and inefficient which means that you might be overpaying for the services you are using. Stay



Provide accurate bills enabling better cashflow



Make your bills simpler saving time for other tasks

in control, save money, and save time by only paying for the energy your business uses.

Save time for other tasks

Your company is innovative, trusted, responsible, and engaged so you need

business solutions which are the same. The key to greater productivity is to work smarter, not harder. With a smart meter, you can continue to do what you do best, while your smart meter provides accurate bills, without needing to provide manual meter readings. This saves precious time and energy to focus on your business priorities.

By using a smart meter, your business can positively contribute to a cleaner and greener world

From the moment your smart meter is installed, you are helping create a smart energy system which could ultimately help reduce our carbon emissions as a nation.

Businesses across Great Britain are working to positively contribute to a cleaner and greener world. Using a smart meter is a step in the right direction to help you cut down on energy waste and make your business more sustainable.

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

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Charlotte Hollins of Fordhall Farm spoke at the breakfast meeting



The Expo, held at Shrewsbury Town Football Club's stadium, was a sellout event

Chamber Expo is a sellout success

Shropshire Chamber of Commerce's autumn expo proved to be one of its busiest and most successful ever.

The sell-out event at Shrewsbury Town Football Club's stadium was an opportunity to network and connect with around 40 exhibitors including professional services, education and training, printing, media, and more.

Charlotte Hollins of Fordhall Farm in Market Drayton was guest speaker at the breakfast meeting, and explained how her family saved their business by turning it into England's first community-owned farm.

Three seminars were also delivered during the event - how to look after yourself and your team in a time of 24/7 connection and hybrid-working by Stephanie Henson from Six Ticks, an employment update from Aaron & Partners, and 'eight tips to business-to-business marketing' from Jon Hepburn of The Fedora Consultancy.

Kelly Roberts, Shropshire Chamber's events manager, said: "The event was a great success - a fantastic way to welcome back our members after all the restrictions of the past 18 months.

"The expo stands sold out very quickly, and Charlotte gave an inspirational talk to our breakfast meeting beforehand.

"There was such a great buzz at the venue throughout the day, and you could feel that businesses were relishing the chance to get back on the networking circuit once again.

"We want to say a big thank-you to our exhibitors, seminar presenters and all the attendees."



Carl Jones from Shropshire Business and SBLTV with Shropshire Chamber of Commerce CEO Richard Sheehan are happy to be meeting in person again, at the successful Expo



Alison Jones on the WPG stand



Hayley Jay promoting the Furrows Group



Brothers Craig and Richard Hughes from Chrisbeon



Melissa Edwards and Jackie Young representing Dyke Yaxley



Martin Huckle of Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service



Lily Ellis and Jane Pritchard of Aico

Monitoring the markets helps to save money and negate risk

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1. Who is someone you admire, and why?

Jurgen Klopp. The Liverpool Football team Manager. I am a life-long LFC fan and he has come in and brought the great days back again, with excellent football. But it's the man management skills that I really admire in him - he is like a Dad to the players, giving self-belief, a great camaraderie and a team spirit that has seen them play such an incredible standard of football, and enjoy it.

2. Tell me three pet hates?

1) I really don't like injustice in any way. 2) I hate bullying in all its many forms, physical and mental. 3) People that do not pick up their pet dogs mess!

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

I play cornet in a brass band, and when I was younger did a lot of singing. I was into amateur dramatics and once played the back end of a camel for a nativity play at the Royal Albert Hall.

4. Who would be your 3 dream dinner guests?

This is a tough one as there are so many – but Jurgen Klopp, Richard Branson and Boris Johnson spring to mind from a sport, business and a government mix. To try and see what makes them tick, but also to understand how they deal with such positions of influence.

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

Pina Colada, always!

6. What is your favourite holiday destination?

There are many. I love a quiet getaway and a chance to laze by a pool. But New York as a city break and Lanzarote as a beach/coast holiday are my two most memorable places.

7. Name three words that best describe you?

Always difficult to talk about yourself like this, but I would like to think 1) encourager, 2) friend and 3) listener

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

My music playlist, a life supply of matches and Swiss Army knife, with all the different tools.

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

Get more rest and become less stressed.



10. What was the last book you read?

Embracing Uncertainty by Susan Jeffers.

11. What is your favourite aspect about your career?

Meeting people and forming working relationships.

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

Absolutely not, I always wanted to be in the RAF as a kid, but in 1982, as an 18 year old I landed a job in banking after phoning round banks in the yellow pages and I have been in the money markets ever since.

13. What are some causes you care about?

I support the Salvation Army as a Charity – the amount of good work it does in this country and around the world is admirable – they are always there with sleeves rolled up to just get on and meet the need of people in so many different ways. A great charity. Making a huge difference.

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

I love West End theatre shows and musicals, and I like eating out with friends in restaurants.

15. What would be your personal motto?

Be kind, always. As far as you can live at peace with everyone.

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Retail students working in the charity shop at Derwen College



Students can learn about horticulture



The college offers students the opportunity to learn new skills

In the business of transforming lives

Shropshire businesses are being asked to play their part by offering just a couple of hours a week to help change a young person's future.

An award-winning specialist college for young adults with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) is asking the local business community to help provide valuable work experience for its students.

Derwen College, which has campuses near Oswestry, Shrewsbury, Ludlow and Telford is asking employers to consider providing weekly work placements to help students in their training.

The college is keen to work with charity shops, designers and printers, theatres, garden nurseries, cafes, restaurants and housekeeping businesses in Shropshire, preferably in or near Oswestry or Telford.

The work experience team are also looking for some specific placements local to Shrewsbury, for students at the college's Walford-based site. They are particularly keen to hear from Shrewsbury-based florists, gyms, leisure centres and horticulture enterprises.

Just a few hours a week in a work environment provides vital experience for students, which helps them towards employment and a more independent future. Students are supported at all times during their placements by a Derwen College job coach and can be a real asset to a business.

Work experience co-ordinator Abi Baker said: "Only 6% of young people with learning difficulties go into work, which is an incredibly disappointing statistic.

"Derwen College's mission is to create opportunities for young people who may have special educational needs, but have proved they are able and willing to work. This enables them to enjoy job satisfaction and also to live more independent lives.

"Our external work placement programme offers life changing opportunities for our students to undertake meaningful, real work experience which is relevant to their learning and future career hopes.

"Businesses that we work with also find it a rewarding thing to do. Offering work placements to a person with a learning difficulty promotes diversity and boosts a company's reputation for being community-minded and inclusive."

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

Deliveries Soar for Zoom 1hr



Delivering the goods

Shropshire's home-grown delivery solution continues to go from strength to strength.

During August 2021, Zoom 1hr overtook the total number of orders delivered in 2020, showing that demand for their home delivery service is higher than ever.

The successful delivery solution achieved an annual turnover of £665,000 in FY2019, and £2.5million in FY2020 and now they are now on course to hit £4million this year.

Thanks to high profile clients, such as Co-op, they are delivering more last mile grocery orders than hot food take-aways.

CEO and Founder, Kev Williams, said, "The evolution of Zoom 1hr shows no signs of slowing down. It is fantastic to see our orders and turnover growing year on year, reflecting the hard work and determination of the team. I'd like to see this continue in to 2022 and beyond.

"There is lots more up our sleeves! We are

about to launch a new brand that will support retailers in Shrewsbury. Stay tuned for more news on that.

"Our Shrewsbury head office is also being kept busy with a new delivery partnership with Snappy Shopper and Southern Co-op in Bristol, which has created new jobs in our team and will build on our success in last mile delivery."

Zoom 1hr has recently invested in an insurance policy so that they can create new job opportunities in the area for drivers aged 21 and over (previously only 25 and over). Kev adds, "We hope this will be a game changer for young people looking for a way into the delivery and transport sector.

"I'm not aware of any other companies that offer this along with our support and benefits, as well as recognising our drivers' worker status."

For more information on Zoom! 1hr Delivery visit www.zoom1hr.co.uk

Local firm continues to smash recruitment in Shropshire!

Team4You, a local recruitment firm, are excited to have engaged in corporate sponsorship with The Shrewsbury Club.

Branch Manager, Amylia Matthews said: "Having discussed sponsorship opportunities with The Shrewsbury Club, we were delighted to be offered the option to sponsor the Autumn/Winter adult tennis league. Collectively, we believe this opportunity will be of great benefit to our business and will enable us to promote our services to other businesses in the County as they recover from the COVID19 pandemic. If there is one thing that the last 18 months has confirmed more than ever, it is that surrounding yourself with the right team is crucial."

At Team4You the main aim is to provide consultancy to businesses across Shropshire, adding value to their recruitment process by sourcing skilled, professional candidates in line with the needs of their vacancy. We do this by not only getting to know our clients and their team as people, but also by understanding the culture and ethos of the business. Quite simply #ThePeopleEffect."

Additionally, Team4You are shaking up recruitment by offering 6 monthly payment terms on all permanent candidates placed into local SMEs, and break invoices in to 6 manageable monthly payments. Team4You



Payroll Administrator Amber Hall, Compliance Manager Jess Bailey, Branch Manager Amylia Matthews, Recruitment Consultant Owen Fyfield, Operations Director Nick Lewis and Recruitment Consultant Otis Powell

understands the cost of hiring can be seen as a "risky business" and are proud that these payment terms have already given many local Shropshire businesses the confidence to drive their recruitment plans forward and invest in building their workforce.

The dedicated and friendly team are based in Haughmond View, on Shrewsbury Business Park and would be more than happy to discuss your recruitment needs.

The team are committed to tailoring the recruitment process based on their bespoke service. To keep up to date with the support and business opportunities Team4You is providing, visit their website at <https://www.team4you.today/> and follow them across social media.

Furthermore, if you're an experienced Recruitment Consultant and you'd like to be considered for a career opportunity with Team4You, please don't hesitate to call us, we'd love to hear from you.



TEAM4YOU

Smashing Recruitment in Shropshire!

☎ 01743 627404
 📍 Haughmond View, Sitka Drive, Shrewsbury Business Park, Shrewsbury, Shropshire, SY2 6LG

#ThePeopleEffect

Future of further education in focus

The principal of Telford College has taken part in a national debate on the future of the UK's further education sector.

Graham Guest was invited to speak at the Westminster Education Forum's policy conference as part of a wide-ranging discussion on the content of the Government's new Skills and Post-16 Education Bill.

He was one of five expert speakers to address the online audience in a forum on the further education sector, post-pandemic recovery, and strategies for plugging skills gaps.

Other speakers were the chief executive of the Federation of Awarding Bodies, director of research and development at the Association of Employment and Learning Providers, a professor of higher education learning and management at Aston Business School, and the head of policy at the awarding body NCFE

Graham spoke about the importance of raising the profile of the breadth of further education opportunities now available, and



Telford College principal Graham Guest

the need to ensure that employers always felt 'centre stage' in the development of the curriculum.

He also outlined the Skills Development Fund pilot project which Telford College is leading across the Marches, in conjunction

with other local colleges, with a specific focus on the health and social care sector.

The new Government bill seeks to offer a new outlook for post-16 education where every young adult has a broad range of opportunities - removing the illusion that a degree is the only path to a good career.

Graham said he felt it was a good step for the sector, and included many positive initiatives which Telford College was already adopting including the fostering of closer links with businesses through sector-specific 'hubs'.

With new technical T levels now being rolled out as a vocational alternative to A levels, Graham said he was a great supporter of the programme. But he asked the policy makers to consider improved pathways for those that leave school without maths or English qualifications.

The Westminster Education Forum has dozens of high-profile patrons from both the House of Commons and House of Lords, and organises senior-level conferences on public policy relating to education and children services issues.

Tackling driver shortage

Telford College is running a new series of training programmes to help tackle a serious shortage of HGV drivers.

The lack of qualified drivers is causing serious disruption to the UK's logistics and delivery chains, and employers are desperate to fast-track new staff into the industry.

Telford College has worked closely with employers and driver trainers to create a 'Sector-based Work Academy' specifically designed to provide jobseekers with the skills required for driving goods vehicles.

The project has attracted TV coverage – the BBC Midlands Today cameras came to meet some of the first intake of trainees

The free courses are available to anyone over the age of 19 who is actively seeking employment, and in receipt of either universal credit or jobseekers' allowance. All the details can be found at www.telfordcollege.ac.uk/sbwa/

Graham Reynolds, Telford College's business programme manager, said: "There is a huge shortage of drivers in the industry at the moment, and it is having a knock-on effect for supplies to supermarkets, restaurants and other retailers.

"Because the need for drivers is so high, it's a great time for licenced drivers to join the industry - with many organisations offering competitive rates and incentives."

Telford College is currently working with a number of top employers in the area which are committed to taking on newly qualified drivers.

Graham added: "The industry has suggested a shortfall of somewhere between 90,000 and 100,000 drivers – the shortage has grown over the past few years and been

Telford College principal Graham Guest with two of the first people to sign up to the courses, Jane Robson and Antony Steadman



worsened following Covid, and Brexit. The greatest barrier for individuals looking to get into the industry is gaining their Category C licence – sometimes referred to as a Class Two licence - which enables them to drive vehicles up to 7.5 tonnes.

"This can be costly, and for individuals who are unemployed they can find themselves instantly priced out of training and licencing.

"Our Sector-Based Work Academy programme enables jobseekers to undertake a supported programme of study to gain

qualifications, improve their employability skills and importantly support them with the costs of licence acquisition.

"There are no direct costs to the individual for their driver theory practice, initial theory tests, practical training or Driver Certificate of Professional Competence (CPC)."

Telford College is also working closely with the West Midlands Combined Authority to provide an HGV pilot scheme across Wolverhampton and Birmingham to help bring even more new drivers into the sector.

It's a 'Nuplace' for Mayor of the West Midlands to visit

Construction work is well underway at Nuplace's latest housing development in Telford and Wrekin ahead of prospective tenants being able to reserve their brand new homes this autumn.

Andy Street, Mayor of the West Midlands, visited the site at Southwater Way last week to see progress on the council's wholly owned company's first fully sustainable development.

The West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) invested around £460,000 into the scheme as part of its 'brownfield first' approach. This involves regenerating the region's former industrial land and vacant urban plots for new homes and jobs, helping to protect the green belt in the process.

Properties have all been designed in accordance with the council's commitment to tackle climate change including PV panels and electric car charging points, helping tenants to reduce their fuel bills and at the same time reducing the scheme's carbon footprint.

Tenants will be able to reserve their brand new homes to rent from this autumn with homes ready to move into early 2022.

The new site, is being developed by Nuplace's building partner Lovell and features 46, one, two, three and four bedroom homes for a mixture of private and affordable rent bringing the total Nuplace homes in the borough to 466. Councillor David Wright, Cabinet Member for Economy, Housing, Transport & Infrastructure said: "Telford & Wrekin Council are extremely grateful for the WMCA's support in helping us to launch Nuplace's first fully sustainable development.

"We are so pleased to see work progressing at this site which brings us another step forward in being able to launch these new homes to the public. Southwater Way has set a benchmark for future Nuplace schemes as well as other housing schemes within the borough and we are confident that these new sustainable homes will prove to be really attractive to people looking for a high quality home for rent."

Andy Street, Mayor of the West Midlands and chair of the WMCA, said: "I'd like to thank the leader of Telford and Wrekin Council for inviting me to see first-hand the progress being made at Southwater Way.

"This is another excellent example of how the WMCA has continued to invest throughout the pandemic in schemes that regenerate former industrial sites to provide affordable, energy efficient homes for local people and modern commercial premises for emerging, 21st century industries to grow and create the well paid jobs of the future.

"This focus on low carbon and brownfield regeneration is not only helping to relieve pressure on the green belt but is also supporting the region's #WM2041 ambition to be a net carbon zero region."

Andy Street, Mayor of the West Midlands takes a look at the Nuplace development with Councillor Shaun Davies, Leader of Telford & Wrekin Council



Katherine Kynaston, Director of Housing, Employment & Infrastructure (Telford & Wrekin Council), Steve Ulfig, Regional Land and Pre-Construction Director (Lovell), Andy Street, Mayor of the West Midlands, Councillor Shaun Davies, Leader of Telford & Wrekin Council, Councillor David Wright, Telford & Wrekin Cabinet Member for Economy, Housing, Transport & Infrastructure

Councillor Shaun Davies, leader of Telford & Wrekin Council, said:

"We were pleased to welcome Andy to the borough and to show him some of our key developments, including our plans for Station Quarter. The WMCA's investment into Southwater Way, as part of their brownfield first

approach aligns with the council's values, as we collectively look to regenerate former industrial sites and protect the green belt."

To be among the first to hear about this new development when it is launched sign up to Nuplace's email list at www.nuplace.co.uk/register now

A spectacular setting – Hawkstone Hall near Wem hosted Shropshire Business LIVE



A most elegant return

The first question of the morning was a revealing one: “So, how many of you are attending your first face-to-face networking event since lockdown?”

Nearly three quarters of the delegates put their hands up – we were very grateful that they chose Shropshire Business LIVE as the occasion for their return!

Nearly 18 months later than originally planned, the magnificent Hawkstone Hall near Wem hosted the latest breakfast event, organised by the wealth management team at Throgmorton Associates, in association with Shropshire Business magazine and event specialists Yarrington.

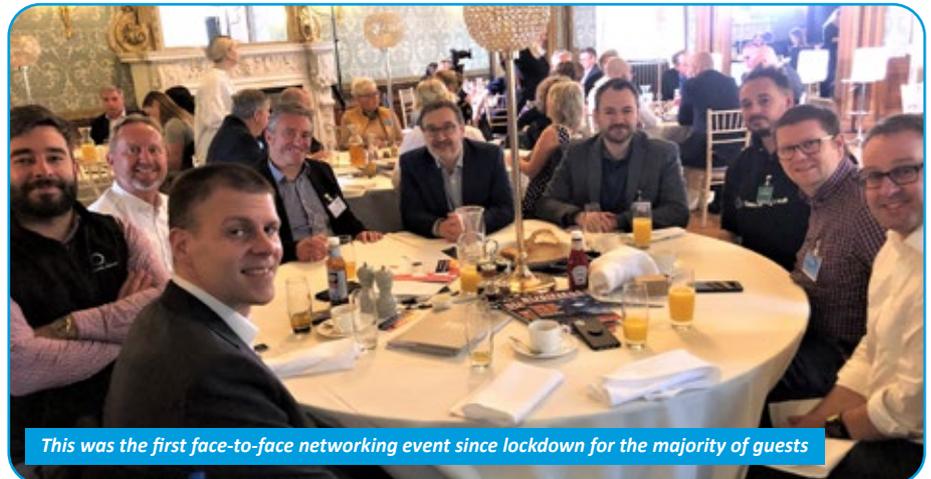
Dozens of local business people packed into the hotel's ballroom for a morning of breakfast, networking, and two panel debates, hosted by Shropshire Business editor Carl Jones.

The Shropshire Business Live TV cameras were also there to capture the panel discussions for their monthly business shows, as well as interviewing some of the delegates, for their September and October editions.

Picking up on the ‘Building Back Better’ theme, the event delivered top tips on how Shropshire companies can maximise their recovery from the Covid lockdowns.

The first panel turned the spotlight on businesses which were at the front line of the challenges during Covid – Shropshire Festivals, Planet Doughnut, Zoom 1Hr, and Good2Great.

Panel number two was made up of expert professional advice and support organisations such as Lanyon Bowdler, WR Partners, the Federation of Small Businesses, and Throgmorton Associates.



This was the first face-to-face networking event since lockdown for the majority of guests



Jenna Tarry and Nicky Flood with Nick Jones



Chris Pritchard and Carl Jones

Carl said: “Our Shropshire Business Live events prior to the pandemic at locations such as Hencote vineyard and Netley Hall were a sell-out.

“After so many months of lockdown, we were all looking forward to the opportunity to network once again with like-minded companies who want to promote the best that Shropshire has to offer, share best practice, and pick up top tips from some of the best in the business.

“It ticked all of those boxes – a fabulous occasion in a spectacular setting.”

Nick Jones added: “With our business community now firmly on the road to recovery, we felt the time was right for this popular networking event to get back on the road.

“The event served up a fascinating mix of comment, advice, and valuable networking opportunities with leading local professionals and entrepreneurs.”

Net zero carbon is achieved

Aico are proud to announce their commitment to the Climate Pledge, as part of their drive towards sustainable business practices and achieving net zero carbon.

The Climate Pledge was founded by Amazon and Global Optimism and brings together a cross-sector community of companies and organisations to tackle the climate crisis and become net zero carbon across their businesses, by the year 2040.

By becoming a signatory of the Climate Pledge, Aico, the European market leader in home life safety, commit to three principal areas of action: regular reporting, carbon elimination and credible offsets. Aico will regularly measure and report their greenhouse gas emissions, implement decarbonization strategies throughout their business practices and neutralise remaining emissions to achieve



net zero ahead of the Paris Agreement.

This announcement aligns with further efforts and commitments made by Aico in the drive towards climate action; their dedicated Corporate Social Responsibility programme has a core focus on environmental impact. Through this, Aico works alongside local and national organisations to promote awareness of the urgent need for climate action, solve the challenges of decarbonisation and share practical

solutions in order to deliver a more sustainable future.

Lee Duffy, Operations | Learning and Development Manager at Aico, comments "We are in the middle of a climate crisis, if we do not take action now, we may do catastrophic damage to our planet. Sustainability is within our core values, and we are passionate about making long term change.

"By collaborating with other organisations through becoming a signatory of the Climate Pledge, we can begin to learn how to make a difference and support others on their journey. Firstly to awareness, then to action, and finally to solutions."

To find out more about the Climate Pledge, please visit: www.theclimatepledge.com/us/en

For more information on Aico, visit: www.aico.co.uk

Promotions announced at Shrewsbury law firm

Shrewsbury law firm Aaron and Partners has announced a series of promotions across the firm after a year of continued growth.

The firm, which also has offices in Manchester and Chester, has announced five promotions across its offices, with a new Associate appointed at its Shrewsbury office.

Zoe Lloyd's development has been recognised with promotion to Associate in the firm's Corporate and Commercial team. She has played a key role in the continued growth of the Shrewsbury-based team, having completed her training at Aaron and Partners in 2017.

Chester-based Joseph Fletcher-Hunt has been made a partner in the Real Estate team having joined the firm in 2019. His work has seen him noted in the Legal 500 directory, a leading industry guide to the top professionals working in the UK's legal market.

Paul Hennity, also a legal 500 listed lawyer, has been promoted to Senior Associate in the firm's renowned Employment team. Paul is highly experienced in both contentious and non-contentious employment matters.

Joshua Simpson in the firm's Real Estate department and Paul Caslin, from the highly regarded Wills, Trusts and Tax team have also been promoted to Associate Solicitors.

Nick Clarke, Senior Partner at Aaron & Partners, said: "I'm delighted that again this year we have been able to recognise the development of our people through these promotions. They have all demonstrated great commitment and excellence in their work for clients and their promotions are well deserved.

"We recognise that our people are the key to continued success and so we aim to create an environment where staff can develop and

Newly promoted Real Estate Associate Solicitor Joshua Simpson, Senior Partner Nick Clarke, Wills, Trusts and Tax Associate Solicitor Paul Caslin, Paul Hennity, Senior Associate in the Employment team, and Joseph Fletcher-Hunt, Real Estate Partner



progress with us. It's been a challenging year so it's important that we celebrate achievement when we get the chance and there's no better example of this than through promotions.

"I'd like to congratulate everyone who has been promoted, and I'm looking forward to seeing the next stages of their development".

Deferred tax changes welcomed

Experts at a Shropshire accountancy firm have welcomed the news that two major tax rule changes will now be deferred.

The Government has announced the starting point for changes to the tax year for trading income for unincorporated businesses will not come into effect before April 2024.

And the Making Tax Digital project will be introduced a year later than originally planned too, with the date also moved to April 2024.

Francesca Hutcheson, Tax Director at Dyke Yaxley Chartered Accountants in Shrewsbury, said the deferrals were good news for both taxpayers and advisers.

"The deferrals have been announced by the Government as they recognise the challenges UK businesses and their representatives have faced as the country

emerges from the pandemic.

"They have listened to stakeholder feedback, and slowed down the changes so that taxpayers and their advisers now have more time to prepare for the new rules which are both significant and complex."

Francesca said the full commencement of the tax year basis for trading income for unincorporated businesses was delayed until 2024, with a transition year not coming into effect earlier than 2023.

"Pushing back the date of the Making Tax Digital for Income Tax Self-Assessment scheme is welcome news for businesses and landlords with a business income over £10,000 per year.

"General partnerships will not be required to join MTD for Income Tax Self-Assessment until April 2025, and the dates

when other types of partnership will be required to join have yet to be announced.

"Clearly as businesses begin to recover after the devastating effects of Covid-19, they will need help and support in order to restructure and adjust their operating procedures accordingly," said Francesca.

"News that such substantial tax rule changes will be pushed back can only be helpful as there's more time for everyone to seek the professional advice they need to ensure they are ready for the new-look regulations."



Francesca Hutcheson

Comms company is a national awards finalist



Business communications provider, Enreach, has been shortlisted for the Best Reseller Innovation award at this year's Comms National Awards.

The Comms National Awards is one of the most prestigious events in the telecoms calendar and the provider has been shortlisted thanks to its innovative HD Touch desk phone that is fully integrated with its game-changing cloud solution, Enreach Contact.

Duncan Ward, Chief Executive Officer, spoke of the shortlisting "We're very proud to have been shortlisted for the Best Reseller Innovation category at the Comms National Awards for the fourth year in a row. This is a true testament to the difference that the HD Touch handset has made for both our customers and our colleagues while working remotely over the past year.

We're up against some of the best competition in the industry and would like to say congratulations to all of the finalists!"

Back of the net for sponsorship deal



Gavin Cowan 1st team manager, Becky Homersley Communications Officer at Enreach, Aimee Lauder Sales Manager at Telford AFC and Adam Walker Team Captain are pictured with the Enreach pitch side board

Business communications provider, Enreach, has been announced as AFC Telford's latest sponsor.

The telecoms provider, with headquarters in Telford, recognised the struggle for local clubs following the COVID-19 pandemic and threw its support behind AFC Telford by sponsoring the club for the upcoming season.

Speaking of the sponsorship Duncan Ward, Chief Executive Officer at Enreach UK, said, "As a proud Shropshire-based business, we were eager to support AFC Telford as they enter the 2021/22

season. After a tough eighteen months, the club needed local support more than ever before and we were more than happy to provide this. We join a whole host of brilliant local sponsors of the club who we look forward to working alongside."

Aimee Lauder, Sales Manager at AFC Telford said "Thank you to Enreach who have become one of our newest sponsors, we are delighted to be working with them and are very grateful for their support. After a tough two seasons here at the club, it's the support from local companies like Enreach that we need to keep us going."

Mental health awareness: vital for employers and employees

Long gone are the days where workplace wellbeing centred around the notion that shutting the office half an hour early on a Friday amounted to showing flexibility and care towards staff.

Now, the standards employers are held to when it comes to their knowledge and actions surrounding the health of their team are much higher – and the pandemic has heightened this progress, with 92% of companies increasing their emphasis on mental health as a result¹.

Which is why skills such as Mental Health First Aid training are in such high demand – and the experts at Paycare Wellbeing are busier than ever.

There are two equally important sides to this story: firstly, employees who've undertaken training around mental health and wellbeing – and have the confidence and knowledge to step into Wellbeing Champion roles and support their colleagues – are becoming increasingly attractive recruitment prospects.

For HR teams who are conscious of this increasing need for wellbeing-savvy workforces, the addition of a Mental Health First Aid course on a CV makes applicants stand out from those who have similar levels of work experience.

But of course, the company themselves must be able to display their own commitment to wellbeing in order to continue recruiting and retaining the very best candidates (and indeed, two thirds of employers consider recruitment and retention as 'very important' when deciding to invest in health and wellbeing initiatives²).

It's no longer enough to simply state 'we're a great place to work' – 2021's employees are seeking solid Workplace Wellbeing policies, a better work/life balance than the business



sector has traditionally offered in decades gone by, and benefits and perks which truly are beneficial! In fact, more than a third consider wellbeing benefits as a priority when deciding whether to accept a job offer³.

Whether it's undertaking training and appointing Champions who take ownership of their colleagues' wellbeing needs, offering remote or hybrid working as standard, or initiating a ban on 'out of hours' emails and communication about work matters, there are countless ways to invest in people's health and wellbeing.

And with so many companies doing exactly that, the time to act is now – otherwise we'll start to see that gap between the wellbeing conscious and the less health-savvy businesses widening, and those in the latter group struggling with their recruitment and retention even further as the very best talent goes in search of a more progressive employer.

Support at Cedo

A great example of a Shropshire company looking after the physical and mental health of its employees is Cedo, who specialise in supplying leading retailers with consumer

household products such as clingfilm and refuse sacks, and have been Paycare Policyholders for more than 15 years.

They have also been making use of the mental health training offering from Paycare Wellbeing.

HR Advisor Jenny Dulson explains: "Cedo has recently participated in the free e-clinics and on the back of this, we arranged for bespoke wellbeing sessions for our teams to help support them, and initiate our own wellbeing policy.

"Paycare has allowed us to effectively support employees with healthcare costs, and has enabled us to support employees requiring optical tests and eyecare solutions as part of their role – whilst reducing our administration time.

"The Employee Assistance Programme has enabled us to signpost many employees to effective and professional advice and support; we have been advised by employees that it has helped them through tough times and helped them to remain at work.

"The access to private healthcare solutions such as a consultations and scans has helped a number of employees and their families reduce waiting times, and crucially reduced diagnosis and treatment times."

To find out more about Workplace Wellbeing, visit www.paycare.org/workplace-wellbeing/

Since 1874, Paycare (formerly known as Patient's Aid Association) has worked to help individuals, families, businesses, and their employees access a variety of preventative and reactive healthcare services which protect their financial, physical and mental health and wellbeing. Its dedicated mental health service — Paycare Wellbeing — launched in 2019 and provides qualified and confidential training to Corporate Groups including Managers, CEOs and HR teams.

Financial firm helps companies access £13.4 million support

A leading Shropshire financial services company has revealed it arranged nearly £13.4 million of funding for more than 60 separate companies to help them during the pandemic.

Q Commercial Finance says it stepped in to help 66 companies access funding through the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme as lockdown sparked a cashflow crisis across the country.

Director Steve Parry said most of the firms it had been able to help were based in the Midlands and had turned to the company after being unable to access funds through their banks or not being able to do so quickly enough.

The 66 companies covered a wide range of sectors including manufacturing, construction, retail and hospitality and came from Shropshire, the Black Country, West Midlands, Liverpool, Cambridge and London. Loans arranged ranged from £40,000 to £1.37 million.

Steve said Q Commercial Finance – part of the Q Financial Services Group based in Wellington and Shrewsbury – had also helped countless other



Steve Parry

companies arrange funds through their banks by offering free advice and using its contacts to get applications fast-tracked.

"At the start of the pandemic we were inundated with inquiries about what finance and government support was going to be made available and there was a huge amount of uncertainty among businesses. Once the CBILS scheme was launched it became clear that banks would only support their own clients and

were being overwhelmed by the volume of requests they were receiving, with some companies facing months of delays to have their application processed.

"We helped a large number of clients speed up these applications by using our contacts and also completed applications on behalf of the client free of charge.

"But many clients were also told that their bank could not help them – or could not do so quickly enough to protect their business – so needed our help. In these 66 cases we helped our clients at all stages of the application and worked to ensure they received the funding they needed quickly enough to safeguard their future.

"I'm pleased to say we were able to arrange more funding than many of the other financial organisations in the region by using the fantastic knowledge and experience we have among our team to cut through the red tape.

"As we emerge from the pandemic it is particularly heartening to see so many of these businesses looking to the future with more confidence and knowing that we played our part in them coming through these turbulent last 18 months."

Government research role

The Faraday Battery Challenge (FBC), UK Government funded research and innovation programme, has appointed AceOn Group Managing Director, Mark Thompson, to its advisory group.

The FBC programme is funding up to £330 million in research and innovation in battery technologies and plays a vital part in establishing policy framework for propulsion battery and original equipment manufacturer investment across the UK.

Mark, who founded AceOn in 2009 and has over 30 years' experience in the battery and power industry, was invited to join the FBC group to help guide and support the programme throughout the critical autumn spending review period.

On receiving his invitation, Mark said: "To have the opportunity to join the FBC programme and support the future development of battery technology and investment in the UK is a major coup for AceOn. We describe ourselves as the battery specialists and to be appointed onto this prestigious national group just underlines this.

"We have a host of exciting developments taking place at AceOn at the moment, including being awarded our own Innovate UK funding to develop mobile solar energy storage units that use cutting-edge sodium-ion battery technology. So, having the chance to support the work we do at AceOn with further involvement in the progress of the UK battery power industry is fantastic."

The FBC was developed to support the UK Government's strategy to deliver net zero for transport, improve air quality and increase the UK's economy-wide investment in research and development to 2.4 per cent.

Its technical targets include reducing battery cost, weight and volume, improving performance and reliability and developing whole-life strategies including recycling and reuse.

Mark added: "The ethos of the FBC ties in perfectly with many of our passions at AceOn. One of our main projects is developing second life uses for electric vehicle batteries, which we know is going to be vital for the industry — and our planet — moving forward."

Dick Elsy, Interim Chair of the FBC Advisory Group said: "The team received a hugely positive response to the positions and following a rigorous selection panel review we are delighted to welcome Mark to the Advisory Group.



**Mark Thompson,
Managing Director
at AceOn Group**

"His appointment will help us to ensure the long-term prosperity of the UK battery industry and economy and I look forward to working with him to define the future landscape of electrification in the UK."

AceOn, which employs 27 members of staff and is based in Telford, Shropshire, was recently shortlisted for the Manufacturing Innovator of the Year award in the 2021 Innovation Awards.

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

Will your insurance cover every eventuality?

Shropshire businesses must not assume their insurance will cover all accidents in the workplace, an industry expert has said.

Rob Andrews is the health and safety specialist at Henshalls Insurance Brokers, in Newport and Shrewsbury, and he leads their in-house team.

He said: "Good workplace safety is far less expensive than an accident, and employers must take health and safety seriously to safeguard both staff and customers on site.

"If an accident does happen in the workplace, there is a cost for everyone involved – the business, the person who has the accident and society itself. Many of these costs are hidden though and not fully appreciated until an event happens."

Rob said business owners often assumed that their insurance would cover any costs incurred, but this was not the case.

"There are obvious direct costs such as fines, sick pay, damage to materials, damage to buildings, compensation and damage to equipment, but not all of these costs will be covered by your policy. Your



Rob Andrews

cover will not pay out for fines or sick pay, so it's vital that employers are clear on the finer details of their chosen policy just in case an unfortunate incident occurs."

Rob said many costs to a business from accidents at work were hidden below the surface and were very unlikely to be covered by insurance.

"This is called an 'accident iceberg' and the hidden costs can include delays,

overtime, employing temporary workers, reduced output, extra paperwork, lost orders and contracts, increased insurance premiums and damage to your business reputation."

The accident victim will also face costs including lost employment income and out-of-pocket expenses such as prescription charges, extra travel and living costs, increased insurance premiums and, in serious accidents, potentially home modifications.

"The cost of an accident also affects the UK society and economy. After a serious accident, society may lose a productive person from the labour market who can no longer contribute to their industry," said Rob. "And the cost to society can also include increased healthcare needs and dependency on the benefits system for people who are no longer able to work due to their injuries or ill health.

"It's clear that the hidden costs involved in workplace accidents can prove costly, and employers should ensure they know what risks they are facing and that they are aware of exactly what cover they have in place."

Expansion into Telford for Lanyon Bowdler's personal injury team

Lawyers at a Shropshire firm are "returning home" as part of the firm's personal injury team expands into a new base in Telford.

Whilst the firm has a strong client base in the Telford area, it's the first time Lanyon Bowdler has had a personal injury team based in the town for nearly 20 years, and head of the new Telford team, Debbie Humphries, said it was a landmark moment for the firm.

"We are all very excited about the move," she said. "We haven't had a Telford presence since 2003 and in some ways it feels like we are returning home."

"I started as a trainee in the personal injury team in the Telford office back in September 1998 and have since progressed to becoming a partner in the firm in January 2020.

"Karen Clarke, an associate legal executive, started her journey with Lanyon Bowdler at the Telford office in 1996 as a support secretary and has worked her way up, having recently qualified as a legal executive and being recognised by the firm in becoming an associate earlier this year, which happens to be her 25th year with the firm.

"It's a fantastic opportunity for us to work with clients in the Telford area, and

this feels like a big moment for the team and the firm as a whole."

Debbie and Karen are joined in the Telford office by Jemma Jones, who has recently moved into a role as legal support assistant following time providing secretarial support. Jemma is looking to build on her law degree and masters in legal practice where she attained a distinction.

Helen Jones and Lesley Teleki have also made the switch to the Telford office as the team's key secretarial support, although Helen will continue to provide some support for the team in Shrewsbury.

Head of the personal injury department at Lanyon Bowdler, Dawn Humphries, said demand for specialist legal advice regarding personal injury claims had grown across the firm.

She said: "Having recently been appointed as head of the department, it's been really exciting to oversee the move of this team to Telford and I know they will be a huge success."

"The firm's reputation for personal injury work is amongst the best in the country, so it's great to be able to help more people in the Telford area."

For any advice regarding personal injury legal services, call 01952 291222 or visit the website at www.lblaw.co.uk



Landmark moment for firm – meet the Telford team



The Telford offices of Lanyon Bowdler



Hannah Barnes

Importance of preparing a will

An experienced solicitor who specialises in preparing Wills and Lasting Powers of Attorney has joined a Shropshire law firm to bolster its private client department.

Hannah Barnes is a new member of the team at Lanyon Bowdler, and said having the correct legal documents in place was one of the most important things a family could do.

She said: "I have been qualified as a solicitor for nearly 10 years, and always get immense satisfaction from helping clients get their personal affairs in order."

"It is a great weight off their shoulders, and I can honestly say that preparing a Will, and particularly a Lasting Power of Attorney, is a hugely important thing for people to do - sooner rather than later."

"It's often something that people put off, but having the correct procedures in place can prevent a lot of stress and heartache further down the line."

Hannah has joined Lanyon Bowdler's Oswestry office as an associate solicitor, and is a full member of the Society of Trust and Estate Practitioners (STEP), as well as being a committee member of STEP Cheshire.

Edward Rees, head of the private client department at Lanyon Bowdler, welcomed Hannah to the team.

He said: "We are very pleased to have

secured a solicitor of such a high calibre as Hannah, and she will be a huge asset to the firm."

"Whilst studying for the STEP Diploma, she was recognised as the top graduate in England and Wales, and prior to that was also awarded the Cullimore Dutton Prize for obtaining the highest mark for private client (Wills, trusts and estate planning) work whilst studying at the College of Law in Chester."

"We have seen a big rise in demand for private client work, and Hannah has already shown herself to be excellent at dealing with a wide range of legal issues."

"We are delighted to welcome Hannah to the team."

Hannah specialises in the preparation of Wills, including trusts and inheritance tax planning, preparation and advice relating to Lasting Powers of Attorney for financial affairs and health and welfare.

She also has experience in all aspects of the administration of estates, including the administration of estates on intestacy, complex estates where inheritance tax is payable and where assets have been left in trust. Hannah can also assist where there is an agricultural or business element involved.

For more advice, contact Lanyon Bowdler on 0800 652 3371 or visit the website at www.lblaw.co.uk

Growth plans continue for TG Concrete

A Shropshire firm has acquired two concrete plants in north Wales as part of ambitious growth plans.

TG Concrete is part of the family-owned Tudor Griffiths Group which already has concrete plants covering the majority of Shropshire, Cheshire and North and Mid Wales.

Now the company has acquired Porthmadog Concrete Limited which has ready-mix plants in Porthmadog and Pwllheli.

TG Group Managing Director Tudor Griffiths said the transaction would not affect customer enquiries and orders, and that service would continue with the same professional approach and attitude as in the past.

"This change of ownership will make the quality sands, gravels and aggregates produced at our Cefn Graianog sand and gravel quarry – at nearby Llanllyfni – directly available to all Porthmadog



Concrete customers. Our entire team is looking forward to continuing to provide both existing and new customers with the same level of support and assistance as before."

Porthmadog Concrete Limited was originally set up by Robert Griffith and his late father, Hugh, in 1991, and over the last 30 years, the company has developed a strong and vibrant business operating

throughout the Llyn Peninsula and West Gwynedd.

It originally operated with two small trucks, but the company now has five plant-based concrete mixer trucks, and also has the support of TG Group's fleet of over 50 concrete mixer trucks.

"Although standing down as Director and Company Secretary, Robert and Fiona Griffith will continue to be involved on a daily basis, and we're very pleased to be working with them during this transitional period," said Tudor.

The latest deal follows on from TG Concrete's acquisition of a plant from Hanson at Cemmas Road, near Machynlleth, and the construction of a brand-new plant in Bridgnorth.

"Our growth plans are continuing as we work hard to keep up with increased customer demand and to meet our objective of reaching new customers in an even wider geographical area," said Tudor.

Silver anniversary celebrated

A quarter of a century in business has seen Agritel Packaging Supplies become a leading supplier of quality packaging goods across the region and beyond, serving many industries and forming a loyal customer base through exceptional customer service.

Like many industry-leading businesses, Agritel came from humble beginnings. Established in 1997, John Duffus & Family founded the company to provide the agricultural industry with wrap and twine. However, after four successful years, the agricultural sector was hit hard by the 2001 foot and mouth crisis and saw Agritel take the strategic decision to diversify into selling industrial packaging alongside their existing offering. This move proved to be the basis of great success and has seen industrial packaging sales grow to form the majority of Agritel's turnover and provide a broad foundation for the company's continued expansion.

Agritel continued to take vast strides in shaping the way it worked for its customers. They boasted an ever-growing portfolio of new packaging products and waste recycling machinery, beginning with pallet wrap and pallet wrapping machines. In 2010, Agritel launched its e-commerce site – agritelonline.co.uk, at the time, a very innovative way of enabling customers to purchase packaging products quickly and easily at the lowest possible price. The site continues to grow year on year and to date still proves an extremely beneficial attribute to their business offering. This success is highlighted through Agritel's many 5 star reviews on both Google and Trust Pilot, in which customers credit the "always reliable, efficient and fast service" and "brilliant products with fantastic support."



Over the next few years, Agritel's progress continued, and by 2019, the family-run business had a new home for its team on the Gledrid Industrial Park, Chirk. This new facility offered modern offices, a welcoming base for visiting customers, and a warehouse more suitable for their ever-expanding business. Furthermore, it allowed Agritel to strengthen its position as an importer of packaging products and manage UK distribution for several notable European and International Manufacturers.

In their 25th year, Agritel is stronger than ever, and with the son of John Duffus, Rob, now at the helm, the future is bright. Rob says, "As the second generation of my family to run this business, it gives me great pride to reach our 25th year.

"The business continues to have the same objectives as when it was established; to offer good quality products at competitive prices whilst taking a long-term approach to customer relationships. We are fortunate to operate in a part of the country with a strong

entrepreneurial spirit. We have some fantastic businesses in the region. We consider it a privilege to continue to serve many of them - their success and growth have contributed to our own. Supporting local owner-managed businesses has never been so important, and I'd like to thank everyone who has supported us over the years. We look forward to the next 25".

It's clear to see how far Agritel Packaging Supplies have come over the last 25 years, and it's this initiative the company has for development that sees them continually go way beyond simple sales growth goals. Currently, Agritel is focusing on working hard to help its customers reduce the amount of plastic packaging they are using. With the ongoing impact of excessive plastic waste on the environment and the forthcoming plastic packaging tax coming into effect in April 2022, it has never been a more critical issue for businesses. Agritel welcomes any contact from companies for whom this is a priority and would like some advice.

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