

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION FOR SHROPSHIRE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

MARCH/  
APRIL 2021

# Your Chamber, Your **VOICE**

IN BUSINESS - FOR BUSINESS



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## **STEAMING BACK**

Visitor attraction hopes for Easter return

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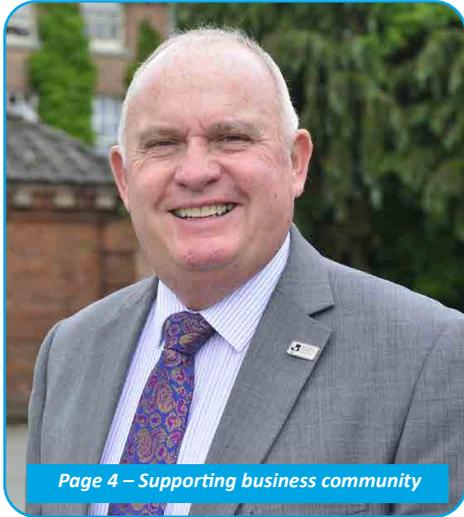
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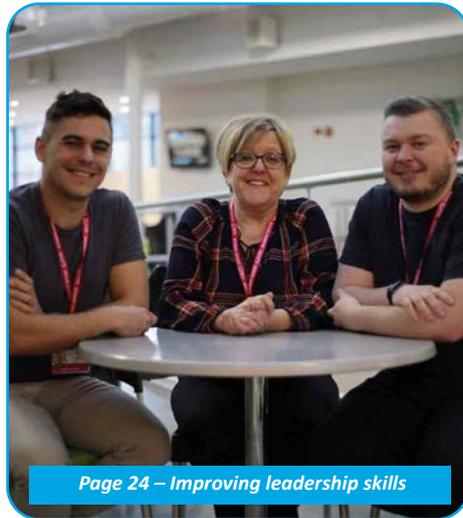
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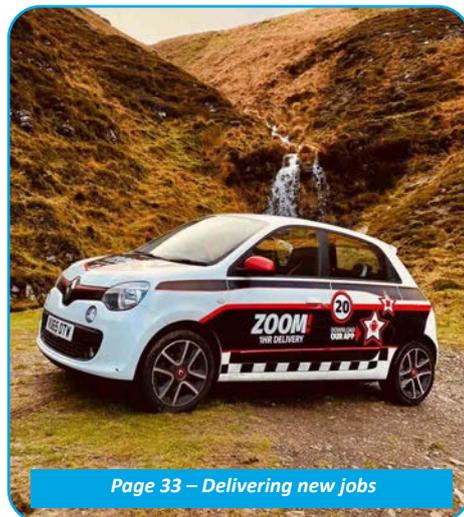
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Published by Shropshire Chamber of Commerce  
Trevithick House, Stafford Park 4,  
Telford, Shropshire, TF3 3BA



Design and layout by Paul Naylor,  
Media & You  
paul@mediaandyou.co.uk



Printed by Welshpool Printing Group Ltd,  
Printing House, Severn Farm Industrial Estate,  
Welshpool, SY21 7DF

The deadline for the May/June edition is Friday, March 26th. Publication date is Friday, April 23rd. Please note: due to the ongoing situation and the effects of COVID-19 on our business community, some events and activities mentioned may no longer be going ahead. Please check on each businesses own website for further clarification. All photos were taken before the Covid-19 pandemic.

For all editorial requests contact Teresa Rowe on:  
[magazine@shropshire-chamber.co.uk](mailto:magazine@shropshire-chamber.co.uk)

For all advertising requests contact Mia Carter on:  
[m.carter@shropshire-chamber.co.uk](mailto:m.carter@shropshire-chamber.co.uk)

# Committed to supporting our business community

**W**elcome to 2021, many had hoped that as the calendar numbers changed so would our world and indeed in some ways it has. A deal with the EU was struck, the UK vaccine roll out has commenced and for most there is light at the end of the tunnel, but not all.

With lock down stretching into the distance, whole business sectors closed and significant numbers of staff on furlough, what you might ask is your Chamber doing to help.

Our commitment to support our business community has been plain for all to see as we called on our reserves to allow us not to furlough any staff, making sure we were at full strength to provide support for Shropshire businesses, whenever and however it was needed. Our members enjoyed a three-month payment holiday and during this time we made 2,500 calls to businesses gathering intelligence and informing policy, locally, regionally and nationally. But we knew we would need to do more and provide more as Covid restrictions unravelled and businesses sort to face the challenges and capitalise on the opportunities that our new world provides. Our response has been to welcome six new members of staff to your Chamber team, strengthening our offer through skilled and well-trained people and making sure we are here for Shropshire businesses.

The impact on our young people and society that the scourge that is unemployment brings is clear for all to see. We are delighted that we are the first Gateway in Shropshire to post live vacancies under the Kickstarters program, supporting young people across Shropshire into funded work placements, helping to develop our future workforce. Our People Portal Video CV platform will be launched in Quarter 1 and will provide massive opportunity through technology to people seeking employment and employers seeking to recruit, more about this in the coming weeks.

The new border model has taken many by surprise and I am delighted that we have been able to invest in significant resource to support our businesses. It is clear there are teething troubles as new documents and processes come into being, we have 10 people employed on International Trade, they are there to help don't be shy ask.

We continue to work on innovative ways to support connectivity and social interaction something sorely missed by so many. Our research informs our decisions and helps shape our offer to fit your needs please take time to respond if invited to participate, help us to help you.

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

# Positivity, productivity and presenteeism – far-reaching impacts of health cash plans

**E**mployee health and wellbeing has been increasing in importance for organisations across Shropshire and beyond in recent years.

A wealth of research now shows us the links between a healthier workforce and higher productivity, lower absenteeism and presenteeism rates, more loyalty towards the company, and a raft of other beneficial side effects.

With absenteeism costing the UK economy an estimated £8.4 billion a year, and presenteeism costing a further £15.1 billion annually<sup>1</sup>, it's no wonder managers are looking for ways to reduce the burden and show their teams they care about their wellbeing.

Almost a quarter of businesses now have Health Cash Plans in place for their employees<sup>2</sup> – not only to support their physical and mental health but also to reward, recognise and retain their staff.

But what exactly is a Health Cash Plan?

Simon Cater, Corporate Account Manager from Paycare, explains: "Introducing a Health Cash Plan can be an effective method of retaining staff by showing how invested you are in their wellbeing, and having a Health Cash Plan in place is also proven to be an attractive benefit for job seekers too."

"Support on hand if they're unwell can be a huge relief, and not just for employees who have long-term health conditions: plans can cover everything including routine dental treatment and annual eyesight examinations, as well as treatments such as reflexology, hypnotherapy and acupuncture.

"To a current or potential employee, having a Health Cash Plan in place indicates a positive workplace culture, where someone won't be made to feel uncomfortable about

being unwell or needing to pop to a doctor's appointment or physiotherapy consultation.

"By having support available at their fingertips, without the worry of cost, staff are able to speak to someone independently and confidentially about any worries they might be experiencing, are empowered to focus on their health, and better able to approach the subject of wellbeing with their managers."

For more information, visit [paycare.org/health-cash-plans](https://www.paycare.org/health-cash-plans).

Sources:

1. <https://www.centreformentalhealth.org.uk/sites/default/files/2018-09/managing-presenteeism.pdf>

2. [https://www.cipd.co.uk/Images/health-and-well-being-2020-report\\_tcm18-73967.pdf](https://www.cipd.co.uk/Images/health-and-well-being-2020-report_tcm18-73967.pdf)

*By having support available at their fingertips, without the worry of cost, staff are able to speak to someone independently and confidentially about any worries they might be experiencing*

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# Tutoring company thanks consultancy

A new tutoring company has been launched in Shropshire after receiving first class advice from a county business consultancy.

Sarah Isaacs started her tutoring firm after attending a course with Good2Great, who provide a range of guidance, information and mentoring to new firms and established businesses.

Sarah took part in an eight week 'master class' with Good2Great, based in Bridgnorth, earlier this year.

"When I decided to launch my business I thought it would be a wise idea to find out from the experts what exactly was involved," said Sarah, an experienced teacher and best selling children's author who now offers private tuition either face to face or online via Zoom.

"The start-up course was brilliant – I would highly recommend anyone thinking of going into business to use Good2Great as a first step.

"Not only do you receive excellent support and guidance but you get to meet other like-

minded people too," she added. With over 25 years of teaching experience, Sarah now tutors English to many children who are struggling in school.

Her face-to-face lessons are carried out in her home in Bridgnorth and she has wide experience with children who have special educational needs. Her services include GCSE English language and literature tuition, English revision sessions, preparation for SATS, drama theory and audition practice and customised lessons.

# E-Scan helps to discover the entrepreneur in you

**A Midlands business consultancy has introduced an exciting innovation to help people who are setting up their own companies.**

Good2Great, based in Bridgnorth, specialise in providing support and guidance to new enterprises and established firms.

It has just launched a pioneering scanning tool which will give a boost to its 'step up' programme for new companies.

"We think we are one of very few consultancies in the UK to be using the new 'E-Scan' tool," said Sally Themans of Good2Great.

"It has been pioneered by Dr. Martijn Driessen in the Netherlands where it is already producing great results.

"We have all received training in order to be able to guide would-be business people and interpret results.

"As business coaches we can't rely on gut feeling alone when assessing new entrepreneurs and their ideas.

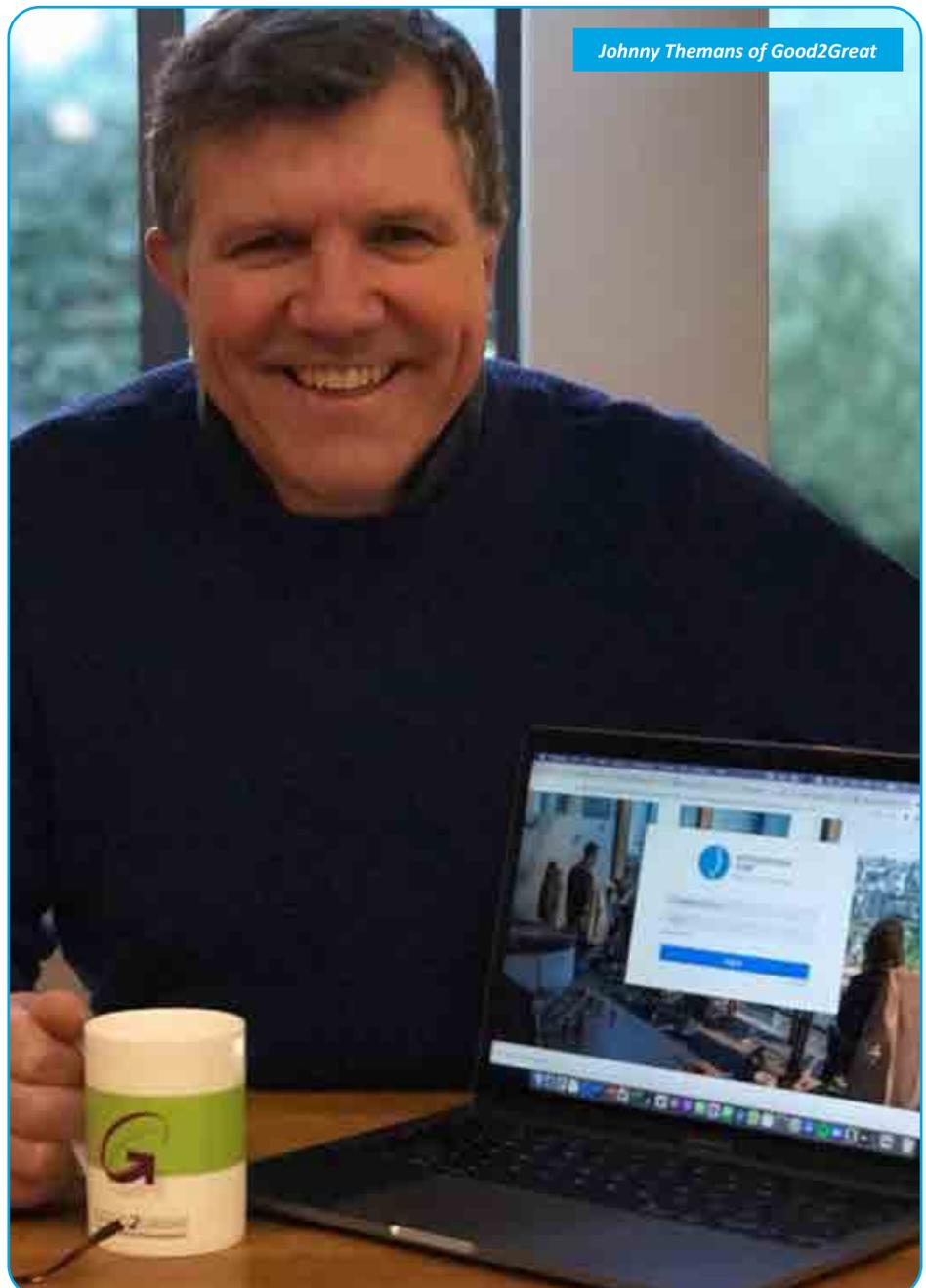
"This personality test has been developed to check if people are up to being their own boss – it will uncover their entrepreneurial potential and skills.

"The online scan gives people – in about 15 minutes – a detailed and accurate entrepreneur self-assessment profile.

"It helps us to have a discussion about a client's personality traits and it is not only for potential entrepreneurs who are thinking about starting a new business, but also business leaders who can turn an idea into entrepreneurial success," Sally explained.

Dr. Martijn Driessen commented: "Over 1,000,000 aspiring entrepreneurs worldwide have gained instant insight into their business mindset profile with E-Scan so far, and in several programmes survival rates went up to 89% after five years after using it.

"Coaches use the tool to help their clients succeed better and faster and I am now glad to be welcoming a partner like Good2Great Ltd to provide this valuable tool for the entrepreneurs in Shropshire and the Midlands.



Johnny Themans of Good2Great

# Hit your 2021 goals with a cloud phone system

**Remote working doesn't mean that targets stop, and businesses slow down, something that business telecoms provider Network Telecom is well aware of. Part of the European group, Enreach, the provider has been supplying businesses across the country with cloud solutions that empower teams of all sizes to continue to work effectively throughout the ongoing pandemic.**

While many businesses focused on short term solutions in 2020, remote working is now well established.

So, having a phone system that keeps everyone connected, wherever they are, is essential. It's no longer enough to just 'make do'.

Instead, your business needs a solution that enables your teams to work effectively together, regardless of whether they're in the office or at home.

Network Telecom is currently offering three months free on cloud phone systems that will ensure your business can benefit from:

- Industry-leading handsets that connect over WiFi and fit within your budget
- Traditional features combined with futureproof technology
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- Cost saving as a result of less hardware and reduced call charges
- Completely scalable solutions to change alongside your business
- Effective disaster recovery to ensure you stay online and available no matter where you and your teams are.

Duncan Ward, CEO of Network Telecom, said, "while we all hope to return to a sense of normality soon, we're urging businesses

to start utilising the technology available to them and get the most out of their communications now!

Cloud telephony really is the future, combining the latest innovations with the traditional features that we all know and love, making it the ideal solution for remote working. We're on hand to offer advice

to any business that is unsure of the best next steps to take with their communications solutions or needs support with flexible working."

Would you like to book in for a 30-minute meeting with a Network Telecom representative?

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You can book in today by contacting the team on 01952 310 746 or by email via [enquiries@networktelecom.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@networktelecom.co.uk).

*Cloud telephony really is the future, combining the latest innovations with the traditional features that we all know and love, making it the ideal solution for remote working*

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# Manufacturer has received in excess of £8,000 funding

**T**elford based access cover manufacturer, Fabweld Steel Products (FSP), has been awarded more than £8,000 of grant funding towards a £22,500 investment to boost its energy efficiency and productivity.

The grant, which is awarded under the Business Energy Efficiency Programme (BEEP) and partly funded by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), will be used on further energy saving measures at FSP including the installation of an improved heating system along with destratification fans. The measures will allow FSP to control its operational costs, further supporting its overall productivity and growth objectives.

"Despite the extensive challenges that we were faced with because of COVID-19, we are confident in our future," Managing Director Richard Hilton said. "The BEEP funding will allow us to reduce our carbon footprint, which, in turn, will help us become more efficient and lower our business expenditure.

The business, which offers bespoke products alongside its core range of fabricated steel access covers, aims to continue to grow in 2021 in the UK and beyond.

"This is the second time we have taken advantage of BEEP funding and we believe



*Richard Hilton, Managing Director at Fabweld Steel Products, which has received a grant towards a £22,500 investment to boost its energy efficiency and productivity*

that reducing our energy usage will go hand in hand with our development in 2021," added Richard. "We are ISO14001 accredited, which shows our dedication to environmental management, and the BEEP grant means that energy efficiency is at the forefront of

our mind as we look towards our goals for the year."

The latest grant follows on from a £94,500 investment in production process and systems improvement at FSP's headquarters in Telford in 2018.

## Campaign is kicking into action

Shropshire Chamber of Commerce says it is delighted to have published its first work placement opportunities for young people as part of the Government's Kickstart campaign.

The Chamber is 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 come forward to offer vacancies in a wide range of sectors from manufacturing to professional services, hospitality, social care, marketing, animal welfare, and more.

All the placements generated from the Chamber gateway are being advertised on the dedicated Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) Kickstart website.

Shropshire Chamber chief executive Richard Sheehan said: "We have been working hand-in-hand with the DWP for a number of months to get this scheme off the ground.

"It has taken time to resolve bumps in the road with the UK-wide back office systems, but we are delighted and excited to finally be in the position to make the first vacancies available."

He added: "Months of hard work and collaboration with the Government have put us in this position – now we can start an exciting journey which has the potential to

change the lives of many young people.

"It couldn't come at a better time, with new figures showing the UK's youth unemployment rate rising to 14.5% between August and October last year. It is likely to have increased even further since then."

So far, around 150 Kickstart employment vacancies in Shropshire have already been approved through the Chamber gateway, with a further 210 in the pipeline once Government checks are completed.

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

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

Mr Sheehan said: "We are delighted with the response from Shropshire businesses to engage with Kickstart and offer up placement opportunities.

"We have already connected with well over 200 businesses, and with the Government having now simplified its systems to relieve the logjam, we can now start to reap the rewards of all the hard work.

"We are extremely proud to support this unique initiative to provide opportunities to kickstart the careers of young people.

"Our services are available free of charge to help businesses navigate the administrative minefield, deal with the paperwork, and take the pressure off them."

Ruth Ross, Shropshire Chamber's director of business, added: "We are keen to hear from any other businesses across the county who are able to offer Kickstart opportunities to young people.

"Anyone wanting to find out more can register at [www.shropshire-chamber.co.uk/kickstart-scheme](http://www.shropshire-chamber.co.uk/kickstart-scheme). More information is available by emailing [kickstarter@shropshire-chamber.co.uk](mailto:kickstarter@shropshire-chamber.co.uk)."

Ben Vaughan, Shropshire Employer Manager for the DWP, said: "We are so excited to begin promoting and filling the Kickstart vacancies for our employers who are represented by our colleagues at the Shropshire Chamber of Commerce gateway.

"They are the first local gateway to have their jobs appear on our Universal Credit system in Shropshire and have put a considerable amount of time and resource into promoting the scheme across our county since September 2020.

"They will represent the interests of a wide range of employers across many sectors covering town and rural locations that will see jobs created in many emerging and exciting industries that will have a broad appeal to our younger jobseekers, giving many their first employment opportunity across the county."

# Recruitment firm launches new app

**D**M Recruitment have launched their own app to allow job seekers to remotely register for work. The business, based in Shrewsbury, currently works with businesses across the West Midlands and Wales, but the app will allow them to place people in jobs across the UK.

The recruitment business supplies temporary and permanent staff to industrial and commercial sectors, including many key worker roles in food production and waste management.

When the pandemic hit the company set about implementing a series of changes so that their operations could continue seamlessly through lockdown in a Covid safe way. The company has reported the new online practices have helped them, not only to recruit without face-to-face contact, but it has meant they are now able to win contracts on a national scale.

Stuart Danks, director, said, "Our old system of meeting all potential candidates in person wasn't going to be feasible in this new era. We knew our processes would need updating so that our temp workers and potential new candidates were able to communicate with us and apply for jobs in a safe and efficient way.

"Creating a Covid safe solution for



Stuart Danks using the new DM Recruitment app

recruiting made sense to our business in the long term, so we commissioned our very own app to be built from scratch. Our new app allows job seekers to remotely register for work and upload their documents, so they are ready to start work within 20 minutes – which in turn helps us to provide the best service to our clients.

"The app is slick and easy to use, and it has revolutionised how we recruit! Our temps and candidates don't need to spend

time and money travelling to us anymore, so they are happy too. Within a few clicks they can get themselves ready to start a new role from wherever they are in the UK."

The new app, built by Mobile Rocket, can be used to upload documents, search for jobs, access timesheets, and communicate with DM Recruitment.

Before downloading the DM Recruitment app, users need to register on their website at [dm-recruitment.com](http://dm-recruitment.com).

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# Get creative and contribute to the community

Businesses need to get creative with their CSR offering – says the High Sheriff of Shropshire.

Dean Harris, herself a company director for over 25 years, says all-too-often businesses have a narrow view of Corporate Social Responsibility, believing it to be generally based around giving money to charity and good causes.

She explains: “More than 90% of Shropshire’s businesses employ between one and ten people, meaning access to huge pots of money which they can donate to the charity/voluntary sector is not as easy as for bigger companies and corporations.

“While donating funds to charities and organisations is, of course, always welcome and gratefully received – there are so many more ways that businesses can help. Third sector organisations can and should be prepared to also drive this process by considering what business skills and practical help and support they might need, for example business mentoring or being a critical friend, rather than solely focusing on fund-raising – and there are definitely ways the voluntary sector can support businesses too, leading to beneficial two-way partnerships.

“Often, business owners and their

teams have expertise which third-sector organisations can absolutely use and are often crying out for: for example, marketing, IT, accounting, business planning, health & safety, polices, legal advice, coaching, HR or social media management and even storage space, print facilities, meeting space etc. Being willing and able to share those skills and resources with other organisations can be so valuable – and I’d like to think an increased focus on community due to the pandemic will see more businesses and voluntary/charity sector organisations working together in this way with benefits including skills exchanges, experience in other environments, sharing best practice and positive impacts on the individual in terms of doing good.”

In addition to supporting those within Shropshire, there is the potential to help on a global scale too – with time ticking to when the UN member states have to achieve the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the progress businesses make will be more closely scrutinised.

While the SDGs aren’t enshrined in law, it is expected that all member states, including the UK, will achieve them by 2030; they include promoting wellbeing for all, promoting inclusive and sustainable economic growth, and making cities and

human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable. Businesses can start to achieve these SDGs through CSR, and it’s also a valuable way for them to demonstrate humanity whilst doing their part for society, the environment and their stakeholders.

Dean adds: “I’d like to see much more collaboration between the business and community/voluntary sectors, working together in order to achieve mutually beneficial relationships.

There are some fantastic examples of large and small organisations out there in Shropshire who are going the extra mile and thinking outside the box in order to ensure that they have a positive impact on the community around them, and on society as a whole. Now we need others to become inspired by them so that meaningful and valuable CSR programmes become the standard for Shropshire businesses.”

Dean would like to hear from anyone who feels their organisation could offer their expertise to a Shropshire voluntary community based organisation. To get in touch, email [shropshirehs@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:shropshirehs@hotmail.co.uk).

For more information about the work Dean has been undertaking during her shrieval year, simply search High Sheriff of Shropshire on Facebook or Instagram.

# Shropshire courts thanked

**The High Sheriff of Shropshire has thanked the county’s judiciary and HM Courts & Tribunals Service staff for their on-going efforts during the Covid-19 pandemic.**

The UK’s court system has come in for criticism in the national press in recent weeks due to delays caused in part by Coronavirus. But Dean Harris said she wanted to recognise those in Shropshire who had been working hard to minimise the disruption to normal service.

The Civil and Family Courts – which protect children at risk in their own homes, those suffering domestic abuse, and vulnerable adults - have seen a significant rise in applications for orders to protect victims from domestic abuse and orders relating to children requiring protection.

There have also been practical issues to manage, with a mostly paper-based system which required the judiciary and court staff to be physically present at court needing to be transformed into a system whereby the system could operate remotely by telephone and video conferencing.

Due to the need for social distancing between jury members, there has also been a considerable amount of extra work for Crown Court cases to continue going ahead.

Court buildings have been made Covid-safe to enable face-to-face hearings, although there are far less able to take place than pre-pandemic.

A temporary Nightingale Court also opened in Telford over the summer to enable more cases to be heard within Shropshire, and a £142million national fund has been allocated



Dean Harris, High Sheriff of Shropshire

to ‘speed up technological advancements and modernise courtrooms’.

Dean has been a Magistrate for more than 20 years, although she has not been sitting during her year as High Sheriff. She said: “I know first-hand how committed the Shropshire judiciary and HMCTS staff are and how hard they work, and this year has been especially challenging for them. In light of ever-changing rules and guidance and restrictions on case listings, good progress has been made in the Telford Magistrates’ Court (Family & Criminal and Youth) to work through the backlogs.

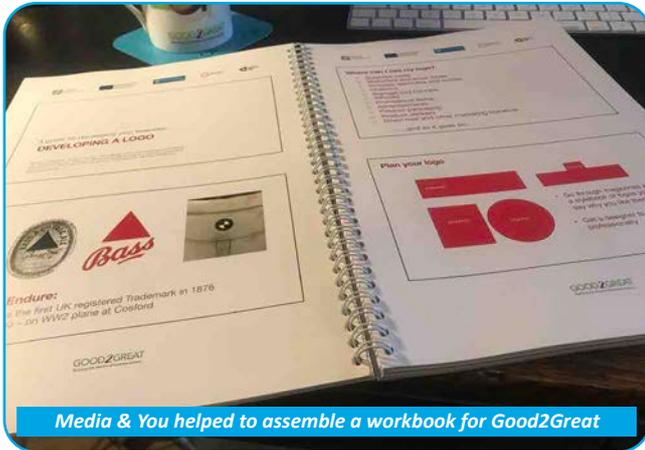
“Despite all the restrictions, they have recently been able to swear in 9 adult court and 3 family court new justices, and an additional Crown Court facility at Shirehall

has now been recommissioned so hopefully it won’t be long before they’re able to list cases there as well. We will then have four court centres in the County.

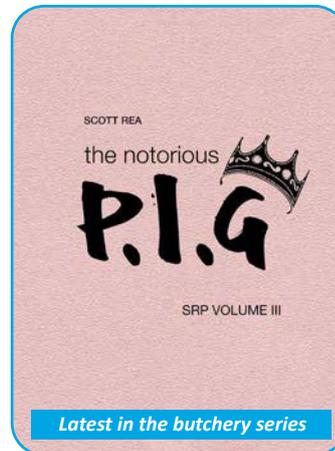
“Thank you to all of Shropshire’s judges, magistrates (who are volunteers) and HMCTS staff.”

A Criminal Justice Joint Inspection report on the impact of the pandemic, published in January has highlighted the under-funding which meant there were already widespread backlogs before March 2020, and has also recognised the efforts of staff who were among key workers continuing to work through lockdown.

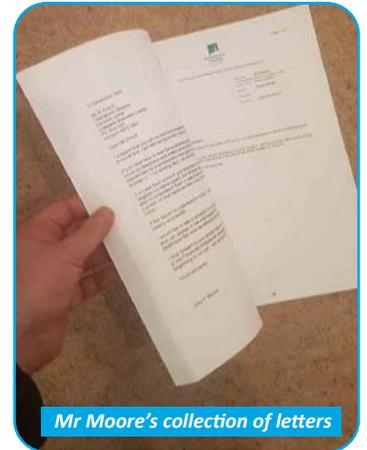
The report adds: “It is a real testament to the criminal justice system (CJS) that in spite of the pandemic, any service was maintained.”



Media &amp; You helped to assemble a workbook for Good2Great



Latest in the butchery series



Mr Moore's collection of letters

# There's a book inside all of us

**A**s the old saying goes, time flies when you're having fun – and the last four years have been exactly that. Media & You was established in February 2017 and since then, the catalogue of projects has included the design and layout of more than 20 books and regular publications for Shropshire Business and Shropshire Chamber of Commerce.

In the next few weeks, the latest in a series of books by Worcestershire's enigmatic 'rock 'n' roll' butcher, Scott Rea, will be back from the printers.

Fancy making your own sausages? Perhaps you'd like to smoke your own bacon? This latest volume, served in pink faux leather, is dedicated to pork butchery and comes complete with a recipe section. It has a pretty nifty title too - The Notorious P.I.G.

"I was just putting the finishing touches to Scott's book when I was approached by two well known Shropshire business folk, both with very different requirements," says Paul Naylor, proprietor of Media & You.

Johnny Themans, who works alongside his wife Sally at Bridgnorth-based Good2Great, got in touch with Media & You for help in compiling its latest workbook to support the 90-day Start-Up Masterclass – a practical step-by-step programme that dives into exactly what you need to do to be successful. The best way to get off to a real flying start with your new venture and massively reduce the risks of failure.

"We were absolutely delighted with the new workbooks compiled by Paul," said Sally.

"They are exactly what we need to help new businesses in the area thrive."

The other project was presented to Media & You by Chris Moore, known throughout the county for his work at Tax Assist in Madeley.

This was to be a very different project.

Chris had collated a number of emails sent to and from his late father. John Moore had kept a collection of 'complaints' letters to - and corporate replies from – a number of companies, that all make for amusing reading.

As Chris said in the book's foreword: "Dad's correspondence on his "concerns" attacks numerous targets, although Sainsburys appears to attract the most flak, but it is the voice of the outraged consumer, pointing out that standards should be maintained, and that the quantity of steak in a pie is a windmill that needs to be tilted at."

Chris wanted 12 copies of the 168-page A4 book which included a glossy, thicker stock, cover.

Media & You helped Chris realise the book he wanted to achieve, assembling the content and organising the print.

The book was printed and sent to me in good time for Christmas and I hand delivered them to Chris at his place of work.

Whether it's a workbook, novel or something more quirky, Media & You can help you find a route to getting your ideas in print.

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## Crucial links between our businesses and education

Shropshire Chamber of Commerce has welcomed the Government's new 'Skills for Jobs' white paper for putting the needs of businesses at the heart of further education.

Richard Sheehan, Shropshire Chamber's chief executive, said: "We are acutely aware of the important role which our county's further education centres play in shaping the skills agenda for current needs.

"And any Government initiatives which put the skills needs of businesses at the heart of the further education system can only be celebrated as a hugely positive move."

The white paper sets out plans to simplify and streamline the complex FE funding system, and proposes a greater role for employer groups such as Shropshire Chamber to help shape the courses on offer.

It suggests that employers should have a central role in designing the majority of technical courses by 2030.

Mr Sheehan said: "As we look to rebuild businesses and communities in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic, it is essential to ensure that the right skills and training provision is in place to support growth.

"We can play a leading role in developing local skills plans that reflect the needs of Shropshire employers. We already have close working relationships with our further education colleges and training providers, and are committed to working as closely as possible with them for the good of the Shropshire economy.

"Working together, we can increase the focus on skills for the workplace - the digital, technical and broader skills that help businesses grow, succeed and create good jobs."

Dr Adam Marshall, director general of the British Chambers of Commerce, added: "We look forward to working with the Department for Education, training providers, businesses and other stakeholders across the FE sector to further develop these proposals."

# Award-winning vehicles available at group

The fourth annual Company Car Today CCT100 Awards took place in January and a number of vehicles available at Furrows Group scooped category wins, with the Ford Puma doing the double, being named both Compact Crossover of the Year and also the overall CCT100 Car of the Year winner.

## City Car of the Year – Kia Picanto

The Picanto took an impressively comfortable city car victory. It sat in the top two for the majority of the 13 factors that decide our winners and topped six of them, including its pricing, BiK position, residual values and cost per mile, backed up by good emissions and practicality.

## Compact Crossover of the Year – Ford Puma

The Puma had top scores in a wide variety of areas including efficiency, an impressive residual-value performance that illustrates the perceived used car demand for the Puma, practicality and the driving experience.

## Crossover of the Year – ŠKODA Karoq

The Karoq is proving to be good at all the sensible stuff, offering a huge boot and good residuals aided by its performance in SMR cost terms.



Six of the best – models available throughout the Furrows group

## Large MPV of the Year – Ford S-Max

The S-Max has again taken the Large MPV category of the CCT100 Awards thanks to its combination of sensibility and style. It is a more sportily styled big people-carrier, and drives like it believes that look.

## Large SUV of the Year – Kia Sorento

This new Kia Sorento recorded an emphatic victory in its Large SUV class of the CCT100 Awards just weeks after going on sale. The new car manages to balance cost-effectiveness, decent emissions, practicality

and a reasonable level of interior quality.

## Sports Car of the Year – Mazda MX-5

It's four wins out of four for the MX-5, a car that offers something that nothing else on the market can. From £23,530, you can have a light 132hp two-seat convertible that offers a driving experience like no other.

If you would like more information on the above-mentioned vehicles, or any other vehicles available please call 01743 454444 (Shrewsbury) 01952 641433 (Telford) or 01691 654141 (Oswestry) or visit [www.furrows.co.uk](http://www.furrows.co.uk)

# The post-Brexit trade rules are causing exporters a headache

**The increase in time-consuming paperwork since the UK's exit from the European Union is posing problems for some Shropshire exporters, it has been revealed.**

Netherton Foundry, the family-run business which sells traditional cookware, was among the companies featured in the first major business post-Brexit survey by the British Chambers of Commerce.

Nationally, the survey found that half of exporters were facing difficulties in adapting to the changes in the trade of goods following the ratification of the UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement.

Netherton Foundry, a Shropshire Chamber member which is based in Highley, said: "Increased documentation means that we need to use higher paid staff to complete shipping details."

The company says it is causing loss of orders due to new duty/customs arrangements; time (and therefore money) spent resolving European customers enquiries; cost of implementing new shipping arrangements and delivery charges on our website.

"A small business like ours does not have the resources to deal with all the extra work," the foundry says.

The survey was carried out in the second half of January, with the majority of responses coming from small and medium sized businesses.

Ruth Ross, Shropshire Chamber's director



Ruth Ross, Shropshire Chamber's director of business

of business, said: "There are many other companies, just like Netherton Foundry, who will not be finding it easy to adapt to the new rules.

"We have seen reports in recent days from other Shropshire companies suggesting they are finding it difficult to continue trading with the EU at the same level as they were doing before Brexit. Clearly this is unacceptable.

"When asked about the specific difficulties businesses were facing, commonly cited concerns from the survey included increased

administration, costs, delays, and confusion about what rules to follow.

"We are calling on the Government to work with the Chamber network to identify the most significant blockages for businesses, and act swiftly to publish plans for resolving them."

One of the suggestions from the BCC, which is backed by the Shropshire Chamber team, is the creation of tax credits allowing firms to offset their spending on adaptation to the new UK-EU requirements against their tax bills.

The BCC also wants the Government to look at key areas of the new relationship and work with EU partners on easements to minimise 'unhelpful burdens', including on aspects of Rules of Origin and VAT.

BCC Director General Adam Marshall said: "Trading businesses – and the UK's chances at a strong economic recovery – are being hit hard by changes at the border.

"The late agreement of a UK-EU trade deal left businesses in the dark on the detail right until the last minute, so it's unsurprising to see that so many businesses are now experiencing practical difficulties on the ground as the new arrangements go live.

"For some firms these concerns are existential, and go well beyond mere 'teething problems'. It should not be the case that companies simply have to give up on selling their goods and services into the EU.

"Ministers must do everything they can to fix the problems that are within the UK's own control, and increase their outreach to EU counterparts to solve the knotty issues that are stifling trade in both directions."

# Property market still “exceptionally busy”

**T**he housing market in Shropshire was “exceptionally busy” in the second half of 2020 - and is likely to remain busy despite the strict Covid-19 restrictions.

That's the view of legal experts at Lanyon Bowdler Solicitors, who say the demand for property has soared in the wake of the stamp duty holiday.

The Government introduced the tax break in July 2020, meaning the first £500,000 of any property was exempt from stamp duty, potentially saving buyers up to £15,000.

Abigail Thomas, who recently joined Lanyon Bowdler's residential property team in Shrewsbury, said: “The stamp duty holiday is due to end on 31 March, so there has been a scramble from buyers trying to complete transactions before the deadline.

“There have been calls for the deadline to be extended, as the new lockdown introduced in January will inevitably make it more difficult for everyone - whether you are buying or selling.

“But whether it is extended or not, the stamp duty holiday has certainly had a positive impact on the property market.

“We have been extremely busy in recent months, and particularly now with people eager to complete before stamp duty is reintroduced on 1 April.”

Abigail said Shropshire was a desirable area for property, especially with the boom in home working since the start of the pandemic.

“This area has always been popular, particularly with buyers moving from the south of England because you get so much more for your money here,” she said.

“The demand has grown steadily over the past 12 months, as home working is now the norm for many of us and people realise there is no need to live in the same location as their business.

“My advice for anyone considering moving is to speak to their local estate agent and conveyancing solicitors so they can assess their options.”

For legal advice about moving home, visit the website at [www.lblaw.co.uk](http://www.lblaw.co.uk) or call 01743 280 280.



Abigail Thomas of Lanyon Bowdler



# Give yourself a real challenge

**T**ake a break with Gareth Hughes, a business coach based in Shropshire who helps business owners work less, build great teams and increase their profits. This is done through a variety of methods; mainly working one-to-one with the business owners on a weekly basis, and also there's group coaching plus a variety of programmes to suit any need or budget. Many business owners then ask Gareth to work with their management team on a one-off or ongoing basis conducting management coaching and leadership training. Gareth also works with all staff in the business through team or sales training days. He is results focussed – and to prove it offers a six-month money back guarantee.

**Who is someone you admire, and why?**

It might be cliché, but Elon Musk. For 20 years people rejected him, laughed at him, told him it can't be done. But he just gets on and does it.

**Tell me three pet hates?**

Lateness. Inaction. Negativity.

**What's a typical day like for you?**

It depends on the day. Usually, a mix of networking, following up and 1:1 coaching. Of course right now, home-schooling my 8 and 11 year old daughters.

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

Not necessarily a skill or talent, but I'm a bit of a cloud geek...

**If you could be anywhere, where would you be?**

On a beach in Barbados.

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

A cricket player. Or at least involved in the sport in some way.

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

A pint of local ale.

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

sleeping in!

**How do you want people to remember you?**

As someone who helped them if I could.

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

Listening, understanding people and helping them externalise what it is they want in their life and business.

**Name three words that best describe you.**

Positive, thought-provoking and kind.

**How do you think your colleagues would describe you?**

I've been described as a steady pair of hands, someone they know they can turn to if they want honest advice.

Gareth Hughes



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

There's a lot on that list but one would be a trek to Everest Base Camp.

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

Very simply, after the year we've all had... A holiday!

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

Commanding Air Missions over Iraq/Syria. Sometimes I worked 35 hour days under immense pressure, but I loved every minute of it.

**What publications do you regularly read?**

I enjoy The Economist when I can.

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

Of course I enjoy reading. But actually if I can get the telescope out, I love Stargazing. I also love going to the beach with my girls.

**What are some causes you care about?**

Three close family members have died of cancer, so Cancer Research UK is definitely one of them. The League of Friends at the RJAH in Oswestry does some amazing work and I try support them in any way I can.

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

Having just acquired a new Border Collie puppy, I suspect a lot will be about walking her now. But I love spending time at the beach.

**What would be your personal motto?**

Think outside the box and challenge yourself!



Jamie Thatcher and Vicki Evans



Andrea Logan-Weston of Turas Accountants

# Accountancy firm looks to the future

**S**hropshire accountancy firm Turas Accountants has put professional qualifications and training at the heart of its business development despite setbacks caused by the pandemic.

Three members of the six-strong Telford-based team have managed to continue their studies despite the coronavirus restrictions.

Turas director Helen Columb paid tribute to the team members who had had to contend with changes or cancellations of teaching and exams during the pandemic.

"It has been challenging for them. But they have all stuck to it despite the setbacks caused by the pandemic.

"We are in an ever-changing environment with tax rules and procedures constantly

being updated. Our training programme means that we are all keeping up to date with the changes despite the pandemic. That's a very positive thing for the team and the practice as a whole," she said.

Jamie Thatcher, 29, has just started on his path to becoming a tax specialist with an Association of Tax Technicians course which will lead on to a Chartered Tax Association programme.

"That's the route that he wants to follow and it will qualify him as a tax specialist which will be a real asset for the practice," said Helen.

Vicki Evans, 22, who joined the practice as an apprentice, is also on the verge of finishing her Association of Accounting Technicians (AAT) level 4 qualification. This will make her a fully qualified accounting technician.

Team member Andrea Logan-Weston,

53, is also working her way through the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants qualifications which will give her the full qualification for professional accountants. Andrea has already completed her AAT qualification.

"It's been particularly tough for Andrea as exams were cancelled last year and the arrangements for them have been changed in 2021. We're really proud of all our staff for sticking with their professional development despite the restrictions of the pandemic. They are a real credit to the company," said Helen.

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 at [www.turasaccountants.co.uk](http://www.turasaccountants.co.uk) or on 01952 882434.

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# Ensuring healthy land for generations to come

Bradford Estates has launched a bold new environmentally-conscious plan to change the way its in-hand farming business is managed, to ensure it has a healthy legacy for generations to come.

And as part of its wider sustainability efforts, the Estates are also set to plant more than 14,000 trees to create a mile of new hedgerow along the A41.

The new regeneration plan, which was brought in by managing director Alexander Newport following expert advice from two leading soil experts, will see the farmland return to being managed directly by the Estates' team.

New farming practices will also be adopted across the Estates, this includes:- increasing ground cover crops and introducing grazing animals to reduce the need for fertilisers; direct drilling to plant crops straight into the soil, avoiding invasive tilling and reducing the consequent CO2 emissions; and ensuring habitats are created for natural insect predators such as ladybirds and starlings to reduce the need for chemical pesticides.

A soil survey will also be conducted to show what kind of crops are most suited to be grown on the Estates.

The team is also in the process of planting a hedgerow of more than 14,000 saplings, all UK grown and native to the British Isles, including hawthorn, hazel, hornbeam, field maple, dog rose, holly, oak and beech. It is hoped the new hedgerow will increase biodiversity and will provide a rich habitat for birds, small mammals and other wildlife.

The trees have been supplied by water and waste company Severn Trent as part of its ambitious pledge to plant more than one million trees in six years.

Alexander Newport said the steps the Estates were taking formed part of his plans to transform the way the business runs to ensure it has a sustainable future.

"We're working hard across every acre of the Estates to increase sustainability and biodiversity, and these trees and the farming changes will help with that ambition," he said.



Alexander Newport pictured with Vince Derry, head groundsman

"Globally modern farming methods are stripping the nutrients out of the soil, and if left unchecked, our farmlands will eventually become unviable for crop growth and farming in the future.

"Most current UK farming relies on chemical fertilisers, pesticides and herbicides to ensure that the yield is as high as possible. But there's now evidence to show that the side effects of this mean that within the next 50-100 years, our soils will no longer be fertile enough for the growth of crops. We have a duty to change things.

"The regenerative agricultural work we're currently undertaking across the Estates will help to increase biodiversity, reduce CO2 emissions and increase carbon sequestration, improve the water courses and will ultimately lead to better crop yields too.

"This is a long-term investment which we are making into the soils - moving away from fertilisers might impact on yield initially which means profitability may be impacted but it's vital to protect not only the future of the Estates, but the future of our overall food security."

# Covid damage is felt

**T**radng restrictions, lockdowns and growing uncertainties about the future are taking their toll on the Shropshire economy, a new survey reveals.

Shropshire Chamber of Commerce has today published the results of its latest Quarterly Economic Survey, covering the final three months of last year.

It shows that although the overall economy saw a slight improvement on the previous quarter, Shropshire companies remain hugely concerned over cashflow – and increasingly worried about future tax rises.

Richard Sheehan, Shropshire Chamber of Commerce's chief executive, said: "It is simply impossible to predict the future at this time, but during this survey the news of an extension of furlough to March, and a vaccine, clearly lifted spirits.

"However, this was tempered by the second lockdown, further redundancies and a rise in Covid cases across the county."

The survey showed a recovery in both domestic and export sales across Shropshire in the fourth quarter of 2020, but the number of companies expecting UK sales to fall still exceeds those predicting a rise.

More than 60% of companies expect staffing levels to remain the same over the coming months, compared with around 15% which are warning of imminent redundancies.

Skills shortages remain a big issue in Shropshire, and the survey asked companies to

identify barriers which stop people coming to work in the county.

Among the most cited issues were low average wages, bigger organisations giving work to overseas staff instead of hiring locally, and the county's proximity to rival cities such as Birmingham and Manchester.

Bad debts have not risen, but the survey showed an increase in the number of companies being asked to renegotiate terms with suppliers – particularly the larger ones.

Investment plans for plant and machinery have stalled, but there has been an increase in those investing in training.

"This rise may be in part related to the investment companies have had to make to allow for home working," Mr Sheehan said.

"Both confidence in profitability and turnover dropped back again from the previous quarter. The second lockdown has reinforced the uncertainty of the future and with Brexit making news again it has taken its toll on confidence.

"Confidence is traditionally always higher than sales reality shows. Taxation is the greatest worry by far, followed by competition - which is understandable in a shrinking marketplace."

The survey has been capturing data about the health of the Shropshire economy as far back as 2009.

Ruth Ross, Shropshire Chamber's director of business, said: "Shropshire Chamber takes part in the British Chambers of Commerce national economic survey each quarter.

"The data which is collected is used both

locally and nationally to lobby those in power on the main topics of concern.

"The national survey is highly respected and is used by central government to understand the economic situation and pressures facing businesses in the UK.

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

"The survey is open to any size of business, from micros who employ no staff, to the very largest businesses."

Nationally, the combined British Chambers of Commerce Quarterly Economic Survey is the UK's largest independent survey of business sentiment and a leading indicator of UK GDP growth.

It covers firms employing nearly a million people – the majority being small and medium sized businesses.

It found that business conditions remained weak in the fourth quarter as the second lockdown squeezed activity, with all the key indicators still substantially worse than pre-pandemic levels.

A total of 79% of hotels and catering firms reported a decrease in domestic sales, worsening from 66% the previous quarter, and 77% of hotels and catering firms reported a drop in cash flow.

To find out more about how to get involved in the Shropshire survey, email [policy@shropshire-chamber.co.uk](mailto:policy@shropshire-chamber.co.uk) or call the team on 01952 208200.



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# Unmute your marketing and do more with less

A new, free online tuition session on practical applications of the latest marketing thinking has been launched by North Shropshire-based marketing experts The Fedora Consultancy. The session is a real time-saver for participants, helping them adapt their marketing activities at a time of unprecedented change and upheaval.

'Do more with less' is the theme of this year's 45-minute tutorial, it focuses on building better quality relationships with a smaller number of potential customers and identifying opportunities.

Covering the latest trends in marketing with a particular emphasis on customer retention, it provides an overview and insight on topics including empathy-based marketing, why buyer behaviour matters and better segmentation of a marketing database. Using common-sense language, the session is not just about the 'what', but why a fresh approach to marketing is so important at the present time.

Hosted by Jon Hepburn, Chartered Marketer and Member of the Chartered Institute of Marketing, the session is full of examples of how to make the most of often limited marketing budgets. It is aimed at smaller 'business to business' companies and professional services providers who may or may not have a dedicated marketing resource.



Commenting on the initiative, Jon said "This tutorial will shine a light on some of the latest marketing thinking to help businesses adapt. With budgets limited for many of us, try concentrating your marketing efforts on dialogue with customers and prospects you know best or would like to know better. This is not at the exclusion of new business development or ignoring the customers you've already got. It is also not 'cold calling'; it's about identifying a group or groups of people you want to do more business with, who you already know to some degree and with whom you have an established level of communication."

Jon added "For 2021 a re-heating of previous plans probably won't be enough in order to continue to progress. A 'one size fits all' approach to your marketing communications won't work either, a more in-depth approach is needed."

This new online tutorial follows the success of last year's marketing planning workshops which attracted much positive feedback from Shropshire businesses – this can be seen at [yourmarketingplan.co.uk](http://yourmarketingplan.co.uk). For further information about the new tuition session, please call Jon Hepburn at The Fedora Consultancy on 01743 366288 or via email to [jon@fedoraconsultancy.co.uk](mailto:jon@fedoraconsultancy.co.uk)

## Jobs on the way at iconsys

**The increased demand from manufacturers for improved productivity, reliability and safety is helping a Telford-based technology specialist press the button on a £3m investment.**

iconsys, which is one of the UK's leading independent system integrators providing industrial automation, enterprise integration and sustaining services, has purchased a 17,500 sq ft site on Stafford Park to cope with its planned expansion and is in the process of fitting it out to be one of the region's leading smart buildings.

Backed by a £150,000 grant from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the Marches Building Investment Grant Scheme, the company will benefit from a substantial increase in available manufacturing floorspace compared to its current site once refurbishment is complete and this will create a technology demonstration/training area, an amphitheatre and an office of the future for agile working.

The move to new premises will create ten highly skilled jobs and is part of the firm's 2020+ growth strategy, which aims to increase turnover to £20m in five years by encouraging industry to adopt automation and digital technology.

"Manufacturers in the UK are increasingly switching on to the benefits of automation to improve their performance and profitability and that is resulting in a number of exciting new opportunities for us," explained Nick Darrall, Managing Director of iconsys.

"In order to cope with demand, we decided now was the right time to create a world class facility that will give us the platform



to meet our current and future needs. Our new headquarters will be a central business core, giving staff a truly smart building that offers hot desking, an inviting tech-enabled work café, agile working and a virtual reality area where we can showcase the latest in technology.

"We will be incorporating the latest collaborative cloud-based infrastructure software to create an advanced, suitable and well-connected workforce, whereby employees are able to work either in the office or remotely with equal efficacy."

He continued: "A lot of time and consideration has gone into creating a welcoming workspace that is conducive to a healthy work/life balance, is inclusive, accepting and that not only fosters collaboration and innovation, but also aids learning at all levels, enabling individuals to develop and grow.

"Outside the facility, solar panels will contribute to our energy requirements and there will be electric vehicle charging points to support sustainable transport. A large part of our 3.8 acre site is made up of mature woodland, which we will look to conserve and nurture to help offset carbon emissions and sustain wildlife.

"We've appointed Forster Tullett as the main contractor and are working with Base

Architecture and workspace design agency iDEA to make our vision a reality. We expect to be in the building and fully operational by April 2021."

Harry Reece, Managing Director of Base Architecture, led the team designing the new building: "We are proud to support iconsys with its plans for development. The new headquarters will be a pioneer for workplaces of the future and it has been exciting to develop a building that not only underpins the company's growth, but also fulfils important environmental credentials that integrate into the building's new smart technology systems.

"As architects, this is an exemplar project that we hope will set the tone for future commercial builds."

iconsys' 50-strong workforce of software, electrical and manufacturing engineers provide a full project management service to blue chip customers involved in a diverse range of industries, including metals, automotive, marine, paper, fast moving consumer goods, food and beverage and logistics.

The company works closely with each client to identify where automation and technology can help modernise an existing process through enterprise integration, industrial automation and sustainable services – the latter involving its experts continuing to provide support after the project has been completed.

What separates the Telford-based firm from its rivals is that it is completely independent and will deliver the best solution for the challenge, leveraging strong partnerships with ABB, Rockwell Automation, Siemens and Schneider in the process.

For further information, please visit the site [www.iconsys.co.uk](http://www.iconsys.co.uk) or follow iconsys on LinkedIn

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# Reimagining your business through a useful IT review

**I**t's the time of year when spring cleaning looms large for most of us but chamber member PC Net is urging businesses to go one step further and review their IT to ensure it is working as it should.

IT reviews are a great opportunity for employers to take stock, get expert advice and make sure systems are meeting all the requirements of supporting a successful business through these most difficult of times.

Katy Jones, of PC Net, said an IT review would also provide a health check of a company's cybersecurity measures and Disaster Recovery Plan - very important programmes in keeping them operational.

"IT reviews are an important and invaluable service we provide for our clients - an opportunity for employers to reimagine their business," she said.

"We can look at the business as a whole or specific parts of it and ensure that it all gets a

good polish, a spring clean, and is investigated to ensure it's all working as it should.

"It's also a great time to confirm those all-important security measures, making sure they are robust enough to fend off any attacks, which is why we ask clients to bring their Cyber Liability insurance policy to the review meeting so we can consider the provisions included and make sure their IT meets the conditions.

"Cyber Essentials" is a Government-led scheme worth considering and sets out the steps needed to reduce the risk of internet-based threats.

"It's a very important programme but can be applied quite easily to protect a business.

"The scheme helps to put basic levels of protection in place to target the threat of cyber attack and signing up to the programme

demonstrates to customers and clients that businesses take cybersecurity seriously. We also ask clients to bring their Disaster Recovery Plan

to the meeting, allowing us to consider this in the light of changes already made or being planned for the business.

"A Disaster Recovery Plan is an essential procedure for every business, providing a range of back-up services - including ensuring data is backed-up and regularly checked and that all your networks are secure.

"To put things in perspective, official figures show 70% of companies hit by catastrophic data loss are out of business within 18 months, emphasising the importance of having an efficient IT Disaster Recovery Plan in place."

For more information on how an IT review can help you, call us on 01743 290588 or email [katy@pcnetsolutions.co.uk](mailto:katy@pcnetsolutions.co.uk)

*We can look at the business as a whole or specific parts of it and ensure that it all gets a good polish, a spring clean, and is investigated to ensure it's all working as it should*

## Inspirational workshops rolled out

An inspirational woman dedicated to helping people deal with life-changing illness or injury is taking her ground-breaking programme virtual, with a series of workshops aimed at enhancing mental wellbeing and resilience.

Kelda Wood MBE, founder of the Climbing Out charity, says the aim of the fully funded workshops is to widen the scope of the charity by offering mental resilience support to as many people as possible.

The charity helps people facing mental or physical trauma improve their confidence, self-esteem and motivation - often changing their lives for the better - during outward bound programmes.

Now, with the COVID-19 pandemic calling a halt to those group sessions, Kelda is reaching people in a different way.

The workshops, which are being sponsored by law firm Lanyon Bowdler, will be available on the Zoom video app, and will see Kelda sharing mental resilience tools for the benefit of those taking part.

Kelda said: "I felt it was important to carry on the work we are doing with Climbing Out and Zoom workshops are the best alternative we can use during these difficult times.

"Mental wellbeing and resilience is important for everyone but can be particularly significant for people who are trying to come to terms with mental or physical challenges.

"The workshops will offer tools and coping strategies at a time when it's so easy to become isolated and I am grateful to Lanyon Bowdler for agreeing to get behind the idea and sponsor the filming.

"The workshops will be delivered in an informal way, creating a relaxed environment in which people can join in as little or as much as they feel comfortable with.



**Kelda Wood MBE**

"I'm asking those taking part to imagine their mental wellbeing as a table, with their mental health and mental resilience as the table top.

"For the table to work, it needs legs to hold it up and each of my workshops are aimed at delivering a different table leg, enabling those taking part to develop a toolbox to help manage their mental wellbeing and resilience.

"Questions and comments can be posted in the chat during the workshop and a number of resources will be shared after each one which include a short video, podcast and information sheet, so there is something to refer back to, revisit or share with others if you wish.

"I hope those taking part will leave the programme with an increased awareness

about how to manage their mental wellbeing and the tools to help them achieve it."

Amanda Jones, of Lanyon Bowdler, said: "This is a marvellous opportunity for people to safeguard their mental health and wellbeing during these difficult times, and Lanyon Bowdler is once again proud to sponsor Kelda, this time through the filming of her workshops.

"Kelda is an inspiration and has helped so many people for more than 10 years since she founded her wonderful Climbing Out charity. The workshops are a clever adaptation of the work carried out by Climbing Out and I am sure will be of great benefit for all those taking part."

Email [keldawood@climbingout.org.uk](mailto:keldawood@climbingout.org.uk) for more information about the workshops.

# Shropshire's Outstanding Community

Exciting news... The Community Foundation manages the longstanding Best Kept Village Community competition in Staffordshire, which has been running since 1956 and now they want to launch a similar initiative in Shropshire!

An opportunity for the people of Shropshire, who take pride in their community, both rurally and within the towns, to come forward and showcase what they have achieved. It is an opportunity to show the great things that are going on within your community and celebrate why it is great to live in Shropshire.

Dean Harris, The High Sheriff of Shropshire said: "I am delighted to be involved with this Shropshire Community initiative which offers communities within our county the opportunity to be recognised. To celebrate the strong, supportive community spirit. Whether it's a community within a town, a village or even a street or housing development, this is not about aesthetics it's about the heart and soul of a community, where people have come together with collective investment in their neighbourhood where attitudes and interest are commonly shared, and I have seen so many fine examples of this during my year in office".

The Community Foundation wants to shine a light where people come together and



support each other. A community of people who have developed a safe and thriving environment in which to live.

Jo Cooper, Business Development Officer at The Community Foundation, and co-ordinator of Shropshire's Outstanding Community said, "We're very happy to be launching this initiative in Shropshire and look forward to seeing the amazing work taking place across Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin".

This award is seeking to identify communities that exemplify all that is great about our wonderful County.

Shrewsbury based digital and creative agency Yarrington were successfully chosen to

create the new logo identity for Shropshire's Outstanding Community.

Andy Hodnett, Yarrington Director, said: "As a Patron member of Shropshire Chamber of Commerce, we were approached to kindly create a couple of logo ideas for this fantastic initiative and fortunately for us – one of those ideas was selected. The new logo will now be used on all of their branded materials including print, video, digital and social media."

For further information please contact Jo Cooper at The Community Foundation on 01743 295 900.

Email [Office@CFShropshire.org.uk](mailto:Office@CFShropshire.org.uk) or visit [www.outstanding.community](http://www.outstanding.community)

# Making new investment in Wales to underpin demand

**B**uilding contractor **Pave Always** is opening a second office in Wales to support the growth of its work in the Mid Wales region. The firm is adding a new base in Newtown to its Welsh headquarters in Wrexham to underpin its increasing presence in the region.

Its office at Ladywell House, which will open when the country's latest lockdown ends, will be led by construction director Jamie Evans and used by its Mid Wales based team. Pave Always completed the £2.1m conversion of the former office building into a hub for small business for the Heart of Wales Property Service last year.

The firm is currently working on contracts valued at more than £26m with a third of that, including new homes for Powys County Council in Newtown and Sarn, taking place in Wales.

Pave Always recently handed over the council's first Passivhaus school in Welshpool in 2020 and has also been appointed to the Welsh Procurement Alliance's Dynamic Purchasing System for Housing Construction.

Managing Director Steven Owen said: "We already have a strong presence in Mid Wales and have worked on some key schemes in the region but this will allow us to provide a specific focus for our clients in the county.

*Pave Always' construction director Jamie Evans outside Ladywell House where the firm is opening its second Welsh office*



"We believe in having a positive impact on the area where we work and the addition of our new office will have a beneficial effect on the local economy. It will enable us to enhance the community support and education and training opportunities we can offer."

He added: "It's a very exciting development for us and a great way to start 2021, especially after such a challenging year generally for construction.

"This is a positive step forward and signals our commitment to our clients in Mid Wales."

# Tech businesses are not immune

**Shropshire businesses in the technology, media and telecoms sectors have been reminded they are not immune to cyber-crime.**

Dave Williams, from Henshalls Insurance Brokers in Newport and Shrewsbury, said tech businesses were generally better prepared for potential security breaches than other industry sectors, but it was vital not to be complacent.

“Research has shown that more than a third of businesses in the tech sector in the UK suffered at least one cyber incident or breach in the last 12 months.

“The most common event to affect these businesses was phishing with 53% targeted, and the most frequent breaches (23%) were ransomware infections where the businesses were able to recover thanks to their system backups.”

Dave said the research had revealed that the majority of tech businesses (67%) were confident in their cyber security strategies and that 85% had a dedicated team or leader dealing directly with the topic.

“It’s clear to see that the tech sector has been investing more in building their cyber protection than other industries, yet they are still potentially vulnerable to cyber attacks which are sadly on the rise.

“It’s important that tech and media firms continue their planned programmes of investment as the threat of cyber crime is increasing all the time – just because they’ve taken some steps to protect their systems so far, they can’t afford to rest on their laurels.”

Dave said it was more important than ever to have the right insurance in place as companies were storing more and more electronic information.

Dave Williams



“The main objective of cyber insurance is to protect against the loss of such precious information, but on its own, just having a policy in place is not necessarily enough.

“You need to take a tough stance on cyber protection and make sure you’re well-informed on the risks and the possible preventative steps available.

“And even if you’re a sole trader tech company operating from a spare bedroom with just one person running the operation, you’re in just as much jeopardy as large national corporations, so don’t take anything for granted – step up your security as soon as you can.”

## Coronavirus changes the face of work as we know it

Shropshire employees who are working from home due to the Coronavirus lockdown are facing increased health and safety risks and their employers must take responsibility for their care.

That’s the warning from Jenny Osborne, from The Henshalls Group in Newport and Shrewsbury, who said that the current restrictions had led to around 60% of employees now working from their own homes.

“It’s clear that Covid-19 has changed the way businesses operate – and that many may never go back to the way they were before.

“But despite the new working arrangements, homeworkers’ health and safety protection at home is identical to that of on-site workers, and as an employer, you are duty bound to ensure they are working safely.”

“Do you know what their workstation is like? Are they perched balancing their lap top precariously on the edge of the kitchen table? Are they working in a poorly-lit space that could lead to eye strain or are they struggling with no blinds or shield to prevent screen glare?”

Jenny said any employer who failed to comply with the Health and Safety Executive’s regulations could be in trouble, particularly if they didn’t have the appropriate insurance cover in place to cover any legal fees.

“For employees working from home, as well as the pitfalls such as being interrupted by children and family, or side-



Jenny Osborne

tracked by household chores, there are a lot of advantages – figures have shown that on average, each employee will save over £40 a week by cutting out things like commuting and buying lunch out.

“And in fact, some employees have taken to the new working practices so well, that 26% of Brits plan to continue to work from home permanently or occasionally after the lockdown ends.”

But Jenny said some employees had been concerned about how their home insurance cover could be affected given their new working conditions.

“Employees should not be concerned though as the Association of British

Insurers has announced that if you now need to work from home because of Government advice or because you need to self-isolate, your home insurance cover will not be affected.

“You don’t need to tell your insurer to update your details or extend your cover as you should still be covered by standard home insurance policies, as long as your work is office-related.

“The business equipment you use – such as a laptop – is not likely to be covered, but in most cases your employer would be responsible for making sure the equipment is insured even if it’s being used away from the office.”

# Turning a page with latest print investment

Prestige Print, based in Halesfield, Telford, has taken delivery of one of the latest Xerox mono digital press and a Morgana PowerSquare 224 booklet maker to cope with expanding demand and to make the 33-year-old business more efficient.

Hitesh Dhulashia runs the Telford business with his two brothers Dhiren and Jay "The investments will help us with production," he says.

"We needed to invest in a square back booklet maker to cope with products that can be up to 240pp. We have two Horizon booklet makers but

these are limited to 80pp and we need to do some catalogues and manuals to 260 pages thick.

The PowerSquare will deliver up to 224pp on 80gsm papers, with two or multi stitches and a formed squared spine which enables the product to be opened flat and achieves a stable stack when pile up.



At the same time the business has invested in a Xerox PrimeLink B9100 to boost capacity and offer a quick turnaround for our customers around Telford covering commercial print, catalogues and manuals.

"We have never been shy to invest," says the Dhulashia brothers. "It's been about keeping our heads down

and working hard. We have a good experienced team of 15 staff working a single shift but the last few months have been very busy with us working every day of the week. We will soon be investing in a new additional Heidelberg SM74 machine to help with the longer print runs.

For further details get in touch on 01952 680333.

# 10 years of being bold

**L**eading PR consultancy **Be Bold Media** is celebrating a decade in business in 2021 - and kicked off the year with a new hire following a hat-trick of contract wins.

The Shropshire Chamber member, which works with high profile business names across the region, has gone from strength to strength since it was launched at the start of 2011 by former journalists Mark Waugh and Amy Bould.

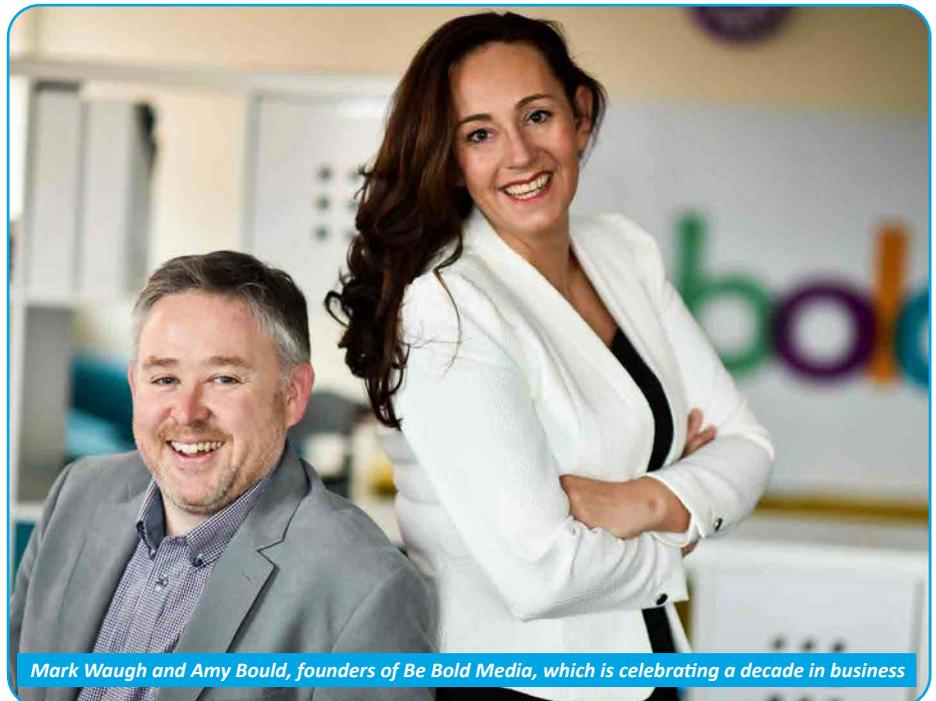
In the last five years, it has tripled its turnover and headcount and is looking to build on its success with new services launching this quarter to meet client demand.

Managing director Amy Bould said despite the challenges presented by the coronavirus crisis, Be Bold had experienced its best year ever in 2020.

"It is perhaps ironic that we start 2021 and our tenth year of 'being bold' in the same home office we started in a decade ago. But we are very much a changed company, working with an amazing team who have all contributed to where we are today.

"We secured a number of new clients last year, including Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust, battery specialists AceOn Group and food sector business Bridge Cheese. We've also welcomed experienced PR professional Jade Ziola-Sammons to the team, bringing with her a wealth of expertise particularly in the manufacturing and engineering sectors."

Be Bold Media works across multiple industries in the private sector as well as public and private sector partnership work



Mark Waugh and Amy Bould, founders of Be Bold Media, which is celebrating a decade in business

and projects involving business support, built environment and green tech.

Amy added: "We're looking forward to further growth in the next decade, but more than that we are looking forward to helping other businesses to grow with our support. Many of our clients who started with us ten years ago are still with us today, we love that we are part of their success story too.

"We know there are still tough times

ahead for businesses and so, as we did in 2020, we continue to offer our free 1-2-1 advice and feedback service to any company which would like us to review how they are communicating to their customers or suppliers. You'd be surprised how many are just grateful for us spotting the spelling mistakes on their website!"

Anyone who would like to take Be Bold up on its offer can email [hello@beboldpr.com](mailto:hello@beboldpr.com)

# Bags of help offered to schools



Richard Hughes from Chrisbeon hands over the packs at Holmer Lake Primary School

**A** Telford school has received six free stationery packs from chamber patron Chrisbeon to help children with their home-learning during lockdown.

The packs contain 10 exercise books, two Berol pens, a pencil sharpener and a box of 12 eraser tipped pencils and have been donated to children at Holmer Lake Primary School.

Richard Hughes, of Chrisbeon, said that as well as supporting businesses and their employees in home-working, they wanted to support families currently home-schooling.

He said: "We had 12 stationery packs to donate and wanted to see them go to families with children who may be struggling with home schooling during lockdown.

"We are only too aware of just how difficult it is for families involved in home learning at this time and donating the stationery bundles is something we can do in a small way to help and support them.

"Holmer Lake Primary was the first school we approached as we had been working with them by supplying office furniture. The headteacher, Harv Kumar, came back to us and said the school could make good use of six of the packs and we were delighted to donate them."

Mrs Kumar said: "I would like to thank Richard and the team at Chrisbeon for their kind offer and we have six families that will really benefit from these packages."

Chrisbeon has been working hard during lockdown providing furniture and stationery home-working and home-learning packages that can be ordered and paid for online, before being delivered directly to the door.

They can be ordered at [www.chrisbeonorderpoint.co.uk](http://www.chrisbeonorderpoint.co.uk) using the code BUNDLE in the ordering portal.

For new office furniture, office planning services and advice on making the workplace COVID-safe you can contact the Chrisbeon team on (01952) 292606.

# Improving management and leadership skills

Telford College is helping a group of senior staff members from Schneider Electric UK to improve their management and leadership skills. Filipe Tavares, Sam Kavanagh and Martin Stanton have signed up for one of the college's leadership and management development programmes.

The courses are tailored to the needs of existing managers who require a formal qualification, new or aspiring managers, or those looking to develop skills to progress through the ranks at their workplace.

Filipe, originally from Portugal but now living in Priorslee, has worked at Schneider for more than two years, including over a year as a team leader.

He said: "My operations manager and supervisor decided to offer me the opportunity to come to Telford College to complete my leadership and management qualification, which I gratefully accepted

"The knowledge I have been learning from this course is great; I am looking forward to taking the best from it and using it at work."

Sam, from Church Aston, works in the tailored care department at Schneider as a senior supervisor and account manager.

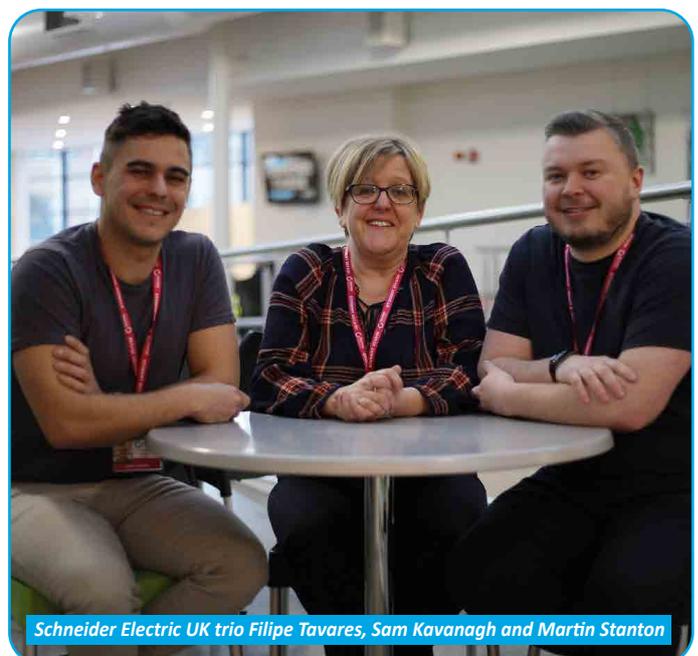
She said: "I'm doing this apprenticeship to gain more knowledge on how to understand and lead people – and hopefully progress into a management role."

And Martin, from High Ercall, added: "I work at Schneider as a supervisor for the inbound care team. I am doing this course to gain further knowledge and help prepare me for a management role."

Schneider Electric UK, which has a customer experience centre at Stafford Park in Telford helping customers with power and energy management, has long-standing training links with Telford College

Sue Gomer, Telford College's assistant principal – who herself used to work at the company – said: "These management training courses help people to better understand their roles and responsibilities, and provide the confidence to carry out their duties more effectively.

"Our aim is to provide cost-effective development which unlocks individual capabilities.



Schneider Electric UK trio Filipe Tavares, Sam Kavanagh and Martin Stanton

"All courses are flexible, offering a range of units to create the course which is most suitable to both the company's requirements and the individual's training needs."

To find out more about Telford College's range of courses for employers, including apprenticeships and management development programmes, see [www.telfordcollege.ac.uk/employers](http://www.telfordcollege.ac.uk/employers) or call 01952 642452.

# Home office bundles are available

Chamber patrons Chrisbeon have launched home office bundles to assist employees and schoolchildren working from home.

Many employees have yet to return to the office since the initial lockdown in March 2020 - and many of them are now permanently working from home.

Home offices have been brought into action across the board as repeated lockdowns have seen schools closed and pupils completing home-learning and parents have begun working from home.

Richard Hughes, of office supplies firm Chrisbeon, said they wanted to support people across Shropshire looking to improve their office set up at home.

He said: "We know that it has been difficult, both for employers and employees, to ensure that all of those who need to work from home can do so safely and appropriately.



Craig and Richard Hughes from Chrisbeon

"In the first lockdown, when many people hoped it would be a short change, there was a lot of working from dining room tables and kitchen islands, but now, especially as many employers are

considering making home-working permanent, we know there is a need for more permanent solutions.

"We are able to offer a full planning and supply service for larger home offices as well as furniture solutions for those with no separate office room available, but we also wanted to offer a package for families who have children at home in lockdown, and also at home during potential self-isolating periods."

Chrisbeon is offering two packages, one that can be delivered to homes across Shropshire and one that can be collected from their Telford site with full COVID-safe measures in place. They are also offering a stationery bundle which includes pads, pencils and pens.

Bundle prices start at £110.99, including VAT, for a home office desk and swivel chair. For more information contact Chrisbeon on 01952 292606.

## Impact of working from home

### A team of employment lawyers have joined forces with leading mental health charity, Wirral Mind, to help businesses support employees that are continuing to work from home.

Paul Hennity and Steven Davies, Employment Law Solicitors at Aaron & Partners, provided expert advice and practical tips to help employers understand more about mental wellbeing and the impact remote working can have on individuals.

They were joined by Rachel Gilbert, Training Manager at Wirral Mind, for the session, with the team also answering a range of frequently asked mental health questions that have emerged throughout the coronavirus pandemic.

Paul explained that with millions of UK workers forced to work from home due to the restrictions put in place by the Government, employers have faced many unique challenges that come with managing remote workforces.

He said: "A better and more positive working environment, where there is a focus on good mental health improves productivity, team morale and contributes to a positive reputation for your business.

"However, with research suggesting that 80 per cent of people in the UK felt that working from home had negatively impacted their mental health, employers are having to navigate an incredibly challenging period.

"COVID-19 and the subsequent national and regional lockdowns have affected all of our lives in one way or another and the situation has created a lot of uncertainty for everyone," added Rachel.

"Employers must recognise the importance of supporting employees' wellbeing and need to understand that everyone has experienced challenges and losses during this period.

"That's why, together with Aaron & Partners, we wanted to answer some

commonly asked questions to help employers understand the impact working from home has had and continues to have on employees, and how they can better support their mental health."

Some of the key questions to come from the session have been listed below with advice from the speakers:

#### 1) **Is there a duty on the employer even if the employee doesn't have any obvious signs of mental health struggles?**

Steven Davies explains that in contrast to physical impairments, mental impairments can often be more difficult to identify, and that can put an increased duty on employers to think carefully about mental health issues, which can so often be invisible.

Under the Equality Act, several mental health issues can amount to a disability, and a common misconception is that employers that don't know an employee is disabled can't be liable, which we know is not always true due to the way in which the Equality Act is worded. So, whilst an employer is not under a duty to make a reasonable adjustment if they do not know that the employee has a disability, the Act suggests that, in some circumstances, employers do have a duty to take the necessary steps to investigate if an employee has a disability, even where it may not be obvious.

#### 2) **If you're concerned about a member of staff's mental health, how should managers approach it?**

Employers should take the time to think about what they would need in that situation, and often employees talk about needing simple things like time, reassurance, respect and to be listened to, says Rachel Gilbert.

She continued to explain that it's important when you approach an employee, to give them your full attention, plan a time to address employees concerns and don't be afraid to ask how someone is and to show genuine concern for their wellbeing.

When you do approach an employee, there are three important things you could do to start the conversation. Firstly, note what you



Paul Hennity

have observed, state your concerns and give reassurance and work with the person.

#### 3) **If an employer doesn't recognise the signs of an employee struggling with their mental health, what are the potential risks?**

Steven highlights that a failure to recognise those signs can have a negative impact on the workplace, and there is evidence that workplaces with good mental health are far more productive. So, recognising the signs of poor mental health early, and taking steps to improve the situation will have a positive effect on both the employer and the employee.

However, there are also legal consequences that we must consider, including claims for disability discrimination, and possibly unfair dismissal as well. An employment tribunal can order employers to pay compensation for loss of earnings due to the discrimination, and that is uncapped. They can also award compensation for any hurt or distress the employee has suffered because of that discrimination, which is referred to as an injury to feelings in law. There is also the potential for personal injury claims if the employee has experienced stress or depression from the employer's inaction.

This could all result in expensive litigation, which can involve significant management time and legal costs which aren't usually recoverable in employment tribunals.

## Readership increases for award-winning magazine

Shropshire Business magazine, the award-winning business magazine and website, says the appetite for trusted and unbiased local business news is stronger than ever after enjoying a record year of readership.

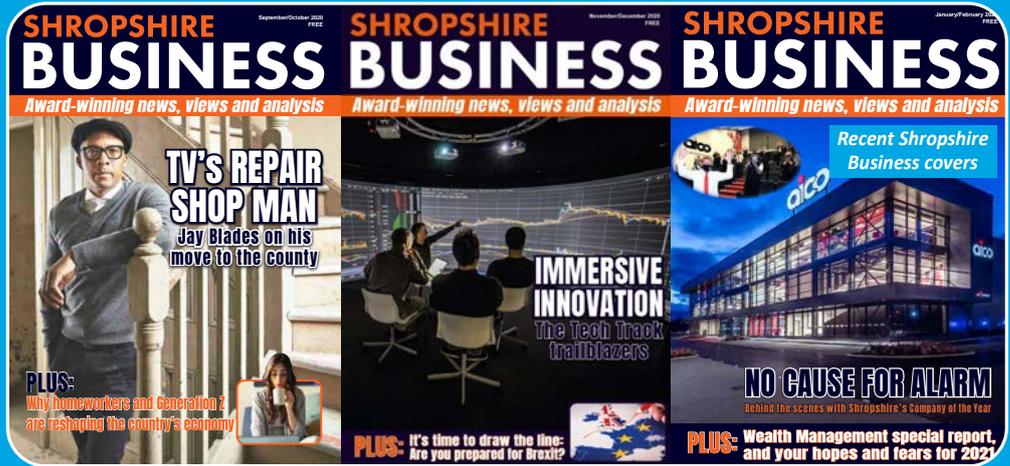
The magazine, founded in 2016 by well-known local journalists Carl Jones and Henry Carpenter, has since picked up multiple accolades at the Midlands Media Awards, including the coveted 'Magazine of the Year' title.

And over the past year, in spite of Covid-19 challenges, the magazine has reached more people than ever before.

Carl said: "Like many businesses, we had to sit down and re-evaluate our plans this time last year when that first lockdown was put in place.

"The greatest challenge was to our distribution model – ensuring that we were still able to deliver printed copies of the magazine to the most appropriate places.

"With a growing number of people working from home, it took us a while to



assess and adjust, but our distribution numbers are still as pre-Covid levels.

"But on top of that, we also saw a 30% plus rise last year in the number of people who were accessing the electronic version of our magazine, by downloading it from the website, [www.shropshirebiz.com](http://www.shropshirebiz.com).

"We may be working in different ways right now, but there is clearly still an appetite for trusted and unbiased local business news - and arguably a greater need than ever to keep in touch."

He added: "Four in five of our readers are based in Shropshire, or close to the county boundary, but elsewhere we have now also built up loyal followings from as far afield as the USA, Scandinavia, across the EU, and even have a handful of regular readers in China."

For details of how to promote your business to the readers of Shropshire Business – or to add your company to the countywide distribution list – email [editor@shropshirebiz.com](mailto:editor@shropshirebiz.com)

## Hunger grows for county's online business TV show

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

Carl Jones, editor of Shropshire Business and co-host of SBLTV, said: "We're delighted with the feedback we've had for the show since our launch in August, which is gaining a growing following.

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

For more information, email [info@sbltv.co.uk](mailto:info@sbltv.co.uk), or see the website [sbltv.co.uk](http://sbltv.co.uk) – where you can watch all the previous episodes on catch-up.



The SBLTV team in the studio – broadcasting under strict Covid-safe guidelines

# Digital demand drives new appointments

**A Shropshire website agency is expanding its team to cope with increased demand for digital services during the ongoing coronavirus pandemic.**

Clickingmad, based at Castle Terrace in Bridgnorth, had its best ever year in 2020 after securing and delivering projects for several new contracts including Ascot Lloyd, one of the UK's fastest growing independent financial advice firms and UK manufacturer Tension Control Bolts.

With digital communications rising quickly to the top of the priority list for many businesses during the pandemic, the company has also experienced a significant increase in the levels of support required by their existing clients including the daily management of 45 individual websites for an international veterinary brand.

To support further growth in the business, managing director Shaun Carvill, said the time had come to expand the team with the appointment of a new website developer and a new addition to its digital marketing team.

He said: "I don't think any business could plan for what 2020 had in store. Most of our staff have been with the company for over 10 years

"When Covid-19 hit last March, like

many businesses, we had to adapt quickly to the changes.

"Staff moved to a remote-working set up and we invested heavily in new tools and technology. It was a real challenge to keep operations running smoothly but we succeeded.

"At the same time, we had a really important job to do for our clients in terms of making sure their websites were up to date and communicating the latest coronavirus messaging to their own customers and ensuring they were ready to support any new or enhanced digital marketing campaigns.

"Without doubt the coronavirus pandemic has served to accelerate digitisation of businesses and our 21 years in digital have helped us be right at the forefront of this shift.

"We think this movement will continue throughout 2021 as businesses carry on adapting to the pandemic and ever-changing economic landscape.

"Taking on another developer and expanding our digital marketing team will give us scope to support more businesses needing to make either the initial shift to digital or improve the assets they already have and we're hoping to have these new appointments in place very soon."

For more details about Clickingmad and the services it offers contact 01746 769612. Email [sales@clickingmad.com](mailto:sales@clickingmad.com) or visit <https://www.clickingmad.com/>



*Clickingmad managing director Shaun Carvill*

## Promotions announced at Yarrington

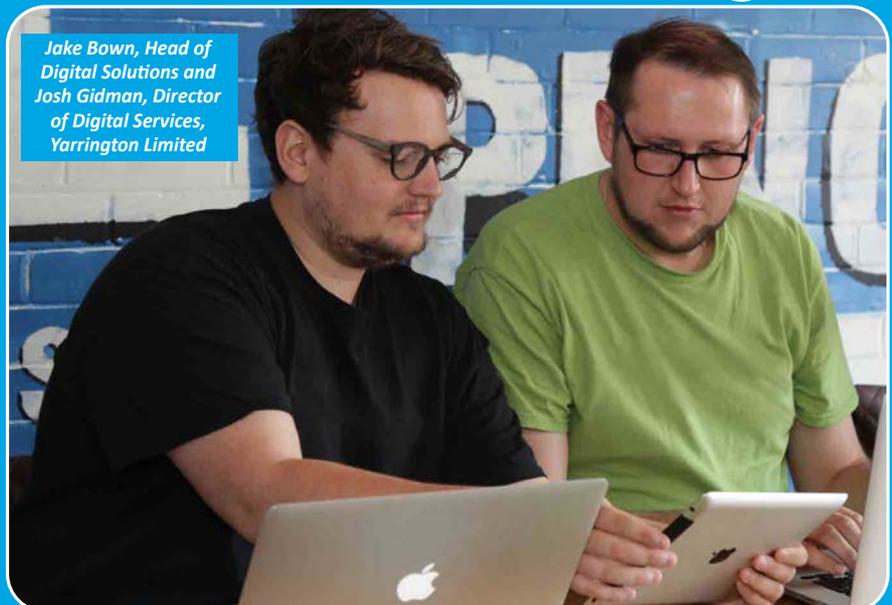
For over 23 years Yarrington has embraced emerging digital technologies and, more importantly, invested in the right people and created the right environment where we can harness and commercialise all the latest developments.

The past 12 months have proven the value of digital innovation, teaching us how vital it is to continue to engage and communicate in a far more virtual world and, more recently, how to enrich those digital experiences and bring the connections to customers in new and exciting ways.

Yarrington are really pleased to introduce a whole new dimension to our marketing services under the management of Jake Bown. Jake has been with the digital team at Yarrington for the past four years as a full stack developer but now steps up to new challenges as Head of Digital Solutions. He'll be busy with a remit to research, innovate and develop new technologies to enhance the digital marketing and events arena.

This important role is part of a programme of enhancements to the Yarrington digital offer which encompasses the very latest app technologies, interactive web developments and high quality TV style live streamed events.

Meanwhile Josh Gidman will be concentrating on his role as Director of



*Jake Bown, Head of Digital Solutions and Josh Gidman, Director of Digital Services, Yarrington Limited*

Digital Services with his team delivering web sites, back end systems and creative digital campaigns for clients across the board.

Managing Director, Mark Allsop, said 'In these difficult times the work that our digital team has produced has been so important to Yarrington with numerous projects completed to the very highest quality, on time and to budget. We

have retained our entire workforce and are actively recruiting for three digital positions and that speaks volumes of the trust that our clients have in our work. I am so pleased for Jake to begin this new role and wish him all success.'

If you want to find out more about the digital, design, video and event streaming available at Yarrington give Mark a call on 07810 805177.

# Bright sparks commence electrical apprenticeships

**A** new intake of electrical installation and maintenance apprentices have begun their training at Telford College.

They are on a three-year programme, studying for an advanced level three qualification.

The trainees come from a range of businesses in Shropshire, including Now Electrical, CMK Electrical, Rose Electrical, TC Electrical, Roycroft, Randles Building Solutions, Swancote Energy, Albinroy, Lloyds Electrical Design, and PP Electrical.

Lora Rogers, recruitment officer at Telford College, said: "We have worked closely with many employers to help them recruit new members of staff, and upskill existing employees.

"These apprentices will be attending college once a week to gain practical experience in our own purpose-built electrical installations workshop and modern classrooms during term time.

"This, alongside their paid employment, will give them practical and theory knowledge and



Some of the new electrical installation and maintenance apprentices in the Telford College workshops

experience, covering a number of specialist subject areas."

Lora added: "Apprenticeships help to provide a skilled workforce for the future and are proven to increase staff loyalty and retention by significantly improving their future prospects.

"We're keen to help local businesses to invest in their staff, or take advantage of our

free recruitment service to build and grow their team for 2021.

Telford College offers around 40 different apprenticeships, across all subject areas and abilities, and works with nearly 700 employers.

Full details of the college's latest apprenticeship vacancies can be found at [telfordcollege.ac.uk/apprenticeships](http://telfordcollege.ac.uk/apprenticeships), or by calling the team on 01952 642452.

## Hub strengthens college's business links

Telford College has launched a new Engineering Hub to build on its close working relationships with companies in the local manufacturing and production sector.

The Hub has been created to provide an opportunity for engineering businesses to feed directly into the college's curriculum planning, and share best practice.

Among the big-name Shropshire employers already signed up to the project are GKN, Muller, Schneider Electric, Avara Foods, Protolabs, UL (Wintech), and Keysight Technologies.

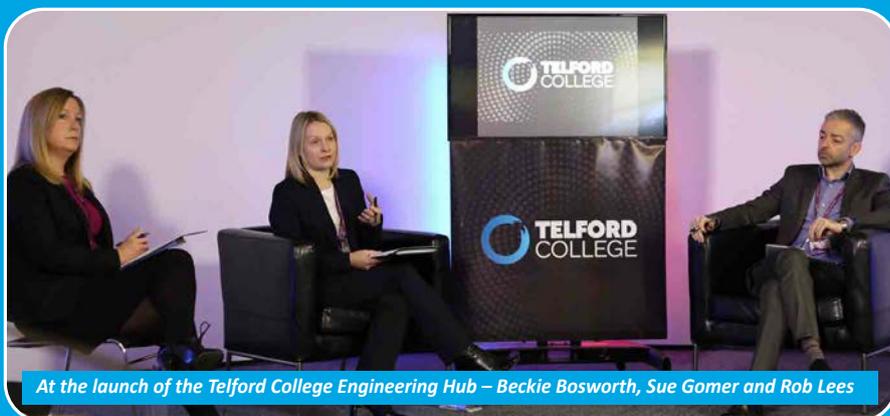
The college is keen to recruit more businesses to the Engineering Hub over the coming weeks. The next meeting is due to be held on March 10, and more details are available from Beckie. [Bosworth@telfordcollege.ac.uk](mailto:Bosworth@telfordcollege.ac.uk).

Telford College's virtual and augmented reality suite hosted the Engineering Hub launch, which was described by principal Graham Guest as 'a very positive first meeting'.

He said: "The group have already identified opportunities where they can work together within the Hub to share best practice and offer support to each other with specific training opportunities.

"We believe this Hub, in conjunction with the college's other partnerships, will actively contribute to identifying skills shortages across the region across a wide range of sector areas.

"Initiatives such as this help us to



At the launch of the Telford College Engineering Hub – Beckie Bosworth, Sue Gomer and Rob Lees

ensure that our curriculum planning is relevant and reactive, so that students have the best progression opportunities into the workplace."

The hub launch comes at a timely moment, with the Government's new 'Skills for Jobs' white paper encouraging businesses to play a greater role in the delivery of higher education.

A cornerstone of the paper is a need for colleges and FE providers to work more closely with business organisations to shape a curriculum which meets the needs of the local economy.

Telford College assistant principal Sue Gomer, who was involved in the launch event, added: "We are fortunate to have developed strong and fruitful relationships with many significant local businesses over recent years.

"Employers are already having a hand in how they want their apprentices to be trained, ensuring that their needs are in step with the apprenticeship framework.

"Our Engineering Hub will build on this, offering a platform for discussion, and a chance for the college to shape its apprenticeships for the differing recruitment model of local businesses."

During the launch event, Telford College employer engagement manager Beckie Bosworth discussed the concept of 'apprenticeship ambassadors', work academies and schools liaison strategies, which are all designed to engage the best young people.

"Hub members will be able to share recruitment models, training resources and facilities and even candidate referrals in the right situation," she said.

# Shropshire Chamber to deliver a regional business showcase

**Shropshire Chamber of Commerce is joining forces with four other Chambers across the West Midlands to stage a huge week-long business showcase.**

West Midlands Business Week will run from March 22-26, and include a five-day Virtual Expo plus a packed programme of webinars tackling some of the region's biggest current talking points.

Chambers across the Black Country, Coventry & Warwickshire, Herefordshire & Worcestershire and Staffordshire are also involved in the event – the first of its kind in the region.

Throughout the week, each Chamber will take a turn hosting the programme, exploring topics such as furlough, the UK-EU trade and co-operation agreement, wellbeing, human resources, and much more.

Shropshire Chamber will be hosting the programme on March 23 – a year to the day since Boris Johnson announced the first UK Covid-19 lockdown.

One of the businesses delivering a presentation on the day will be Oswestry-based alarms firm Aico, the reigning Shropshire Company of the Year, which is the event's official Shropshire sponsor.

All the webinars will be pre-recorded and able to be viewed at a later time.

The event comes at a time when many firms are struggling to stay afloat after three national lockdowns, despite a range of financial support measures put in place by the UK government.

The Virtual Expo is expected to attract thousands of visitors from across the West Midlands, with exhibitors manning virtual stands to showcase products and services and respond online to enquiries.

Mia Carter, Shropshire Chamber's director of membership, said: "We're looking to do all we can right now to help support members through the Covid-19 recovery – and we're excited to be able to join forces with neighbouring Chambers on this groundbreaking project.

"The Virtual Expo will be a week-long experience enabling Shropshire companies and

organisations to meet new customers, prospective partners and suppliers from many sectors, and discover new opportunities.

"Visitors will be able to explore a complete virtual exhibition hall, and exhibitors will have chance to show their corporate videos to visitors who want to learn more about their company.

"This event is also a chance to connect with businesses beyond the Shropshire boundary that wouldn't necessarily attend one of our traditional expos."

Chambers of Commerce have been at the forefront of supporting and advising firms through the Covid-19 pandemic and helping them to understand the latest developments, as well as acting as 'the voice' of their members to local, regional and national government.

For more details about how to get involved in West Midlands Business Week, or book a stand at the virtual expo, contact Teresa Rowe by email for further details via [events@shropshire-chamber.co.uk](mailto:events@shropshire-chamber.co.uk)

## WEST MIDLANDS BUSINESS EXPO

Discover the best of the region's business community at this spring's virtual expo.

22 - 26 MARCH

DEVELOPED AND DELIVERED BY:



**TO BOOK YOUR STAND**

**Call: 01952 208200**

**Email: [events@shropshire-chamber.co.uk](mailto:events@shropshire-chamber.co.uk)**



Matthew Anwyl, managing partner of Berrys

## Matthew lands new role as Agriculture Act 2020 takes effect

A Shropshire chartered surveyor has been appointed to a new arbitration panel introduced as part of major reforms under the Agriculture Act 2020.

Matthew Anwyl, managing partner of Berrys, has been appointed to the Central Association of Agricultural Valuers (CAAV) Panel of Arbitrators for a five-year term.

The Agriculture Act 2020 gives the CAAV powers as a statutory professional authority to appoint arbitrators to resolve disputes under the Agricultural Holdings Act 1986, Agricultural Tenancies Act 1995 and for other contractual disputes.

Matthew's appointment was made following a rigorous assessment and interview process last month and took effect from Jan 11.

"I am delighted to join this new panel," said Matthew who is already a member of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) President's panel of rural arbitrators.

"The Agriculture Act 2020 made ground breaking changes to agricultural tenancy law including giving greater flexibility in rent reviews and increasing choice on the appointment of arbitrators in dispute resolution.

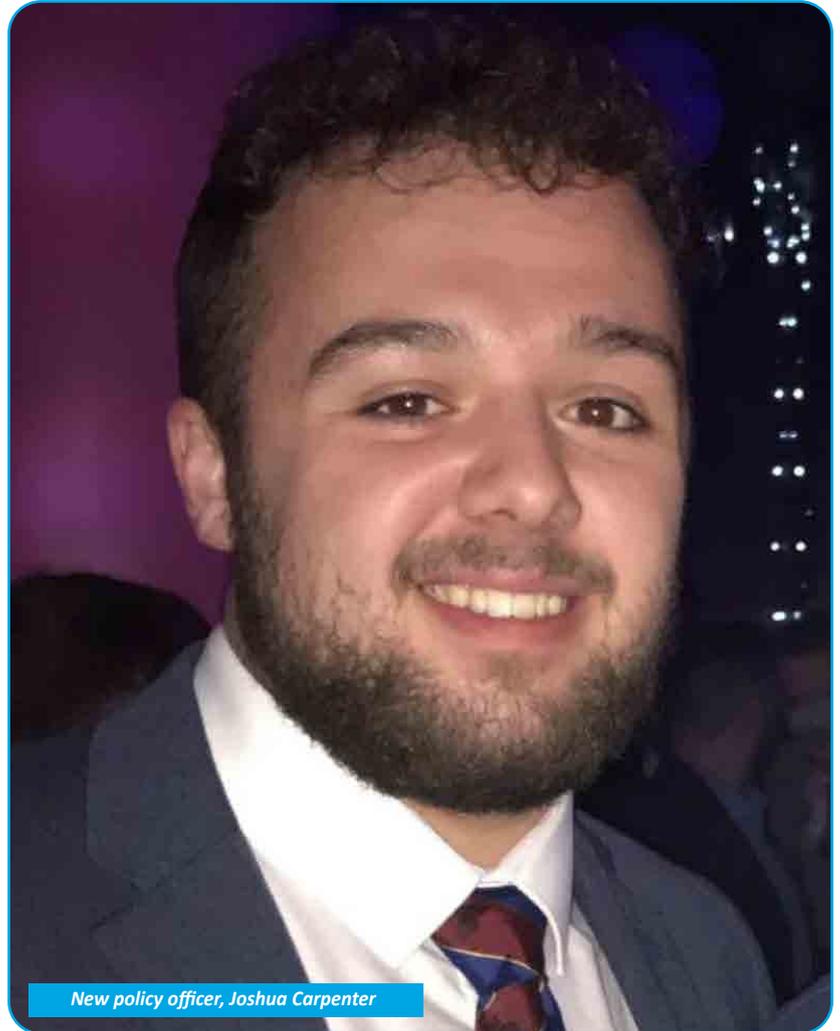
"Arbitrators can now be appointed from other professional bodies, namely the Central Association of Agricultural Valuers (CAAV) and the Agricultural Law Association (ALA), in addition to RICS."

The object of arbitration is to obtain the fair resolution of disputes by an impartial tribunal with minimal delay and expense and extending the choice of arbitrators will be beneficial to both landlord and tenants.

"The CAAV will provide a panel of robust rural arbitrators with wide ranging skills able to assist with disputes over issues such as valuations, utilities, compensation claims, telecoms, rents, end of tenancy matters, pipeline claims and development option values," Matthew added.

For further details and advice contact Matthew Anwyl at the Shrewsbury office of Berrys on 01743 267064 email matt.anwyl@berrys.uk.com

# Policy officer for Chamber



New policy officer, Joshua Carpenter

## Shropshire Chamber of Commerce has appointed a new policy officer.

Josh Carpenter is a former student of Adams' Grammar School in Newport, and Madeley Academy in Telford.

He has previously worked in the invoice finance and central finance departments at Lloyds Banking Group, and has a BA in Political Science and International Relations.

"I am delighted to be joining Shropshire Chamber," he said.

"Every member knows the value that the Chamber adds to their business, and assisting such a fantastic team in delivering that value is something I'm passionate about.

"2020 was a bizarre year to say the least, but in my new role I am keen to get to grips with the challenges 2021 may pose."

In addition to his time at Lloyds Banking Group, Josh has also previously worked with the Envision charity in Birmingham, coaching underprivileged

students with business skills. And he has a level one Mandarin language proficiency grade, achieved at East China Normal University.

Josh takes over the policy officer role from Fergus Hamilton Collard, who has returned to university to study a postgraduate degree in International Political Economy.

Ruth Ross, Shropshire Chamber's director of business, said: "We are delighted to welcome Josh to this pivotal role. It's our objective to ensure that the voice of all businesses, whatever their size, are heard when councils and government agencies are formulating policy or consulting the business community.

"Our activity ensures Shropshire businesses are represented in policy decisions at all levels of government.

"We formulate our policies on the back of extensive engagement with members, through lobbying and consultations, Chamber forums, and our quarterly economic survey which feeds directly into UK-wide data."

## Driving business growth in Scotland and Northern Ireland



Graham Deuchars of Craemer UK

Craemer UK are pleased to announce the appointment of Graham Deuchars into their UK Environmental Products Sales team.

Based in Perth, Graham will be responsible for driving business growth in Scotland and Northern Ireland, whilst building upon Craemer's established reputation as a leading UK based supplier of high quality, long lasting wheeled bins and recycling containers into the public and private waste sectors.

Commenting on his new role, Graham said; "I'm delighted to be joining the team at Craemer. It will be a pleasure to work for a company who are market leaders, known for quality and have ongoing investment."

Graham joins Craemer having enjoyed a successful sales career spanning over 30 years working for industry leading companies such as HC Slingsby, Arthur Shaw Manufacturing, Jewson and HCS Group.

Steve Poppitt, UK Managing Director said; "We are delighted to welcome Graham to our fantastic UK sales team at such an exciting time for Craemer following the recent expansion of our UK production operation and the introduction of a range of brand new products".

Based in the Midlands and supplier to over 70% of UK councils and major municipal bodies, recent investment has seen Craemer UK as part of the Germany-based Craemer Group expand to a purpose built, second production facility running alongside their UK headquarters. This state-of-the-art facility, and the addition of a full range of 4 wheeled bins along with a 340 litre bin and household food waste caddies completes their range of waste and recycling containers and establishes Craemer as the only UK based manufacturer with the ability to produce their entire range in-house in the UK.

# International trade team adds three new recruits



Caroline Volles Loos



Kelly Roberts



Sam O'Sullivan

## Shropshire Chamber of Commerce has added another three experts to its fast-growing international trade team.

Trade documentation experts Caroline Volles Loos, Kelly Roberts and Sam O'Sullivan have been trained to help businesses navigate the complex area of customs declarations.

The international trade team, based at Shropshire Chamber's offices, provides companies of any size or export experience with free support, and access to a range of Government-backed services.

Kelly has 25 years of previous experience working in the hospitality industry across the West Midlands, and says she has enjoyed the 'huge learning curve' of her latest role.

"I am looking forward to working with the Shropshire Chamber team," she said. "This is a fantastic organisation, and somewhere I feel proud to work."

Caroline, who was born in Brazil, has been living in the UK since 2009 and has a previous career background in online and mainstream retail administration.

She is also a keen amateur astronomer with a passion for the sciences, and is currently finishing her BSc in Physics.

Sam grew up near Liverpool but moved to San Diego in California in 2014, taking on various roles in the hospitality industry. He moved back to the UK in November last year to be closer to his family.

Shropshire Chamber of Commerce was last month revealed as the top-performing chamber in the UK for helping business with

their post-Brexit customs declarations.

A new report showed that the international trade team in Shropshire had recruited more businesses to the 'Chamber Customs' package than any of its other 40-plus counterparts across the country.

Chamber Customs delivers a declaration service for importers and exporters of all sizes, and is designed to take the hassle out of trading goods across international borders.

The service is offered direct to businesses and through UK freight forwarders, ensuring that customs clearance is accurate and timely, and avoids additional costs through delays or errors.

For more details about international trade support available through the Chamber, see [www.shropshire-chamber.co.uk/international-trade](http://www.shropshire-chamber.co.uk/international-trade)

## Redundancy Support Services help employers and apprentices

To help businesses and the economy recover from the impact of the coronavirus pandemic, the government is offering financial incentives of up to £3k to encourage employers to take on apprentices.

Corinne Brown, Business Development Manager at Shrewsbury Colleges Group (SCG), said:

"It's a sad fact, that many apprentices, and young apprentices, are experiencing redundancy during these difficult times. This means the skills they have learnt and progress they are making is being cut short.

"Experienced, work-ready apprentices are finding themselves without an employer. Here at SCG we are helping local businesses by matching up their needs with the right apprentices.

"This is enabling key skill gaps in industry to be filled by experienced apprentices who can also benefit by continuing to build on their own existing training.

"There are so many benefits to taking on an apprentice with some experience. From developing creative talent to strengthening practical know-how, apprentices are a great way to give businesses a competitive edge and provide a quick return on investment.

"For those businesses considering hiring, the incentive payments are fantastic, with up to £3,000 available.

"These grants will give both large and small employers alike the chance to invest in the skilled workforce they need to help them recover and grow.

Rishi Sunak, Chancellor of the Exchequer stated: "I urge every employer, big or small, national or local, to sign up to our offer and support apprentices as we continue our economic recovery. This scheme will create, support and protect jobs across all regions of the UK, and ensure our economy is fit for the future."

Over the past few months, local businesses

have already seen the benefits of working with the college to take up the opportunity to recruit an apprentice previously faced with redundancy.

Sam Lewis-Evans, Salon Manager, Style Director and Technical Director at Toni & Guy in Oswestry, recently recruited Nancy Fensome, an apprentice who was unable to complete her apprenticeship with her previous employer.

He said: "We knew that we could offer exceptional training and opportunities for Nancy and we're happy to support her future."

John Hughes, owner of ATW Bespoke Joinery in Shrewsbury, agreed and said: "I would highly recommend businesses taking part in this scheme. We took Joseph on, after discovering that he had been made redundant, and he has flourished within our company.

"He came with prior knowledge and a great work ethic, so I have no regrets about helping progress him through the rest of his apprenticeship."

## TV contract for pet care company

**A** Shropshire company has scooped the contract to supply the kit for new prime time television series *Pooch Perfect*.

Mutneys Professional Pet Care Ltd, based at Stoke Heath, near Market Drayton, has supplied all the equipment for the new BBC dog grooming reality competition series which aims to find Britain's best dog groomer.

The Mutneys equipment is now being featured in the BBC One show presented by actress Sheridan Smith and featuring 16 leading pet groomers. The eight episode competition started on January 7 and will culminate with the crowning of the Top Dog Groomer next month.

Mutneys director and co-owner, Jamie Roberts, explained that the television show producers approached the company last year.

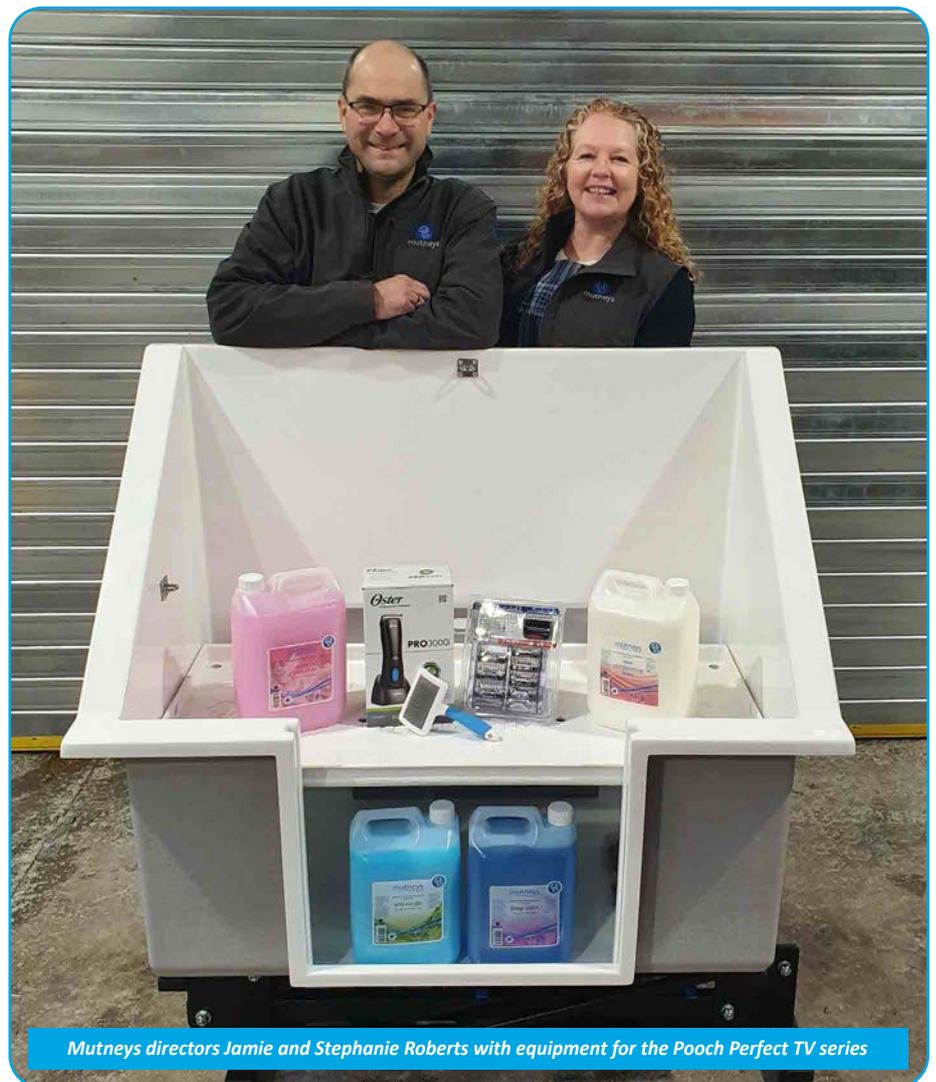
"We've been involved in the dog grooming industry for the past 25 years and we know Colin Taylor who is one of the judges. He recommended us to the production company as he knew we were experienced and flexible enough to make whatever they needed.

"As a result we were able to tailor the height adjustable electric tables and the baths to their specification and supply all the driers, trimmers, brushes, shampoos and conditioners. It was a bit of a rush to get it done for the start of filming last summer but it's great to see all our efforts on show in the series now it has started," he said.

Jamie added that the dogs' welfare was top priority for the show with a vet and support team on hand at all times to make sure all the pets' needs were taken care of.

"The production team was very keen to use only products that had been fully tested and were safe to use. All our shampoos and conditioners are specifically formulated for dogs and have been developed over the past 25 years to comply with all animal welfare regulations."

He said that Mutneys was delighted to be involved in the programme and all the nine-



Mutneys directors Jamie and Stephanie Roberts with equipment for the *Pooch Perfect* TV series

strong team had been glued to the first two episodes of the series.

"The great thing about the show is that it is highlighting the skills of professional dog groomers focusing on grooming for pet dogs rather than show dogs. It really shows how

much is involved in making your pet look and feel good and how much training professional dog groomers need to have," he said.

Further information on Mutneys Professional Pet Care is available on the company website at [www.mutneys.com](http://www.mutneys.com)

# Antigen testing is rolled out to the county's employers

**C**hamber members **Summerfield Healthcare** are continuing to work with businesses across Shropshire, helping employers to protect their workforce and keep companies running during the pandemic.

The private healthcare industry has become an important part of business recovery as pressure mounts on the NHS and antigen testing is now available for all employers.

David Edwards, sales manager at Shrewsbury-based Summerfield Healthcare, said: "Antigen testing is proving invaluable in the battle with COVID - helping firms keep staff safe and our new expanded service means the workforce of a large company can be tested regularly on-site with results known in just 15 minutes.

"The lateral flow test allows employers and managers to carry out rapid cost-effective screening and outbreak control by quickly identifying COVID infected team members within businesses, workforces, organisations, education and community groups from a simple swab.

"There is an ever-growing number of LFT Antigen tests on the market, it is important to understand they are not all the same, some are a lot more accurate than others."

"We supply the Siemens Clinitest which has Public Health England approval, is CE marked, used widely within the NHS and is proving crucial in the fight to contain the virus, preventing its spread."

The Shropshire private healthcare provider is working with various industries UK-wide, including TV production companies, education providers and manufacturing/construction firms.

Antigens are viral proteins and rapid antigen tests are commonly used in the diagnosis of respiratory pathogens, including influenza viruses and respiratory syncytial virus (RSV). Antigen tests are immunoassays that detect the presence of a specific viral antigen, which implies current viral infection.

"The lateral flow antigen tests are already being used in the NHS and care homes as part of a Government scheme and are currently being rolled out to high-priority workplaces," adds David.

"We are here to support those employers looking to keep their businesses operating while ensuring the safety of their employees and limiting the spread of the virus using the antigen tests."

The nasal swab test is available at £20 plus VAT per test with a minimum order of one box of 20 units.

For more information or to order antigen tests for your business please visit <https://www.summerfieldhealthcare.co.uk/covid-test-business/>



David Edwards, sales manager at Summerfield Healthcare

## Businesses collaborate in delivery of new jobs

Zoom! 1hr Delivery has been using the services of fellow Shropshire Business, DM Recruitment, to source dozens more drivers for their rapidly expanding operation.

Zoom! 1hr Delivery are Co-op's chosen rural logistics partner to fulfil their food delivery roll out across the whole of Wales and areas along the English border from the Wirral down to Worcestershire. They are delivering for Co-op's customers within 2 hours of the order being placed.

The order and delivery service has so far asked DM Recruitment to source 61 new drivers across the West Midlands and Wales to keep up with demand for the newly launched service.

Kevin Williams, Managing Director at Zoom! 1hr Delivery, said, "We are so pleased to be creating lots of new jobs at a really challenging time for people looking for work. We have an average delivery time of just 28 minutes, so we needed dependable and diligent drivers to continue that commitment to customer service, and DM Recruitment have delivered just that.

"We are all about working with local businesses, so it was great to use the services of a top Shropshire recruitment agency to source our new drivers.

"These new drivers will be not only be delivering for Co-op stores in our new areas, they will also be delivering for our own customers - who can order food, retail, alcohol, flowers and more through our app and website - bringing goods from local companies straight to their doors."

Both Zoom! 1hr Delivery and DM Recruitment have head offices in Shrewsbury and have been rapidly expanding over the last 5 years.

Stuart Danks, Director of DM Recruitment, added, "It is great to work with a fellow independent, local business, and be part of their exciting growth. This year we have taken all of our registration and application processes online, including a brand-new app, which has perfectly positioned us to recruit workers for Zoom! 1hr across England and Wales."

Zoom! 1hr have over 60,000 users on their app, and they are projected to achieve 650,000 deliveries in 2021, as they take on a further 200 Co-op stores across the UK in the new year.



Zoom! 1hr delivering near Bwlch Mountain in South Wales

# A glass act in the pandemic

Leading Shropshire based Salop Glass & Glazing have announced 20% year on year growth from the start of May to the end of 2020.

Dedicated to providing reliable, professional glass and glazing services for over 65 years, the Shrewsbury business has also reported a 77% year on year increase in enquiries since they reopened in May, 2020.

From the beginning of the first UK lockdown in March 2020, the business closed and the firms Managing Director, Phill Brown became the primary point of contact for all customers.

Phill commented: "Ensuring that we were still available and in contact with our customers was so important for us. We quickly adapted the business at the start of lockdown and began managing all quotes via email which I think greatly helped us continue trading.

Phill added: "The Salop brand name has been around in the industry since 1954, so despite what is currently going on in the world we wanted to be here for customers old and new, more than ever".

Due to the evident and positive increase in demand, the business quickly recognised that their team needed to expand.

Salop Glass & Glazing have created 4 new appointments including an Administrative Assistant responsible for customer service and quote management, two Trainee Fitters and an Assistant Glazing Manager who is set to join them imminently.

Phill concluded: "This is an extremely exciting time for the business. It's wonderful to be able to welcome new talent to the

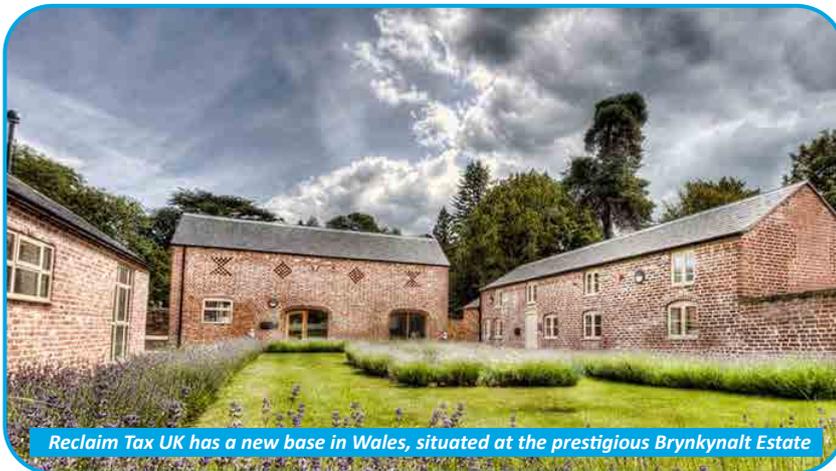


Salop Glass Managing Director, Phill Brown

team and we can't wait to see the business continuing to grow from strength to strength".

Those who are interested in learning more about Salop Glass & Glazing and the services that they offer are encouraged to visit: <https://salopglass.co.uk/>

# Expansion into Wales



Reclaim Tax UK has a new base in Wales, situated at the prestigious Brynkynalt Estate

**S**hropshire's leading R&D tax credit specialists are delighted to announce their expansion into new territory. Not only are Reclaim Tax UK now offering their services to businesses throughout Wales, but this move comes alongside the hiring of two new team members to help support the rollout.

Reclaim Tax UK's new recruits are Isabelle Hargeaves-England, who is joining the team as a Business Development Executive, and Joshua Davies, who is taking on the responsibility as MD for the new Wales branch.

"I'm thrilled to be joining the team at Reclaim Tax UK," says Joshua. "We look forward to working with clients across Wales

at this very exciting time for the company and for innovative businesses as a whole."

In addition to these impressive new hires, Reclaim Tax UK has selected illustrious offices for their base in Wales, situated within the prestigious Brynkynalt Estate. The estate offers the ideal location for the company, set within historic grounds rich in more than a thousand years of history.

This atmospheric setting provides a fantastic place for staff to assist clients in Wales as they grapple with R&D Tax Credits. The company has developed an enviable reputation for their expertise in this area, providing a full service for businesses eager to receive tax reliefs and maximise their claims.

The R&D Tax Credits system awards companies which have invested in innovative new products, systems or procedures. It provides motivation for companies of all sizes and scales to choose innovative solutions, and



New recruits Joshua Davies and Isabelle Hargeaves-England

by working with Reclaim Tax UK, the same businesses can gain significant rewards for their enterprising approach.

"This is a fantastic time for companies to think carefully about the benefits of innovation," says Reclaim Tax UK Managing Director, Chris Jones. "In the coming months, we will help many more businesses make the most of the tax credits which are available to them, no matter where in the UK they're based."

Find out more about the company online at the official website <http://www.reclaimtaxuk.co.uk> or head for the website of the Welsh HQ at <http://www.reclaimtax.wales>



# Easter reopening ambition

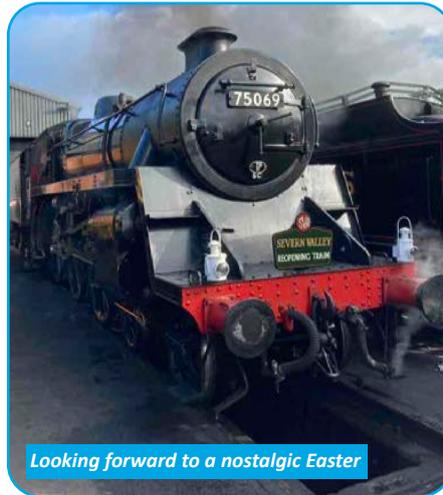
**T**icket lines have opened for the Severn Valley Railway's spring services, as the historic line prepares to reopen at Easter. From April 2nd, visitors will once again be able to travel through the Shropshire and Worcestershire countryside, as they step back in time to the golden age of heritage rail, and celebrate the start of the SVR's 2021 season.

Following a successful run of services in 2020, including a sell-out Christmas season, the railway will continue its hugely popular excursion trains that were so well received by visitors last year.

A day full of adventure awaits as The Explorer, Flyer and Adventurer return for 2021, updated to offer visitors new experiences and locations to explore.

Starting in time for Easter, there will be two excursions from Kidderminster and one from Bridgnorth on all normal operating days, with extra services added from the end of April, including the return of the very popular diesel Pioneer service on selected dates. In addition, Easter activities, including a giant Easter Egg Hunt along the line, will provide families with some fun and challenge as they travel.

The Adventurer departs from Bridgnorth, towards Kidderminster with the option to explore The Engine House Visitor Centre at Highley, home to the reserve collection of full-size steam locomotives. At the other end of the line, The Explorer departs Kidderminster, for Bridgnorth, visiting each station on the



Looking forward to a nostalgic Easter

line throughout the day, offering visitors the chance to visit Arley and Hampton Loade stations for the first time since the railway closed for the first lockdown in March last year.

The Flyer offers a slightly shorter day out, departing Kidderminster for a visit to The Engine House before heading to Bridgnorth to explore the beautiful Shropshire town, ending with the return journey to Kidderminster.

Internal combustion fans will also be happy to see the return of the diesel-hauled service, The Pioneer, which will run on selected days.

In addition, two special events are planned during April and May. First up is the Spring Steam Up, a four-day event from April 15th, with the opportunity to clock up 96 miles of steam travel behind seven different locomotives, including a special VIP guest

loco that will be announced very soon. This will be one of the final showcase appearances for No 6960 Raveningham Hall, before the popular locomotive is withdrawn from service pending overhaul.

And starting on May 13th, the four-day Spring Diesel Bash event will showcase the best of the Severn Valley Railway's diesel fleet, again offering the chance to clock up 96 valuable diesel miles. Tickets for this event will be on sale in the coming weeks.

Helen Smith, the railway's general manager, said: "We're taking every care to ensure we can operate in a COVID-secure way, using tried and tested methods, including private compartments, complimentary hand sanitiser and social distancing measures on platforms."

Visitors to the SVR in 2020 left glowing reviews, describing the railway as "friendly, welcoming and helpful as ever", and saying that it provided "a fantastic day out on a COVID-safe railway". Others praised the escapism they discovered: "To see my children so happy and to be having fun again was wonderful. We felt safe and the COVID procedures were so well prepared. We made memories today that will never be forgotten."

To ensure passengers can book with confidence, the SVR is backing every ticket with a COVID Guarantee, so that ticket holders can transfer to an equivalent event or date, or receive a full refund. The offer applies should the railway cancel the event, Government restrictions prevent the ticket holder from travelling, or a member of the party tests COVID-19 positive or is required to isolate.

Visit [www.svr.co.uk](http://www.svr.co.uk) for details regarding journey tickets, the Spring Steam Up and Diesel Bash – or call 01562 757900.

## There is no time to rest on our laurels

The current situation with Coronavirus, has significantly changed the way we have been communicating over the last 12 months. Using Zoom and Teams is now part of everyday life both at home and at work. In many ways, it's hard to conceive how we could ever have managed our way this far through the pandemic without the use of technology.

However, despite this becoming a regular, almost usual means of communication, we do need to remind ourselves that communicating through a screen is very different to the methods of communication we have been taught since birth and as humans are conditioned to use.

Significantly, as many of us will remember from our teenage years, there was a time when we very rarely gave people eye contact and anyone who has tried to have a meaningful exchange with a teenage child will appreciate how challenging this can be.

Similarly, most of us, when talking via a screen, look at the image of the person we are speaking to rather than looking at them directly down the eye of the lens which means we almost get eye contact but they most certainly don't. The result



Heather Noble of Salt Solutions

means connection is one step removed and we are going to need to find ways to redevelop that skill as we transition back to face to face communication.

For many people this will feel very strange. When we set our expectations for our remote and face to face staff, when we go back to reconnecting with our clients, when we ask managers to motivate and mobilise staff who have been living in a virtual world for some time, we need to recognise that this shift will not happen by accident.

As employers and as business owners

it is our job to help people transition to what is likely to become a hybrid way of working if we want maximum engagement, meaningful communication and memorable interaction.

What we've learned about communication during Coronavirus and what we need to be mindful of as we emerge from the pandemic is that communication is easy to get wrong and less easy to get right. It takes consideration, planning and effort. The time to focus on these nuances of communication is now. How communication works is complex and ensuring a sound level of understanding can only have a positive impact on the way forward.

In summary, whether we are reintegrating teams, rebuilding client relationships or redefining our offering in the post lockdown world there is much we can and should do to upskill staff and bring people to a level where they can start to find a way back to communication as it existed before Coronavirus.

Heather Noble, Salt Solutions (Consultancy) Ltd, Coach, Trainer and Communication Specialist.

Visit [www.salt-solutions.co.uk](http://www.salt-solutions.co.uk) or call 01691 700800 or text 07843 006984.

# Offering advice to flood hit firms

## IR35 – are you ready? A lot aren't!

With the focus on Covid-19 and Brexit, the rapidly approaching start of the new rules affecting those providing services through their own personal services companies has rather slipped under the radar. However, from 6 April 2021 the new rules kick in and there is a growing body of evidence that shows many of those affected are ill prepared. Others are adopting a blanket one-sized fits all approach which may address the short-term issue but may well result in problems in the long term.

The off payroll working rules (the formal name for IR35) affect those working through a personal services company ("PSC"). If the rules apply because the relationship between the PSC and their customer is "employment like" then the income of the PSC is effectively taxed as if it were from a normal employment. For years the responsibility has been on the PSC to determine whether the rules apply or not and for them to implement them – and in truth many have ignored them or only paid lip service. As a result, the Government decided to put the obligation fairly and squarely on those using the services of the PSC to decide whether there was an employment-like relationship. If the end user of the services decides there is such a relationship, then the payments to the PSC are subject to PAYE and NIC – and if the payments are made by a third party such as an agency, they will have the responsibility for deducting the tax.

The rules were originally due to come in to force in April last year but were delayed because of the Coronavirus outbreak. Many may be assuming there will be a further delay this year as the Pandemic continues to bite – at this stage there is NO suggestion this will be the case and many stand to be caught out as a result.

If you think your business may be affected by the new rules or have any questions please contact us on 01743 273273 or by email [hello@wrpartners.co.uk](mailto:hello@wrpartners.co.uk) so our experts can talk to you about any actions you need to take.



Partner, Paul Brown

**A**fter the recent flooding in Shrewsbury from the effects of Storm Christoph, local accountants WR Partners want to offer their support to affected businesses.

As accountants and business advisors, the team have seen the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and the challenges that have resulted for their clients.

With the latest Lockdown, leading to the closure of many non-essential businesses, the flooding has brought further disruption to those already struggling with uncertain trading conditions.

The firm's office based on Shrewsbury Business Park was not affected by the flood waters, however many of the practice's clients and employees are based locally and have seen first-hand the devastation and damage to businesses in the town centre.

Partner Paul Brown commented: "The flooding in Shrewsbury has been terrible to see and as a local business we want to do what we can to help.

"The most valuable thing we can contribute is our time and professional knowledge.

"By offering free consultations to discuss any financial or business aspect of recovering from the floods, we hope to provide individuals with the reassurance that there is a route to recovery and perhaps offer them a clear and concise strategy allowing them to focus on repairing the physical damage caused to their business."

WR Partners are offering the owners of affected businesses the opportunity to talk through the potential financial implications from the flooding, whether it be cost of the repairs, impact on cashflow and profitability, understanding the road to financial recovery of their losses and even the possibility of deferring tax liabilities while they are in the process of recovering from the floods.

If your businesses have been affected by the recent flooding in Shrewsbury and you would like to speak to one of the WR Team, please contact us on 01743 273273.

*WR Partners are offering the owners of affected businesses the opportunity to talk through the potential financial implications from the flooding*

# Ambition drives a brave decision

**L**ouise Reid worked for Lloyds Banking Group – a corporate bank – for 18 years. She often dreamed of extending her profession to include providing mortgage and protection advice from a range of lenders and not just one bank. Louise has four children and a fiancé and lives in Oswestry. One thing that this pandemic has taught Louise is to face her fears and grab opportunities with both hands – no matter how scary something feels. That's why she has decided to set up 'Louise Reid Mortgages & Protection' – her own mortgage brokering business.

#### **Who is someone you admire, and why?**

I admire my fiancé Tristan. He works as a builder and he has continuously worked throughout the pandemic. He is conscientious and loves doing a great job, he's self-driven mostly always happy and very positive.

#### **Tell me three pet hates?**

When people don't use basic manners, queue jumpers and men leaving the toilet seat up.

#### **What's a typical day like for you?**

Wake up in the morning get the children ready for the day set them up for home schooling and then start my working day, dinner time is usually around 5pm but you can guarantee that everyone wants something different making so it can be bedlam.

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

I can blow bubbles from my tongue.

#### **If you could be anywhere, where would you be?**

Somewhere hot on a sandy beach by the sea with a cocktail in hand.

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

When I was 10, I always wanted to be a German interpreter

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

Lots and lots of Long Island Ice Tea cocktails

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

chilling on the sofa with a cup of tea and a bacon roll watching Sophy Ridge

#### **How do you want people to remember you?**

I would like people to remember me for being honest, trusted and someone who tried her best in all she did.

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

Drive, self-motivation and great communicator

#### **Name three words that best describe you.**

Driven, Impulsive, Caring

#### **How do you think your colleagues would describe you?**

Caring, knowledgeable and trusting.

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

Go on a worldwide cruise



Louise Reid

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

I would like to really establish my business and make a success of it.

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

Highlights of my career are being recognised as a top performer - Low lights would have to be the negative impacts Covid-19 has had on people.

#### **What publications do you regularly read?**

I'm a sucker for the Financial Times (a bit of a financial geek, I like to know what's going on).

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

Cleaning, and creating TIKTOKS with my 5-year-old.

#### **What are some causes you care about?**

Climate change and poverty

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

Nothing lately due to lockdown!

#### **What would be your personal motto?**

What goes around comes around.

# Rethink your workplace wellbeing strategy now

**O**rganisations across the UK have been steadily realising the importance of staff wellbeing as part of future-proofing their business – and rightly so; yet, only half of businesses consistently supported all of their employees with wellbeing as we entered 2020<sup>1</sup>.

The Coronavirus pandemic, and associated impacts on businesses and their teams, has shown us more than ever why it's important to be physically and emotionally healthy – with many using lockdown to begin and sustain new hobbies and habits. And that's why the Paycare team is urging all employers to implement or refresh their workplace wellbeing strategy:

Around two thirds of us reported exercising to boost our mental health at the beginning of the first Coronavirus lockdown<sup>2</sup>. With the UK still experiencing variable restrictions almost a year on, staff wellbeing has never been a more crucial part of the future of businesses across the UK.

Supporting staff to incorporate these positive practices into their life post-lockdown is something all employers should now be looking at; gone are the days where individuals were expected to manage their own health and wellbeing without letting it impact their working day. Now, we understand that looking after the holistic health of the workforce is hugely beneficial not only to them, but also to the company as a whole.

According to Paycare's research, before the current health crisis, half of all businesses reported having a wellbeing strategy in place – presumably with the other half either providing support in an ad hoc manner or not at all; but the world has changed so dramatically in the last year, meaning now is absolutely the right time to be considering refreshing an existing strategy or creating a new one.

It's expected that half a million more people will experience mental ill health over the next two years<sup>3</sup>; there are more than 41,000 UK families going through the grief of losing a loved one to Covid-19<sup>4</sup>; and 9.4 million employees experienced the uncertainty of being furloughed<sup>5</sup>. In addition to that, every single one of us has gone through some sort of upheaval, whether it's a partner being made redundant, working from home, boredom, loneliness, shielding, home-schooling, the stress of constant media reports about Coronavirus, the list is endless...

## What should a Workplace Wellbeing Strategy include?

A Wellbeing Strategy should protect the emotional, mental, physical and financial wellbeing of every member of the team. Naturally, employees should be supported through any specific problems which

arise, but the strategy should also focus on preventing issues and making health and wellness a priority at all times, not just when a specific team member is experiencing an issue.

The strategy should cover the benefits offered to employees such as Health Cash Plans, gym passes, healthy snacks, access to a virtual GP, or workplace counselling. But just as important are the other factors: what health and wellbeing training can they access? What's the flexible working policy? Who do they go to if they need support? What happens if they need to see a health professional during the working day? Can adjustments be made if health conditions are making certain aspects of their job more difficult for them?

## Ensuring the strategy is relevant in a post-Covid world:

The likelihood is your flexible and at-home working practices may have changed in recent months, so your strategy needs to reflect this. If you're going back to a rigid 9-5 structure having had employees working from home for many months, then do ask yourself why. Is it because you really need to for your business to continue successfully, or is it because you want to get back to status quo without considering how you could use 2020 as chance to adapt and refresh?

Allowing your team to set their own working hours, work from another location, and manage their own workflow has been shown to increase productivity, it certainly helps with a work/life balance, and it's free!

If investment is a problem and you're going to have to remove one or two benefits, firstly ensure you go through the proper legal processes in order to do so (it's much easier to modify than remove) and secondly consider the lower-cost benefits you can introduce as an alternative. A benefit might cost the company a couple of pounds per month, but the real-life advantages to the team as a result, could be huge.

To know how introducing new policies would impact staff, you need to be listening to them. It's easy to assume team members will benefit from (or even be grateful for) anything they get from their company, but in reality, you might be offering something they don't want or need. Establishing a Wellbeing Champion who can gather the thoughts of all team members, opening up a direct line of communication between Staff and the Board, or making it simple and quick to fill out a quarterly staff survey about physical and mental health are all easy ways to ensure your strategy meets their expectations and needs.

This communication should be two-way: there is absolutely no point having a Wellbeing Strategy if it's locked away in a

cupboard and no one has any idea what's included. Using a mixture of communication methods such as message boards, newsletters, emails and posters will ensure as many people as possible know what they're entitled to.

If you have more people working from home than before, then considering how they would access the same level of support and benefits as their office-based colleagues is a must, as well as ensuring that two-way communication remains solid and they feel included in the process.

The past year has been full of dark days, worry, stress and trauma. But if there's one good thing which has come from it for UK businesses and their staff, it's been employee health and wellbeing moving up the agenda. We all need a little extra support right now, and any extra help you can give will result in loyalty, productivity, and higher morale among the team.

Letting the opportunity to refresh your Wellbeing Strategy go to waste at a time when that support network is so vitally needed by so many would be a real shame – it's time for a rewrite. Give every single team member the best support to keep going over the next months and years in the best place possible, both physically and mentally.

For more information about workplace wellbeing, visit <https://www.paycare.org/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.

Source:

- <https://reba.global/reports/reba/axa-ppp-healthcare-employee-wellbeing-research-2020>
- <https://www.sportengland.org/news/surge-appreciation-exercise-and-activity-during-lockdown>
- <https://www.centreformentalhealth.org.uk/news/least-half-million-more-people-uk-may-experience-mental-ill-health-result-covid-19-says-first-forecast-centre-mental-health#:~:text=The%20global%20Covid%2D19%20pandemic,by%20Centre%20for%20Mental%20Health>
- <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2020/09/08/uk-coronavirus-cases-deaths-covid-19-numbers-today/>
- <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/jul/31/uk-coronavirus-job-losses-the-latest-data-on-redundancies-and-furloughs>

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# New members to engage with

## BRIDGNORTH

### Churchill Maintenance

0330 2233812

Specialists in building, mechanical and commercial property support services

## LUDLOW

### Leversedge Wealth Management Ltd

07946 341854

Financial Planning

## OSWESTRY

### The Marches Academy Trust

01691 664 400

Academy Trust

### Moreton Hall Educational Trust Ltd

01691 773671

Independent School

### Louise Reid Mortgages and Protection

07873 116391

Mortgages and Protection

## SHIFNAL

### New Chapters Fostercare Ltd

01952 463 251

Children Social Care

## SHREWSBURY

### Laundryquip LLP

01743 718062

Hospitality supply chain – suppliers of industrial laundry equipment

### I-Dealer Distribution

01939 290492

Distribution and processing of refurbished IT and Apple products

### The Little Food Company Ltd

01691 668004

Independent delivered wholesale food supplier providing services to caterers across North Wales, the North West and the Midlands

## SOLIHULL

### Jerroms Corporate Finance Ltd

0121 593 5000

Corporate Finance Practice

## TELFORD

### Clearview Security Ltd

0800 167 0422

Professional Security services

### Scanning Pens Ltd

0207 9764910

Education Technology

### Shropshire Expert Cleaners

07462 479576

Specialist emergency response biohazard infection control cleaning services

### Westone Wholesale

01952 670220

Wholesale and exporter of branded fast moving consumer goods (fmcg)

### BPO Consultancy LTD

07947 555470

SME Business optimisation



## Shropshire Chamber of Commerce Patrons . . .



SHREWSBURY COLLEGES GROUP



Patron



# IR35- Are you ready?

The off payroll rules are changing from the 6th of April. Visit our dedicated IR35 Hub to find out if your business is affected.

[www.wrpartners.co.uk/ir35-hub](http://www.wrpartners.co.uk/ir35-hub)



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