

Somerset Voice

The Official
Magazine of
Somerset
Chamber of
Commerce

August / September 2020

Somerset Business Awards

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FOR YOUR
DIARY



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What do you do if an employee refuses to return to the office?

 Somerset
Chamber of
Commerce
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FIRST WORD



The gradual easing of the lockdown and start of Somerset business returning to work is a welcome sight. It's still far from clear how and, indeed when, some businesses can resume anything close to normal trading but as each week passes, we are seeing more activity and a gradual improvement in conditions for SMEs and larger organisations.

I'm mindful that application of safe working practices and protection for employers, employees and customers is incredibly diverse and we certainly cannot apply a 'one size' fits all approach. The Government's cautious phased tactic is good and it's reassuring to know that, should the unthinkable second spike appear, plans are in place to instigate local lockdown.

The most striking thing for me, though, has been how resilient and adaptable businesses have become. There are some fabulous examples of initiatives and innovation from our businesses community and how they can continue to communicate and trade despite severe restrictions.

Looking to the future, the feature in this magazine is recruitment on pages 6-7 and the new challenges and trends faced by employers, while we take a closer look at the legal and insurance sector on pages 10-12. The results of the BCC's Quarterly Economic Survey on pages 8-9 and the recruitment survey on page 13 are not easy reading but, hopefully, the next quarter will look more positive.

And on a positive note, I'm delighted to announce the Somerset Business Awards are back - full details are available on page 25. Our business partners and members have also been busy and there is plenty of good news to find on the relevant pages.

We have all had to make changes and adapt over the last few months and I am incredibly proud of the Chamber team who, like many, have needed to massively alter working practices and embrace very different conditions. They have rapidly moved to a digital and virtual delivery platform while still maintaining the strong working relationship with our members and the wider business community - great work and well done!

Stephen Henagulph

CHIEF EXECUTIVE

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Somerset Chamber of Commerce

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Since March,
Somerset
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over 1,300
businesses**



held over
65 events



via
webinars



to support and
inform businesses with
**critical information
for their survival**



“I just wanted to compliment you and the team for acting so quickly and offering so much help and advice in such an uncertain time. I suspect most small businesses have been scared and confused about their options, so getting all the information in a nicely condensed format, sign-posting them to where they can seek help, is simple but very effective.”

**Richard Howes,
Kontrolit**

“Thought it was important that I send you a note to acknowledge the amazing work yourself and the team are doing. Everyone in the area should be utilising your content, and joining as members of course!”

**Dave Crew,
Weston College**

Find out more about the benefits of becoming a member of Somerset Chamber
T: 01823 444924 E: membership@somerset-chamber.co.uk

FEATURE

Recruitment

Amberley Management Selection

As one of few senior management recruiters in Somerset, Amberley has been a Chamber member for more than 20 years and has operated in Taunton during that time.

We specialise in the search of people across a wide range of management positions and from various industries and disciplines. And our search activity extends to assisting small business owners to search for a buyer when looking to sell.

With our breadth of recruitment experience we feel that we can best serve Chamber members at this time by offering a free one-to-one consultation service to assist with a planned approach for future recruitment needs, in tandem with an assessment of your staff retention plans, as you look forward to 2021

Making the right selection of staff is fundamental to any successful business. And yet so many people still rely

on gut instinct when appointing people and spend very little time in properly assessing the real strengths of each individual applicant.

Applicant CVs are carefully matched to the job description. But do we actually consider how well the individual will blend in with the company culture which you have carefully developed for many years? 'No' is often the answer and which results in early dismissal and recruiting again at a cost. Due simply to a bad decision.

Please call or e mail Derek Smart, Managing Director, to discuss how best we may be able help you.
www.amberleymanagement.co.uk



Jobseekers

From early July, the UK has started to reopen, and — with the furlough scheme unwinding from the beginning of August — people are being encouraged to return to work.

Expecting the economy and job market to improve the minute the rules are relaxed is beyond wishful thinking, so we continue to monitor this uncertain, unprecedented situation proactively, but with all the necessary patience.

As employers, the wellbeing of staff is of paramount concern. However, given the economic challenges that many have faced as a result of COVID-19 then the wellbeing of the business community is also at risk. Few will escape unscathed but spare a thought for those employees and employers who won't survive this pandemic.

Thankfully, though, although it's been tough it's not all doom and gloom with us. While the majority of our staff

remain on furlough, our fantastic Temps Consultant, Michelle, has been able to return to work, for a few hours per week. We are still working from home but are absolutely on-hand to help with any of your recruitment needs.

We have, of course, had to adapt our process somewhat in order to comply with social distancing guidelines and communication via Skype, WhatsApp and Zoom, instead of in person, has become a new norm.

To find out more about what we've been up to, check out our Facebook page!



HR Go Recruitment

Inevitably as the country re-opens there will be businesses which are faced with the difficult task of making some staff redundant. This is a tricky and delicate time and one that can be very emotive.

At HR GO Recruitment we can provide practical support to individuals who find themselves facing redundancy. The programme is bespoke to your company's requirements, and can be delivered online as a live webinar for groups or one-to-one sessions.

Content can be tailored to different levels within the organisation, from manual workers and basic entry staff, to middle management, through to director level.

Subjects covered include: researching the job market, use of job boards, networking and social media, building confidence, CV, personal profile and covering letters,

interview preparation, and working with feedback given.

If this is something you are keen to find out more about please call Helen Lacey on 01749 330630 or email helen.lacey@hrgo.co.uk

We are also aware that some businesses will be looking to expand their teams, so if you would like to discuss how we can support you with recruiting then we would be delighted to help.

For more information about what HR GO Recruitment can offer visit www.hrgo.co.uk



Elite Staffing Solutions

Elite Staffing Solutions is an award-winning, independent recruitment agency based in Taunton, working with companies all over the UK.

The Coronavirus pandemic has altered the recruitment sphere dramatically, almost overnight and, sadly, many new job hunters are flooding into the market through job cuts and redundancies. Things are definitely picking-up, though, and more businesses are starting to recruit and there will still be labour shortages in certain professions.

If you are thinking that you may need to recruit now or in the near future there are a couple of things to bear in mind to ensure you enjoy success:

- Continue to work on your employer brand and ensure your social media content and workplace culture is well nurtured and maintained
- If you are recruiting, be clear about what you need and what you want from the ideal person so you

direct your vacancy at the right audience

- Get clued up on how to vet CVs quickly and efficiently as there could possibly be more applying than normal (see our website for blog)
- Don't try and short change potential candidates due to the immediate circumstances as this will not set the relationship off on the best footing and you may lose out on who you really want
- Take the time to respond to every applicant - courtesy goes a long way to maintaining goodwill

If you feel overwhelmed by recruiting get in touch and we will ensure you only recruit the very best, genuine talent. We are ready to help on 01823 429566.



BRITISH CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE

QUARTERLY ECONOMIC SURVEY Q2 2020

The British Chambers of Commerce's Quarterly Economic Survey is the UK's largest independent survey of business sentiment and a leading indicator of UK GDP growth. The most recent results find that UK economic conditions deteriorated at an unprecedented rate in the second quarter of 2020, with eleven of the 14 key service sector QES indicators falling to their lowest level in the survey's 31-year history.

“ Our results demonstrate the need for swift and substantial action. The Government has one chance to jump-start the economy and business confidence over the coming weeks - and they must take it.

Business communities across the UK want to see a clearer, bolder roadmap to recovery that helps them restart, rebuild and renew. The UK cannot meander its way back to success in this era of uncertainty. The only way to re-ignite business and consumer confidence is to demonstrate an absolute and unshakeable focus on boosting the economy over the coming months. ”

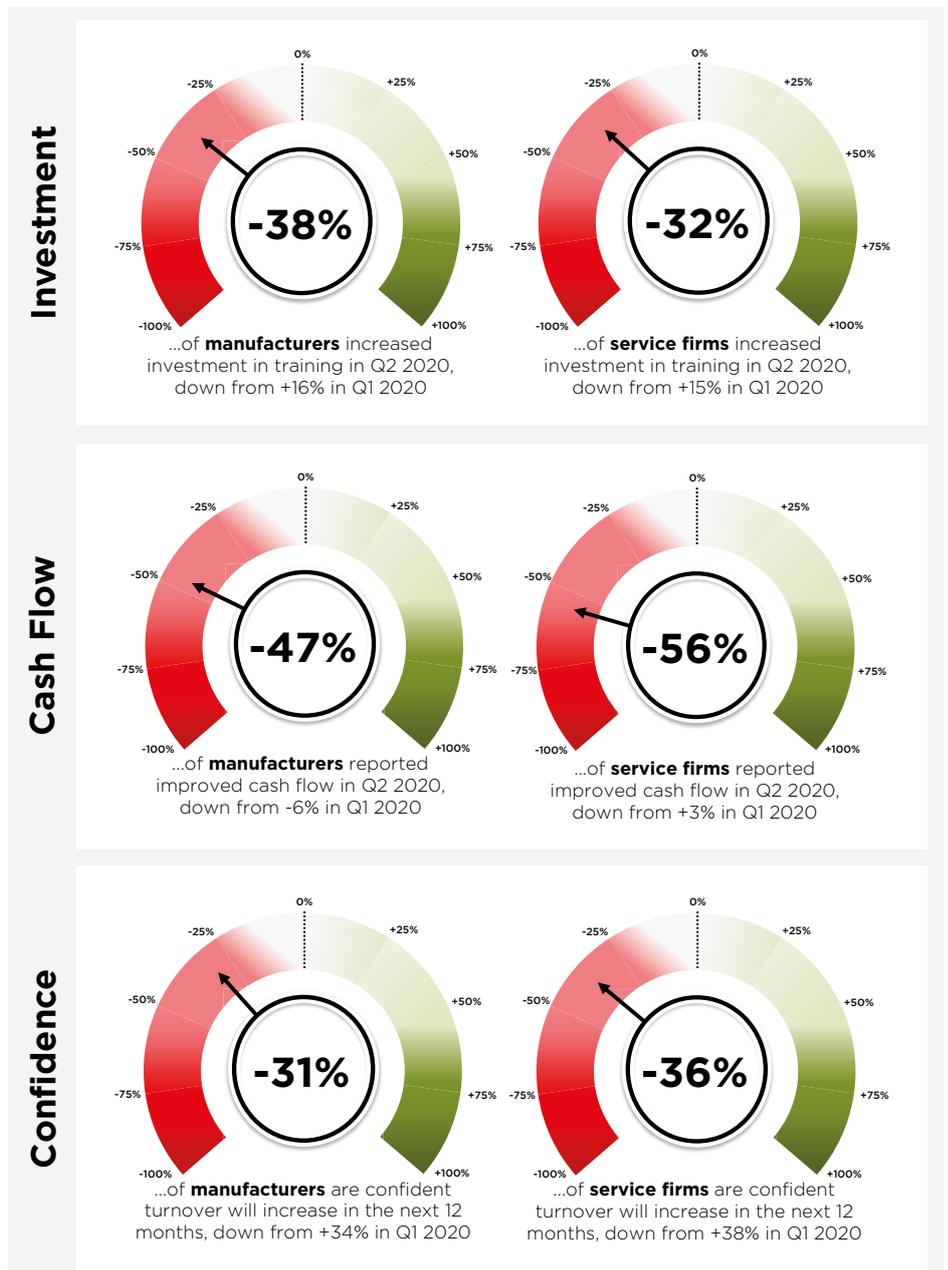
Adam Marshall
Director General, British Chambers of Commerce

For the full BCC QES Q2 2020 results see our website

www.somerset-chamber.co.uk

AT A GLANCE

Positive balance (+) = **growth** | Negative balance (-) = **contraction**





SOMERSET CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

QUARTERLY ECONOMIC SURVEY Q2 2020

The Somerset QES results revealed almost a third of Somerset firms expected to make redundancies in the next three months, half expected turnover to worsen in the next year and three quarters had no plans to recruit. On the flip side, around 60% of businesses expected their workforce to remain the same in the next three months and almost 20% said they intended to upscale in the coming months.

Area	Furlough CJRS	Self Employed ISS Claims	Total Supported	Population (16-64)	% Supported / Pop (16-64)	33% Risk Unemployed	20% Risk Unemployed
Mendip	15,100	5,600	20,700	67,700	31%	10.1%	6.1%
Somerset County	64,400	23,100	87,500	323,900	27%	8.9%	5.4%
Somerset West and Taunton	17,100	6,300	23,400	88,300	27%	8.7%	5.3%
South Somerset	18,900	6,500	25,400	96,100	26%	8.7%	5.3%
South West	654,800	224,000	878,800	3,382,627	26%	8.6%	5.2%
Sedgemoor	13,300	4,800	18,100	71,800	25%	8.3%	5.0%
England	6,445,800	2,056,000	8,501,800	35,049,467	24%	8.0%	4.9%

Local QES analysis by Barclays

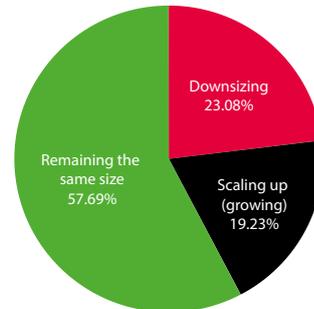
Graham Austin, Head of SME, South West, Barclays, said: "These figures clearly demonstrate what we are hearing from our clients, that some small and medium-sized businesses up and down the country including in Somerset are feeling the impact of COVID-19. Barclays is continuing to work hard to provide SMEs with the support they need to weather this crisis and begin to operate in the 'new normal'."

So far, Barclays has facilitated a total of £21.4 billion into the economy through BBLS, CBILS, CLBILS and CCFF. A number of SMEs are using the funds to pay suppliers, pay rent for business premises, top up the wages of furloughed staff and keep operations running during lockdown and as restrictions ease.

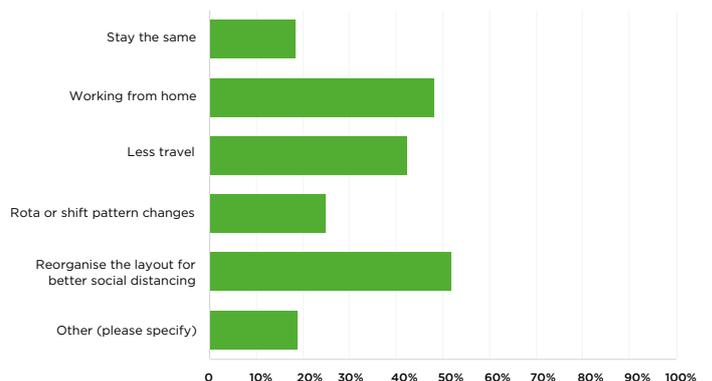
In response to pressure on SMEs to diversify and pivot their business models, Barclays has partnered with Cambridge Judge Business School to offer a free 'Back to Business' toolkit. The course is open to all Somerset and UK SMEs and aims to help participants assess the overall health of their company and create a tailored resilience plan during times of crisis.

Graham added: "SMEs are the backbone of the Somerset and South West economy and while public confidence after lockdown is difficult to predict, it's important for us to understand the headwinds they are facing and help businesses deal with the challenges that lie ahead."

Are you planning to change the size of your business as we recover from Coronavirus?



How do you plan to change working practices after Coronavirus?



FOCUS

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WPA is a specialist health insurer helping our customers access the best healthcare. Headquartered in Taunton, employing 250 people locally and with a history dating back to 1901, we look after hundreds of thousands of private individuals, families, professionals and all businesses from micro enterprises through to blue chip global brands. Our Benevolent Foundation promotes healthy activity among the young where, this year alone, over 35 schools have already benefitted from our support.

As a not-for-profit company, we are 'not hampered by the demands of shareholders motivated by profit' (Daily Telegraph, July 2, 2020) leaving us free to invest in our business for the long term. Our ethos is to treat our customers as we would like to be treated ourselves.

We prioritise clinical best practice. All of our customers

are free to choose where, when and who provides them with treatment. 62% of medical consultants surveyed by Populus would commend WPA – twice as many as our nearest competitor.

When COVID-19 struck, our investment in technology allowed us to move to homeworking without missing a beat. We were the first UK insurer to pay a rebate to our customers reflecting the reduced claims that we have experienced. We are the only insurer to have paid a second rebate underlining again, that customers come first.

To find out more, get in contact (01823 625 000) or visit our website – wpa.org.uk



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If a business is well managed, then it should expect significant premium discounts. We take the time to understand the risks associated with our clients' business and present them to insurers in the most positive light. We clarify expectations and identify areas that will impact on cover and premium. We can then provide a portfolio of coverage that is comprehensive and competitive.

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- Claims negotiation and management. The premium will inevitably reflect the historical claims experience and also the potential for future claims. Strong negotiation and effective management of attritional claims will result in a client having greater control of the cost of their insurance protection
- General Service. The quality and speed of response to day to day queries, consistency with a proactive approach delivered by a team of people you will come to know and trust

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Battens is recognised as one of the country's most progressive law firms providing decisive legal solutions to clients nationwide who value a high standard of practical legal support. We have adapted throughout lockdown to provide and maintain our full service to clients.

With offices in Yeovil, Sherborne, Castle Cary, Dorchester, Wareham, Bath and London, the philosophy of our directors and staff is to offer an expert professional service on a personal basis, delivering the results you want.

There is no 9am to 5pm attitude and we are happy to work flexibly to meet clients' individual needs, providing specialist legal advice and solutions for whatever life brings - at home or at work.

Our aim is to provide a personal service which is practical, understandable and reasonably priced. We

appreciate how important it is to understand the needs of our clients and to establish long-standing relationships and as a result have many clients who return to us over and over again.

We are proud of the fact that a significant proportion of our staff have worked for us for many years and a sizeable number of our lawyers actually trained with the firm and stayed after becoming qualified.

Our teams can be contacted by telephoning:
Yeovil - 01935 846000; Bath - 01225 562581;
Castle Cary - 01963 834477; Dorchester - 01305 250560;
Sherborne - 01935 814811; Wareham - 01929 768720;
London - 0207 781 7750.



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Call for Government to do more to protect businesses and jobs

Results from the British Chambers of Commerce's (BCC) Quarterly Recruitment Outlook, in partnership with Totaljobs, reveal the impact Coronavirus has had on the jobs market, with the two organisations calling for further action from Government to protect businesses and jobs.

- 29% of businesses expect to decrease the size of their workforce in the next three months - the highest on record
- 28% decreased size of workforce in Q2 but 66% kept their workforce constant, reinforcing the success of the Job Retention Scheme
- The two organisations call for a cut in employer National Insurance Contributions to protect businesses and jobs.

The leading business organisation's landmark survey, which serves as a barometer of the UK labour market, received 7,400 responses and is the largest of its kind in the UK.

Fieldwork was done prior to the Chancellor's Summer Statement which announced the Job Retention Bonus, Kickstart Scheme and an Apprenticeship Recovery programme, among other things.

Some 59% of respondents said they will keep headcount the same and just 12% will look to increase the size of their workforce. The percentage of businesses attempting to



recruit in the previous quarter fell to 25%, the lowest level on record. Of the firms that attempted to recruit, 65% faced recruitment difficulties, particularly for skilled manual/technical or managerial roles.

The two organisations have called on the Government for further action to limit the damage to the UK labour market, including reducing the overall cost of employment, through a temporary cut in employer National Insurance Contributions and support to upskill and reskill employees as businesses adapt to change.

BCC Co-Executive Director Hannah Essex said: "Many businesses are suffering from an historic cash crunch and reduced demand, meaning firms will still face tough decisions despite welcome interventions made in the Summer Statement.

"The Government should consider additional support for employers before the Autumn Budget to reduce the overall cost of employment and prevent substantial redundancies. Measures could include a temporary cut in employer National Insurance Contributions and support to upskill and reskill employees as businesses adapt to change."

SECTOR FOCUS: Recruitment

August 11
12 noon

Neil Carberry, CEO of the Recruitment & Employment Confederation (REC), will be joining us for this closed forum, specifically for businesses operating within the recruitment sector.

This one hour online event will be an opportunity to discuss issues affecting the sector, important trends and receive professional, expert advice in a confidential environment.

For more information visit our events page, or contact a member of the team on 01823 44424.



HINKLEY UPDATE

New website for Hinkley Supply Chain Team and opportunities for local businesses

The Hinkley Supply Chain Team has relaunched its website to make it even easier for businesses to find out about the project and to sign-up as potential suppliers.

The website has been streamlined and includes a host of important information to help Somerset and South West companies benefit from the opportunities on offer at Hinkley Point C.

The new site contains information about contract opportunities, the Hinkley Supply Chain Team members, events and project news, as well as direct links to external sites, including HPC developer EDF, accommodation provider Host and the HPC Community Fund.

Somerset businesses which are not yet registered with the Hinkley Supply Chain for work at HPC are currently being encouraged to sign-up using the 'register now' option on the new website as a new wave of contracts become available.

The team, which is overseen by Somerset Chamber of Commerce, is working with EDF to help Somerset and South West businesses win work during the construction of the new nuclear power station.

There are a large number of contracts which still have to be awarded and the supply chain team wants to help local businesses win the work.

But to do that, businesses need to register their details on the Hinkley Supply Chain portal via the website www.hinkleysupplychain.co.uk.

The next phase of the project will include both the internal and external



fitting of a number of different buildings on the site.

The Hinkley Supply Chain Team can only profile the capabilities of regional companies who are registered on the Hinkley Supply Chain Portal. By not registering, businesses could miss out on potential opportunities.

To register on the supply chain portal, visit www.hinkleysupplychain.co.uk and click the green 'register now' login button located on the right hand side.

More information is available by emailing the team at office@hinkleysupplychain.co.uk or telephoning on 01823 443425.

More jobs and contract wins at Hinkley Point C

EDF has announced more contract wins and jobs to support the next phase of the construction of Hinkley Point C nuclear power station.

Staffordshire-based Capula and Exyte Hargreaves from Lancashire will create 80 new engineering posts as part of the expected 1,200 new jobs and 300 apprentices who will become part of the 4,000 strong workforce need to fit electrical systems, cables and pipes at the nuclear power station.

The work is being delivered by an innovative joint venture – the “MEH Alliance” formed by EDF and its major contractors Altrad, Balfour Beatty Bailey, Cavendish Nuclear and Doosan Babcock. (MEH stands for Mechanical, Electrical and HVAC – heating, ventilation and air conditioning).

Many of the new workers will be making use of new locally-based training facilities such as a welding and electrical centre of excellence.

A new welding centre in Bridgwater is supported by the MEH Alliance, the Engineering Construction Industry Training Board (ECITB), the Weldability SiF Foundation and South West Institute of Technology and Bridgwater & Taunton College.

The centre plans to train and qualify 350-500 welders a year, benefitting people and industries across the South-West of England and beyond.

Simon Parsons, Hinkley Point C MEH Programme Director, said: “In this next major chapter for our project, the MEH phase will join together hundreds of small and large companies from across Britain. Together we are delivering on our promise to build Britain’s industrial capability by creating new jobs and skills.”

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Falcon keeps firms on the move at HPC

Hinkley Point C (HPC) continues to break records and hit milestones but it's the businesses and people behind the scenes who are ensuring the project keeps moving on time and to schedule.



Take Falcon Vehicle Solutions, which has bases in Taunton and Bridgwater, as well as a modern workshop in Bridgwater.

The vehicle rental company has provided a wide range of vehicles on contract hire to a number of different local, national and international contractors who are working directly on site at HPC.

Clients include Somerset Larder, which uses LCVs and refrigerated HGVs, Windsor Catering, which uses 3.5t fridge vans and makes use of flexible fleet hire and Construgomes, a Portuguese sub-contractor which has used more than 10 vehicles for workers to use while working at HPC.

Tristan Savage, Managing Director, said: "Our flexible approach and wide-ranging fleet, allows contractors to scale up or down their fleet as required. The use of contract hire supports the core fleet of any contractor, with flexible hire being used to scale up during peak requirements.

"Our workshop and maintenance teams mean we can maintain all vehicles in Bridgwater or through our 24/7 breakdown service, both minimising vehicle downtime which is key to contractors working against deadlines."

Falcon Vehicle Solutions offers all HPC workers discounted rentals on self-drive car/van hire. The workshop provides maintenance support for any HPC contractor, with a focus to minimise downtime, using highly-skilled technicians and offering a special labour rate for HPC contractors.

The company registered with the Hinkley Supply Chain (HSC) and over the last 12 months has worked with the Somerset Chamber of Commerce-led team and received regular updates on key events and timelines at HPC.

"This allowed us to identify where we will fit best as a provider to contractors during the upcoming phases," explained Mr Savage.



"From here I was introduced to Natalie Beacham from the supply chain team. Natalie came to visit our site to get a feel for what we could offer and I have now met with Natalie a regular occasions, getting briefed on HPC progress with ideas on how we can fit in and was given a key introduction to a large local business which I am hopeful will lead to a long-term relationship being built.

"I would highly recommend working with the HSC team; they are fully engaged in HPC and they understand the challenges and frustrations that local businesses have in accessing the market.

"They offer free, personal and friendly advice over a coffee, which can be invaluable and allow you to reset your thinking."

Falcon Vehicle Solutions has been in business over 30 years and is continuing to grow, earning an enviable reputation as a comprehensive fleet provider. From humble beginnings, today the company operates a fleet in excess of 700 vehicles ranging from self-drive cars and vans through to a full range of HGVs and trailers.

The fleet is the most diverse rental fleet in the South West of England and can provide anything from a one-day Luton tail-lift van or a 17-seat minibus hire, to a seven-year contract hire on a bespoke fleet of HGV's.

Mr Savage added: "Falcon Vehicle Solutions currently has 32 full time employees who all have a focus on delivering exceptional service to our customers. We have a UK network of sub-contractors who, in partnership with ourselves, will provide dedicated service 24/7 to keep our clients' vehicles moving.

"We operate a multi-brand fleet and work independently from OEMs giving us the freedom to offer choice and flexibility and listen to our clients' views and opinions to provide a solution that will fit best to our customers' requirements."

More information is available online at www.falconvehiclesolutions.co.uk.



HPC workers complete second reactor base on schedule

Workers building the Hinkley Point C nuclear power station have completed the 49,000-tonne base for the station's second reactor on schedule - meeting a target date set more than four years ago.

The final concrete pour of 8,991m³ set a new UK record for a single, continuous pour.

The achievement, known as "J-zero", comes less than a year after the completion of the first reactor's base in June 2019.

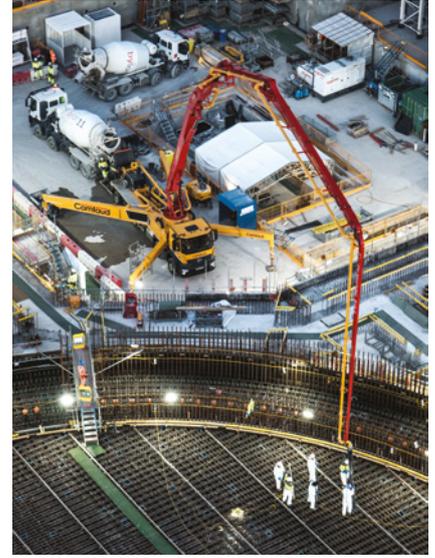
Construction during the current Coronavirus crisis was able to continue after the project took a wide range of

steps to ensure the safety of workers and the community. This included reducing numbers on site to enable social distancing and concentrating on the most critical areas of construction. Many health measures remain in force to prevent the spread of infection. Where social distancing is not possible, workers have been using extra protective equipment.

Work on the first reactor is also moving ahead with rapid progress made since its own "J-zero" 12 months ago.

Hinkley Point C Managing Director Stuart Crooks said: "I want to thank workers and our union partners for their extraordinary efforts to make safe working possible during the pandemic. They have adapted to major changes in everyday behaviours and working practices which would have been unimaginable a few months ago.

"The commitment of our specialist suppliers across the UK and in Europe has also been instrumental in helping us safely achieve this major milestone. And we must never forget the duty of care we owe to our community,



whose on-going support is vital to the success of our project.

"Hinkley Point C has a strong culture of learning and innovation which is leading to improved productivity as we get ahead building our second identical reactor. This experience is a great basis for further identical reactors at Sizewell C in Suffolk."



Alan helps deliver a cool treat for Bridgwater care home residents

Somerset Chamber's Hinkley Supply Chain Team member Alan Windsor has helped contractors at Hinkley Point C and EDF to deliver some iced treats to residents at a care home in Bridgwater.

As well as being a pivotal part of the Hinkley Supply Chain Team, Alan is also Club Captain of the Marketeers Carnival Club, in Bridgwater.

And with this year's Bridgwater Carnival cancelled due to COVID-19, he was only too happy to use the club's creative skills to make a purpose-built ice-cream van for residents at Oak Trees care home, in Bridgwater.

He was called on to help by EDF after Balfour Beatty's Marine Works team from HPC created a custom-made ice-cream van for residents at Stockmoor Lodge care home in Bridgwater, when the residents were left without their regular ice-cream treats due to lockdown.

Inspired by the work of the Balfour Beatty team, the Marketeers built a second van - complete with a modified Marketeers club badge featuring Guy Fawkes eating an ice-cream!



Alan said: "As with many people in Bridgwater, some members of our club have had friends and family who have been looked after in our local care homes, and Somerset Care recently looked after Mike Williams, a life member of the club, as he battled a long illness, and we wanted to do our bit during these difficult times.

"By dedicating this gift to Mike's memory, it is hoped his name lives on for many years and the truck brings joy to both the faces of fellow Somerset Care residents

and the staff who took great care of him.

"While the graphics used on the vehicle were designed in-house, the club would like to thank ARC Document Solutions for printing the graphics which were applied to the vehicle and club members Rob Williams and Kenny Rogers for their hard work creating the miniature masterpiece."

Elsewhere volunteers from across the HPC project have been supporting the two care homes during the pandemic, helping with mowing, weeding, planting and painting in the gardens.

Penny Hammond, one of the care home managers, said: "I cannot tell you how much the staff, and particularly, our residents appreciate what the volunteers have done."

BUSINESS PARTNER NEWS

Richard Huish College tops the latest league tables – again

In the latest national league tables, published by the Department for Education (DfE), Richard Huish College has excelled across all categories, outperforming all other colleges in the county.

The league tables set out comparisons on college performance for A Level and vocational courses in relation to measures such as average grades, value added (progress) and the number of students achieving top grades in facilitating subjects such as maths, sciences, English, history, geography and modern foreign languages.

As a result of the high levels of success the students achieve, compared to other schools and colleges in the South West and nationally, the college attracts students not only from the local Taunton catchment but from a wide regional area.



A Levels - Huish has the highest grade averages of B-, higher than all other local colleges who recorded between C+ and D+ average grade. The national average is a grade C+.

Vocational subjects - the average grade at Huish was a Distinction-, one of the highest grades



compared to other local colleges, with the national average being a Merit+.

Facilitating Subjects - Huish students also topped the tables for the percentage of students achieving AAB or higher in at least two facilitating subjects.

Grade and Point Score - In A Levels, Huish had a point score of 35.64, the highest of all the local colleges.

Principal Designate, Emma Fielding, said: "At Huish, we put our students at the heart of everything we do. Students are happy, supported and challenged. They are well informed when making their course choices and are guided to choose a programme that plays to their talents and strengths and that will open the doors to them in the future.

"All of this, combined with the excellent teaching, as evidenced by Huish's ongoing status as Ofsted Outstanding, makes Huish one of the best colleges locally and nationally for post 16 study and Apprenticeship opportunities. We are delighted that the success of our students and staff is now recognised by the Department for Education with the publication of these league tables."

Emma Fielding is pictured with Principal and Chief Executive John Abbott.

WPA sets the benchmark with PMI rebate pledge to individual and SME members

WPA, the not for profit private medical insurance provider, has set an example for the rest of the sector with a pledge to rebate around 40% of monthly premiums to SMEs during the current pandemic.

The provider was first out of the traps weeks ago to tell members that it would work hard to find ways to compensate them during the lockdown.

Now, it has confirmed that it will offer two-fifths of premiums back to SMEs whose employees are unable to access private treatment. There will be no commission clawback for intermediaries.

At present, private and independent sector hospitals are not treating or diagnosing patients, meaning that

individuals or companies who are paying PMI premiums are unable to use them.

Providers – and some intermediaries – have been quick to stress that the typical PMI policy provides cover for remote GP access or even remote specialist consultations.

There is also acknowledgment that claims funds need to be protected and ongoing claims need to be funded.

But there remains some frustration that insurers have not done enough to tell customers about where their premiums are going during the ongoing crisis.

A spokesman for WPA said the provider was "committed to not profiting" from the reduction in claims as a result of Coronavirus.



Top ranking for Clarke Willmott's Taunton office

The Taunton office of national law firm Clarke Willmott LLP has once again been recognised at the highest level in the recently released Chambers and Partners High Net Worth rankings.

The office has been awarded a prestigious Band 1 ranking and is hailed for its contentious and non-contentious private client offering in the South West. Its private client team advises farming clients, landed estate clients and business owners on a broad range of matters.

In addition to the firm's top rating, five Taunton-based practitioners have been individually ranked as leading lawyers in their field.

Partner in the private capital team David Maddock is ranked in Band 1 and is noted for his expertise in Inheritance Tax planning and estate planning for agricultural and farming matters. Partner Esther Woolford, who leads the firm's commercial and private litigation practice in Taunton, is ranked in Band 2.

Also ranked in Band 2 is partner Stuart Thorne whose expertise spans lifetime tax and succession planning, particularly for local landed estate and farm owners, while senior associate Sarah O'Grady is named as an 'associate to watch' in Private Wealth Disputes in the South West.

Partner Tom Chiffers who joined the firm last month, is named as 'Up and Coming' by the guide. He provides affluent clients with advice on tax planning, the formation and maintenance of trusts, wills drafting



and power of attorney matters.

Anthony Fairweather, (pictured) head of Clarke Willmott's Private Client team, said: "We are delighted with this year's High Net Worth Guide, and we're pleased to see our people individually named for their work, across our Manchester, Taunton and Bristol offices.

"These rankings are very impressive and are testimony to the strength and consistency of the private client team we have.

"Our strong and growing presence in all regions of the UK, highlights Clarke Willmott's private client practice as one of the best and most diverse in the country."

The Chambers and Partners High Net Worth guide covers private wealth management work and related specialisms, features in-depth editorial about the leading lawyers and law firms for wealthy individuals and families.

For more information visit www.clarkewillmott.com.

Somerset Coronavirus local outbreak management plan published

Somerset County Council and partners have released further details on how they will prevent and react to localised Coronavirus outbreaks after Somerset's Local Outbreak Management Plan was published online. They have also published advice for businesses on what they need to do in the event of suspected outbreak among customers or staff.

To date, almost 70 outbreaks (defined as two or more confirmed cases associated with a specific setting and symptom onset dates within 14 days) have occurred across Somerset predominantly in care homes. Local outbreaks have reduced considerably from a peak earlier in the year.

The plan sets out how Somerset County Council and partners will actively engage with Somerset residents, businesses, visitors and communities to keep cases down and reduce further spread if outbreaks occur. It is being overseen by a new Somerset Local Outbreak Engagement Board, chaired by Council Leader David Fothergill.

Cllr Fothergill said: "It's vital we all play our part and follow the rules so we can significantly reduce the risk of catching the virus and, importantly, protect those at most risk of more serious health consequences. When an outbreak does occur, our plan sets out how we will react quickly to put in place measures to reduce its spread."

The outbreak plan and other business advice is available on the council's website at <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/>. A telephone helpline is also available on 0300 790 6275 (open seven days a week 8am to 6pm).



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Weston College and Dr Paul Phillips win double gold at the UK National Business Awards

Dr Paul Phillips CBE, Principal and Chief Executive at Weston College has won gold and been crowned 'Leader for the Future' for the exemplary leadership shown during COVID-19 in creating #MyVirtualCollege at this year's UK Business Awards.

His innovative strategy ensured that all the college's provision was moved across within seven days prior to lockdown, for day one readiness, so that no one missed out on receiving an outstanding education. The speed of his response and high engagement levels by students, staff and businesses during the pandemic, was applauded by judges as a model of excellence for the UK, with 4,043 virtual teaching/support sessions delivered in the first week.

In winning gold, his leadership to keep education moving during lockdown, was recognised as 'exceptional' by the panel of judges, comprising the very best in leading business experts for the UK.

Dr Phillips was also recognised for providing impressive virtual support for the college's 1,200 employers creating #WednesdayWorkingLunch - with topics including 'Crisis Leadership', 'Rebuilding for the New Normal' and providing successful roadmaps for economic recovery/networking.



The college itself was also recognised, winning gold in the Wellbeing at Work Category for Dr Phillips' equally impressive approach to tackle mental health and wellbeing through his 'Body and Mind' strategy. Prior to lockdown, mental health and wellbeing support was accelerated using highly-trained staff and impressive digital capability

as a Microsoft Showcase College to live stream group yoga, mindfulness, healthy exercise routines and counselling.

Dr Phillips' impressive investment and innovative methodology to reduce self-isolation and promote positive mental health during lockdown, for the College's staff, students and community, was unanimously cited by judges as 'inspirational' and showcased as an approach that all businesses in the UK could learn from for best practice to aid recovery.



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UPCOMING EVENTS

**We will be taking registrations for physical events in the form of a waiting list and will be in touch when there is more clarity.

Wednesday

12

August

ONLINE: In conversation with . . . Riverford Organic Farmers

As well as networking, this event includes the opportunity to hear from Nay Brotherton, People Business Partner, at South West-based Riverford Organic Farmers.

Nay focuses on development and succession planning, teams and change. She is passionate about enabling senior and line managers to create an environment where 'co-owners' are listened to, valued, and developed.

This event offers the opportunity to continue to build valuable connections as well as the opportunity to ask any questions. Riverford Organic Farmers is a hugely successful business which now has an annual £60m turnover.

Time: 10am - 11.30am

Cost: £10 for members and non-members

Thursday

20

August

ONLINE: Sector focus: manufacturing and engineering

Our quarterly sector forums are proving a popular addition to this year's events calendar and are a great opportunity for businesses to discuss current issues and opportunities - as well as how they are adapting to the 'new normal'.

This will be our second manufacturing and engineering sector forum, giving businesses from these specific sectors the opportunity to discuss and share best practices in a closed forum, as well as hear from guest speakers from the sector.

Delegates will be able to ask our guest speakers questions, as well as contribute to the discussion. The one-hour forum will operate under Chatham House rules.

Time: 12 noon - 1pm

Cost: free of charge

Tuesday

18

August

ONLINE: Leveraging LinkedIn for business success

Businesses are looking for other platforms to sell, communicate and advertise their business. LinkedIn is a key platform for businesspeople, from owners to apprentices, allowing them to grow their network and reach prospective clients.

Omnia Business Management will lift the lid on all things LinkedIn, from best practice, to building relationships and measuring success. Delegates will leave this workshop with more confidence to connect with their target audience and to grow leads.

Our online workshops are limited to 15 spaces to ensure delegates get the most out of the event.

Time: 9.30am - 11.30am

Cost: £15 for members and non-members

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Wednesday

26

August

ONLINE: Ladies' Afternoon Networking with Emma Britton

Specifically for businesswomen, this networking event offers the opportunity for our members to hear from guest speaker, Emma Britton, while also catching-up with each other over a cuppa.

Emma has been working for the BBC for over 10 years as a BBC local radio presenter in both Somerset and Bristol and in 2016 decided to diversify onto a new career path. In early 2020, Emma qualified as a family and funeral celebrant with the UK Society of Celebrants and is now using her skills to write and conduct ceremonies for some of the most important moments in people's lives.

Time: 2pm - 3.30pm

Cost: free of charge

*Prices are plus VAT unless otherwise stated

Please note due to high demand, some of these events may be fully booked by the time of printing.

Please note that all non-members are entitled to attend a maximum of two Chamber events. Should you wish to attend further events, you will be required to become a Somerset Chamber member.

Thursday

27
August

ONLINE: Mental health: how to take care of your employees

We will be joined by representatives from Mind in Somerset, Thales and Porter Dodson for this mental health awareness discussion panel. With one in four adults experiencing mental health issues and an estimated cost to business of £43m a year, there has never been a more important time to look after the mental health of your employees.

The panel will cover the importance of taking care of your staffs' mental health, tips on how to implement a mental health strategy as staff return to the workplace and employment law. There will be an opportunity to ask questions and contribute to the discussion.

Time: 10am - 11.30am

Cost: £10 members and non-members

Wednesday

23
September

PHYSICAL: Business to Business Lunch Wells, Best Western Plus Swan Hotel

Our B2B lunches give guests multiple opportunities to network with different people from across Somerset over a delicious two-course meal - a great way to get out and meet people post lockdown. Hosted at the Best Western Plus Swan Hotel, in Wells, the event will be subject to Government guidance at the time and will be run with full health and safety measures in place. So, if you are looking to meet like-minded professionals and raise the profile of your business then this is the event for you. It will also be the first physical networking event with the Chamber since March, so one not to miss!

Venue: Best Western Plus Swan Hotel, Wells

Time: 12.30pm - 3pm

Cost: £27; please register your interest

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Thursday

3
September

ONLINE: First Thursday Club

Aimed at businesses within the construction and property industry, this monthly meet brings together like-minded individuals for relaxed networking. Regularly attracting businesses from across Somerset these online events are proving popular for this sector.

This one-hour online forum allows business to come away with more confidence in their practices, by sharing common issues and opportunities within the construction industry as well as giving you the chance to meet valuable new contacts.

Time: 12 noon - 1pm

Cost: free of charge

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Tuesday

29
September

PHYSICAL: Ladies Afternoon, Dillington House, Ilminster

Whether you're new to networking, new in business, or just want an opportunity to meet new contacts, the Somerset Chamber ladies' events are an ideal way to raise the profile of your business. Our guest speaker will be Ellie Webb, founder of Caleño Drinks. Ellie will discuss how she uncovered an opportunity within the alcohol-free drinks industry and her future plans for Caleño, over the coming years. Caleño is a tropical non-alcohol spirit and is now stocked in around 500 Sainsbury's stores, as well as popular UK pub and bar chains. If you're interested in attending, please register your interest in this event.

Venue: Dillington House, Ilminster

Time: 1pm - 3.30pm

Cost: £22.50; please register your interest

Speaker



MEMBERSHIP

Special focus - what happens if employees refuse to return to the workplace?

With the Government urging employees to return to their workplaces, what happens when an employer re-opens their business, but employees refuse to return because they are worried that they will become infected with COVID-19?



If employees are then dismissed, will such dismissals be treated as health and safety dismissals and so automatically unfair? While most premises will be safe, in a pandemic situation, the matter becomes a little more serious. Here, HR, legal and safety specialist Quest explains the implications for employers.

First, the employer must carry out a risk assessment before recalling staff. Having done so, they must then implement all the practical control measures. Once all reasonably practical steps have been taken, they would be justified in recalling their staff. If staff have ongoing concerns about returning to work, employers should discuss those concerns and reassure their staff. If necessary, give them an opportunity to raise a grievance.

The law

Sec 100 (1) of the Employment Rights Act 1996 deals with health and safety related dismissals. This means where an employee has been dismissed or has suffered a detriment because he/she raised a health and safety concern, then such a dismissal will be prima facie automatically unfair.

However, under sub-sections (e) and (d), employees have the right to walk out of work or refuse to attend work ‘...In circumstances of danger . . . which the employee reasonably believed to be serious and imminent’. It should be noted that the legislation refers to the employees’ reasonable belief, not what the employer thinks. It is the employee’s belief that matters. Therefore, the question is “did the employee hold a genuine belief that there was a danger”?

Is COVID-19 or the risk of contracting it, a danger? Of course, it is. But when does that become an imminent danger? Clearly, this will depend on the circumstances. If an employee works in a hospital, dealing with infected patients or cleaning the premises, then the risk of getting infected are clear and more likely. In these circumstances, a dismissal due refusal to attend may be unfair. But in other working environments, the risks may not be realistic.



Risk assessment

Employers need to carry out a risk assessment and implement the control measures identified. Elimination of the risk may not be possible; thus, the aim is to minimise the risks. Once the process has been completed, the employer must consult the staff to explain and discuss these measures. Consultations also encourage staff to raise issues which may have been overlooked. Staff are then required to follow these procedures.

Remember, staff are obliged to follow all reasonable health and safety instructions and are under a specific statutory duty (under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974), to look after their own safety as well as that of their colleagues at work.

Where employees have expressed concerns, employers must meet them to discuss these with a view to re-assuring them. Thereafter, employees must prove that risks/dangers remain. In this case, an employer should reassess their risk assessment and procedures to address the omissions where relevant. Once the concerns have been addressed, it becomes very difficult for the employee to argue that they held a genuine and reasonable belief of serious and imminent danger.

Where all reasonable and practicable steps have been taken, and the employee is not able to explain serious and imminent danger to his safety, they would be expected to return. A refusal to attend will be unreasonable. In these circumstances, the matter should be investigated before summoning disciplinary proceedings.

But what happens where the employee is refusing to return because they are worried about infecting a vulnerable person they live with? This of course is far more complicated and requires an investigation about the vulnerable persons status/relationship, medical information. In such circumstances, employers should seek appropriate advice.

Quest can help and guide you through these steps to ensure that the matter is dealt with sensibly and effectively – all included in the cost of your Chamber membership.

To find out more, either telephone the advice line telephone number on 01455 852037 or log-on to the website <https://chambersomerset.questcover.com/> with your Chamber membership details.



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Jurassic Fibre is a full fibre broadband company with a mission to provide ultrafast 21st century infrastructure to 350,00 premises across the South West. Better broadband means more than just ultrafast; it means local support, better service, and reinforced trust.

Daniel Langworthy-Smith, 01392 797070

enquiries@jurassic-fibre.com, www.jurassic-fibre.com

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Kevin Dibble, 07810 794173

kevin@instacom.org.uk, www.instacom.org.uk

Spark Somerset

Charity

Spark Somerset is a charity which supports the voluntary sector, inspiring strong, sustainable communities through voluntary and community action. Spark provides free information, advice and training to charities and groups. They also are a registered DBS provider and run the Volunteer Service in Somerset.

Kerry Wills, 01460 202970

support@sparksomerset.org.uk, www.sparksomerset.org.uk

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Justine Parton, 01935 385900

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CHAMBER NEWS

Entries open next month for the Somerset Business Awards

The Somerset Business Awards are back – a bit later than scheduled – but entries will open on September 1, with new categories and a gala black-tie awards ceremony scheduled for March next year.



Somerset Chamber reluctantly decided to delay this year's awards due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but as businesses start to return to the office and lockdown eases we are pleased to confirm Somerset's largest annual black-tie awards will be returning next month.

The annual awards are free to enter and you don't need to be a member of the Chamber to take part. Our main sponsor will once again be leading accountancy firm Albert Goodman.

The awards, which are now in their 16th year, recognise and celebrate the very best of Somerset's wide range of businesses across all sectors and are the only county-wide business awards in the county.

While entries open on September 1, the awards ceremony will take place on March 26, 2021, at the Winter Gardens Pavilion, in Weston-super-Mare, making these the Somerset Business Awards 2021.

New awards this year include an Environmental Award to recognise an individual or organisation's positive environmental impact and a, hopefully, one-off award for an Outstanding Business Response to COVID-19, from supporting key workers to diversification to protect the business and jobs.

The New Business of the Year Award has been renamed Start-Up of the Year to recognise businesses which have begun trading since January 1 this year.

Returning Awards are: Small Business of the Year (1-5 staff members), Medium Business of the Year (6-25 staff members), Large Business of the Year (26+), Best Use of Technology, Charity of the Year, Family Business of the Year, Investing in Somerset, Start-Up of the Year, Service Excellence, Somerset Manufacturer and Producer, Employer of the Year and Outstanding Achievement.

Stephen Henagulph, Chief Executive of Somerset Chamber thanked awards sponsors for their support and added: "The Somerset Business Awards celebrate everything that is great in the county and covers so many sectors across a wide range of categories.

"I would encourage all local businesses to enter the awards to share their own success stories and celebrate their achievements."

Sponsors already confirmed for the 2021 awards include Albert Goodman, TDA, Brook Financial, PKF Francis Clark, Porter Dodson, EDF, CETSAT, Garador, Clarke Willmott, Elite Staffing Solutions, Weston College, Teapot Creative and Clarks.



Pictured, from left, are Richard Bugler of main sponsor Albert Goodman, Stephen Henagulph of Somerset Chamber and the 2019 awards' host, cricketer Peter Trego.

Key dates for this year's awards include:

September 1 – awards open for entries

November 27 – awards close for entries

January 11 to February 5 – judges visits

March 26 – awards ceremony

More information about the awards is available on the website www.somersetbusinessawards.org.uk, while updates will also be posted on the official awards Twitter account @SomBizAwards.





Chamber steps up to meet COVID-19 challenges head-on

Pivoting? Reinventing? Redefining? Adapting? Whatever you call it, the last four months has forced many organisations to change their offering, or at least approach their business from a different angle. You only need to look at the pages of this edition of Somerset Voice to see some great examples of how these challenges have been faced by our business community.

Somerset Chamber has been no different to any other business. As an organisation which normally organises around 75 events a year and support nearly 550 members; the Chamber team has had to adapt, embrace the positives of enforced changes and has worked hard to support our members and the wider business community.

We have run over 70 events since the middle of March, nearly tripling our events output by taking them online to cover topics such as managing cashflow, understanding furlough and Coronavirus health and safety for the workplace.

We've tried to strike a balance between business-critical information and keeping businesses connected and will also hit the milestone of 1,500 attendees at these events.

There's no doubt that for many businesses, it's highlighted the importance of their membership and supported them at a critical time for business, keeping them connected to share experiences and learning points.

The Chamber team has faced the

logistical, organisational and business challenges head-on, with positivity, passion and dedication, understanding that what we do can be vital to support business across the region - so a huge thank you to them all for their efforts. Thank you also to you, our members, who have supported the wider community and contributed to the success of our events.

Alistair Tudor
Operations Manager

Queen's Award for Enterprise

Somerset businesses are being encouraged to set the standard by applying for a Queen's Award for Enterprise.

The awards are given annually for outstanding achievement by UK businesses in the categories of:

- Innovation
- International trade
- Sustainable development
- Promoting opportunity through social mobility

The online application process is quick and simple to follow and those who win are invited to a Royal reception and presented with their award by the Lord-Lieutenant of Somerset, Annie Maw.

Winners are also able to fly The Queen's Awards flag at their main office and use the emblem on their marketing materials. They also receive an official certificate and a crystal trophy.

Past winners have reported benefiting from worldwide recognition, increased commercial value, greater press coverage and a boost to staff morale. Each award is valid for five years.

To be eligible, the business must be based in the UK (including the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man), file its Company Tax Returns with HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) and be a self-contained enterprise that markets its own products or services

and is under its own management.

It must also have at least two full-time UK employees or part-time equivalents and be able to demonstrate strong corporate social responsibility.

In addition, each award category has its own additional entry criteria.

International Trade

To apply for the International Trade award, you must also:

- Have made a minimum of £100,000 in overseas sales in the first year of your entry and show year-on-year growth
- Prove that your organisation has achieved outstanding growth in overseas earnings relative to your business size and sector
- Prove steep year-on-year growth (without dips) in overseas sales over 3 three years - or substantial year-on-year growth (without dips) over six years

Innovation

To apply for the Innovation award, you must also:

- Have an innovation that has not been sold before
- Have had your innovation available on the market for at least two years



- Have recovered all the investments made in your innovation or show that the innovation will recover its full costs in future
- Show outstanding commercial success as a result of innovation over two years - or continuous commercial success over five years
- Your innovation should be in one of the following categories: invention, design or production of goods; performance of services; marketing and distribution; after-sale support of goods or services

Sustainable Development

To apply for the Sustainable Development award, you must also:

- Show how you have achieved outstanding sustainable development for more than two years
- Provide evidence of the benefits or positive outcomes of your actions or interventions

Promoting Opportunity Through Social Mobility

Applications for this award category will open at a later date.

Applications for all other categories must be submitted online by midday on September 9. More information is available from the helpline on 020 7215 6880, or to apply visit <https://www.gov.uk/queens-awards-for-enterprise>.



HM The Queen praises Chambers' contribution to business communities during Coronavirus

Her Majesty The Queen has offered support to businesses as they reopen, and praised the contribution Chambers of Commerce across the UK and around the world are making to help firms, champion trade and rebuild communities.

The letter from Her Majesty, Patron of the British Chambers of Commerce, comes as businesses across the UK are reopening and adjusting to a new normal.

The letter reads: "At a time of great difficulty for many, it is heart-warming to see the civic response and generosity of so many businesses, small and large, to the challenges posed, whether supporting the health



sector or vulnerable communities."

Her Majesty also recognised the contribution Chambers of Commerce and their members have made during

the pandemic: "As Patron of the British Chambers of Commerce, it gives me great pride to see the contribution you and your members are making to help firms, champion trade and rebuild communities."

Welcoming the letter, BCC President Baroness Ruby McGregor-Smith said: "The Queen's personal message of support will be a huge morale boost to our business communities at this complex and sensitive time.

"We are grateful that Her Majesty has recognised the crucial role Chambers of Commerce play supporting businesses and communities through the pandemic, and as we restart, rebuild and renew the economy."

Somerset Chamber welcomes Truespeed as a Business Partner

Leading edge ultrafast, full fibre broadband provider Truespeed has joined Somerset Chamber as a Business Partner.



Winner of the Best Rural ISP 2019 award from the Internet Service Provider Association, Truespeed is building a brand new network that removes frustration such as buffering, drops and slow speeds at peak times to give the South West a future-proofed broadband solution.

Unlike other companies which provide fibre to a cabinet and then copper cables to people's homes and businesses, Truespeed only use full fibre, direct to the premises connections which means they can guarantee 200Mb/s speeds.

"We are delighted to announce Truespeed as Business Partners of Somerset Chamber of Commerce," said Alistair Tudor, Operations Manager at the Chamber, "We've had a long relationship with the Truespeed team, partnering with them on the broadband survey last year which further highlighted the need for ultrafast broadband for many companies across the region.

"Digital connectivity for business is critical for the continued success of organisations across Somerset and we're looking forward to working closely with Truespeed as Business Partners to address this need."

Jeze Allman, Director of Sales for Truespeed, said "Having previously worked with Somerset Chamber of Commerce to understand how businesses can be better supported, it was a natural progression to collaborate again and start making real change in the region.

"It's great that we're starting a new chapter with the chamber, that aims to ultimately equip Somerset businesses

with the infrastructure and connectivity they need to compete and create long term stability and success."

Businesses can choose from a range of broadband packages tailored to their needs. More information is available online at www.truespeed.com.

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MEMBER NEWS

Cory Brothers and a brighter future

Cory Brothers are ready for business post lockdown and what they believe will eventually be a brighter future. Clearly, it will be different. Working from home has been a phenomenal success and is here to stay. The office is still important to the firm but striking the right balance between working from home and the office is under review as the company adapts to embrace the future.

Established in 1842, Cory Brothers clearly have longevity and experience of world changing events. Maintaining a moral compass has been vital; the company endeavours to do the right thing. This isn't always the easiest option when so many others are doing the opposite.

Group wide, the firm has not furloughed anyone – in fact, Cory Brothers has recruited seven new

people during lockdown. The company has won new business and more customers. It's also stood by its suppliers and customers and they have done likewise.

As a business, the company is a service provider and is resolute in its belief that its people are the business. Throughout lockdown, the firm ensured its people knew they were valued and would be financially protected. It invested in new kit and ensured staff could work from home with reduced worry.

Anyone who wants to use the offices, can. There is no pressure at all. Strict safety protocols are in place and each team is divided into two groups: A and B. Only one team can use the office on consecutive weeks to avoid overlaps. It may be that no one from team B uses the office but they have a choice.



Pictured is Mark Cooke, Cory Brothers Group Brand Ambassador.

Mike Bowden, Marketing Manager, said: "Cory Brothers has been trading for 178 years this year. We're planning for the next 178 and a brighter future."

Chamber members inspire young people

June and July are usually the months when businesses offer students invaluable work experience – shaping young peoples' future choices and keeping their own talent pipelines primed. This year, was, of course, different, with most businesses unable to offer placements on site.

Somerset Education Business Partnership wanted to ensure that students still had the opportunity to learn about the workplace – and was thrilled to find many Chamber members felt the same way.

The Somerset 'My Futures Careers Challenge' features 20 interviews with Somerset employers explaining the work of their business – and importantly the skills they need from young people. The consistent themes – regardless of business sector were 'positive attitude' and 'passion'. In the words of Martin Smith, Culinary Director at Somerset Larder: 'If you've got the right attitude, you'll go far.'

Each video closes with a task set by the employer to help the student understand their workplace. These range from whale identification (UK Hydrographic Office) to bridge building (M-CNC Precision Engineering). Anyone who would like to try their hand at one of these can visit Somerset EBP's YouTube channel and watch the industry interviews.

With 26 schools taking part across the county it has been a cost and time effective way for Chamber members to raise their profile with potential future customers and employees. More importantly they have inspired young people about



their future career prospects in Somerset.

Feedback forms from over 500 students show how much they have

appreciated the input from Chamber members. Put simply by these students 'It was fun and great to learn' and 'It made me open my eyes to look at my future and what I want for myself'.

Chamber members who took part included Barclays, CETSAT, Claims Consortium Group, Design Hive, Hinkley Point C, M-CNC Engineering, Somerset County Council, Somerset Film and Somerset Larder.

Andrew Hanson, Somerset Education Business Partnership Manager, said: "The great response we have received from Chamber members, schools and students shows that digital resources can make an impact whilst removing travel, timetable and work schedule barriers.

"We will be developing more digital content in the future. So, if you would like to raise the profile of your business with more young people then please get in touch. We'd be happy to help."

To get in touch with the Somerset EBP contact Andrew on 07912 264531, email andrew.hanson@somerset-ebp.co.uk; or Imelda on 07519 124546, email Imelda.leetch@somerset-ebp.co.uk.



Sycamore Process Engineering wins Somerset Chamber's QES prize hamper

Sparkford-based Sycamore Process Engineering has taken delivery of a luxury hamper of Somerset produce after being chosen at random from the businesses which completed Q2 of the British Chambers' of Commerce Quarterly Economic Survey (QES), which was run locally by Somerset Chamber.

The Chamber received a record number of responses and Katie Burt, of Sycamore Process Engineering, said she was thrilled to win. The hamper was created and delivered by fellow Chamber member The Hamper Guys.

Katie said: "I was so excited as I have literally never won anything before!

"I've recently moved back to the area and I'm a huge fan of Somerset produce so can't wait to get stuck in – we're having friends over for a socially distanced barbecue so its perfect timing. Thank you to the Hamper Guys and Somerset Chamber."

Sycamore Process Engineering design and manufacture processing equipment for the dairy, food and

beverage industries.

The team has over 30 years of experience and has also expanded into the personal care industry.

The QES is the largest survey of its kind in the UK and the results of closely followed by key policymakers such as the Treasury and the Bank of England.

Jerry Redman, Operations Director at Sycamore Process Engineering, said the company had been doing all it could during the pandemic to look after its staff.

"If there is one lesson we have learnt



SYCAMORE
PROCESS ENGINEERING

during the pandemic, it is that our people matter more than ever. Over the past three months we have been doing everything we can to support our employees, whether that may be through the transition to working from home, implementing COVID-19 health and safety measures, daily or weekly catch ups, supporting furloughed team mates, etc, the list is long," he said.

"What this has done is increased camaraderie and team spirit and we have almost unintentionally strengthened our culture along the way. So, whether it was the Friday PM virtual pub quiz, the weekly chat on Zoom or the cakes delivered to the employees' door, keep it up, do not stop as that would be a mistake."

More information about Sycamore Process Engineering can be found online at <https://sycamoreprocessengineering.co.uk/>.

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Simply Sig wins national hospitality marketing competition

Simply Sig, a Somerset marketing agency specialising in hospitality, tourism and leisure, has been announced as one of the winners in a Hospitality and Catering News' national marketing competition.

Owners Lorrie Kelly and Sarah Berry said they were thrilled: "After such a short time in business we couldn't have anticipated being placed. Having worked together for almost a decade, we launched Simply Sig just as COVID-19 hit the UK and the hospitality industry came to a grinding halt," Lorrie said.



Sarah added: "Because of the lockdown, we turned our focus to helping out in our local area. As a result, we designed and built www.simplysig.shop in conjunction with the fabulous team at Coronavirus Community Help Taunton to help connect the community with local suppliers, pubs and restaurants that were able to offer fresh food parcels and takeaways. We've been incredibly lucky to survive the past four months, mainly through recommendations."

Hospitality and Catering News' competition offered suppliers a chance to win funds to increase their marketing firepower and combat the effects of COVID-19 in the year ahead.

H&C News said that, while the detrimental effects of COVID-19 on the hospitality industry had been widely reported, suppliers to the industry had quietly suffered in the background.

A panel of seven judges, including Brenda Collins, Managing Director of UK, Ireland and Northern Europe, Preferred Hotels & Resorts and Jonathan Ellson, Director of Restaurant for Ascot's 5* Coworth Park, were rightly impressed with all entries, demonstrating their understanding of marketing to the

hospitality industry across its many segments.

Paul Anderson, MD of Meiko UK, a brand recognised all over the world and built on the foundations of product and marketing excellence said: "Great work was conducted to present individual cases and their specific focused applications, a truly great job by all and a pleasure to judge."

Paul's Marketing Manager, Mark Roberts, added: "Extremely well-presented plans from all entrants, with some great media activity ideas on how they plan to bounce back from the current COVID-19 situation, well done to everyone who entered."

Double award success for Cooper Associates Mortgages

Cooper Associates Mortgages has achieved double success at the 2020 ESTAS - the Estate and Letting Agents Awards also incorporating mortgage advisors.

For the fourth consecutive year we have been named Best Mortgage Office in the UK and Best Regional Mortgage Broker in the South West.

The ESTAS is an independent customer feedback scheme, with the winners determined by feedback provided by clients. The ESTAS awards ceremony was held virtually this year, as a result of the Coronavirus situation. The awards were hosted by Phil Spencer, the TV property expert, and determine the best mortgage brokers and estate agents in the UK.

Samantha Jackson, Managing Director of Cooper Associates, commented: "We are absolutely delighted to once again be recognised by the ESTAS awards. To be named Best Mortgage Office in the UK for the fourth consecutive year is a fantastic achievement which we are all incredibly proud of.

"I am especially pleased for all the staff within Cooper Associates Mortgages, who have worked so hard during a challenging economic period to obtain these awards. The ESTAS mean a lot to us, with all the winners selected purely on feedback received from clients, who are asked a series of questions about the service they received. We are incredibly grateful to every client who took the time to vote for us. We pride ourselves on delivering an unparalleled service



to all our clients, as we know they always have a choice where to place their business."

This success in the 2020 ESTAS follows-on from the 2017, 2018 and 2019 ESTAS, where Cooper Associates Mortgages also received the Best Mortgage Office in the UK and Best Regional Mortgage Broker in the South West gold awards.

Phil Spencer - the ESTAS awards host - is pictured with Cooper Associates' directors when he officially opened the company's extended Taunton office in January.



Charity works with businesses to mentor young people

PROMISEworks provides long-term inspirational, one-to-one mentoring to some of Somerset's most vulnerable children and young people. Some of them are on the edge of care or have left the care system.

The charity's volunteer mentors help them as they deal with struggles young people should not have to face. Many will have never experienced the benefits of security and trust that come with the friendship of a reliable, supportive adult.

PROMISEworks relies purely upon its own fundraising efforts and has a focused fundraising group.

To date, the charity has been:

- Awarded a grant from the Hinkley C Fund to recruit a full time Case Holder to be based in Bridgwater for a period of 2.5 years
- Successfully held our first fund-raising and awareness dinner at the Yeo Valley Canteen



- Started a programme to engage with businesses to encourage staff members to volunteer to be trained as mentors and finance those staff who are matched to a mentee. (This is a very long-term venture, the first success being with Thatchers Cider)



- Been selected as Irwin Mitchells Charity of the Year
- Chosen alongside St Mungo's by Mill on the Brue in Bruton, as their Charity of the Year
- Recently won the Somerset Unsung Hero Award 2020 for team of the Year

Christell (pictured) is the PROMISEworks face of the Taunton area, complementing the work already being carried out in other areas of the county. Helping to develop a long-term, sustainable mentoring service that will support children and young people for a minimum of two years each.

Anyone who feels able to help a local young person, please get in touch with Christell by emailing mentoring@promiseworks.org.uk to find out how a little of their time every week or so could change the life of a local child.

More information is available online at www.promiseworks.org.uk.

School's virtual charity fundraiser raises more than £1,200 for Brainwave

Year 8 pupils at King's Hall School used their creativity to ensure their usual charity fundraiser went ahead - albeit virtually - and raised more than £1,200 for fellow Chamber members, Brainwave.

With the intention of raising as much money as possible for the children's charity, suggestions for how this might work culminated in the idea of a series of challenges that would be recorded by the pupils for others to watch and predict the outcomes.

The onus was very much on the Year 8 pupils to deliver some fun and exciting challenges. Activities ranged from the traditional 'guess the number of sweets in the jar' and egg throwing and catching, to the more painful 'hand in an ice bucket challenge' and drinking a pint of cold water in as short a time as possible.

There were also some exciting football 'keepy uppy' and skipping competitions, as well some cricket challenges, grape throwing (and catching in the mouth!) and some challenges in which pupils even managed to involve their horses! Perhaps the prize for originality goes to the 'guess how long the queue at the MacDonald's drive thru is' - the answer was very long indeed!



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Wincanton strengthens business development team with three new appointments

Wincanton, the largest British third-party logistics (3PL) company, has announced three senior appointments to the business development team.

The appointments, which are effective immediately, have been made to drive transformational growth in Wincanton's core and selected markets.

Martin Dougherty is appointed Business Development Director. He has over 30 years' experience in sales leadership in the logistics industry.

Martin's most recent role was as VP Business Development in the DHL Supply Chain where he led their new business growth agenda. Martin has extensive experience in the deployment of end to end supply solutions with a particularly strong background within inbound to manufacturing.

Kate Jones is appointed Head of Development for Consumer. She has worked across a broad range of



sectors including technology, public sector, retail and consumer.

Prior to joining Wincanton, Kate was responsible for defining and leading DHL supply chain's UK and Ireland network sales team. Kate's strong delivery resulted in her being awarded the DHL Employee of the Year Award in 2018.

Andrew Turner is appointed Head of Development for Home and eFulfilment. He has worked in transport, logistics and supply chain since 2002.

Andrew joins Wincanton from Yodel where he was Head of New Business Development. Previously Andrew worked for XPO Logistics in senior commercial and new business roles, leading multiple new business wins in the retail sector and eCommerce service lines.

Ian Keilty, Chief Operating Officer at Wincanton, said: "We are delighted to have such highly talented professionals join us in strategically important positions. These significant appointments will help us in our mission to deliver sustainable supply chain value to our existing and future customers. I wish the new team members a bright future with Wincanton."

More information is available online at www.wincanton.co.uk.

SSG announces exciting company developments

As SSG Training & Consultancy returns to delivering classroom-based health, safety and HR training at its head office in Plymouth, the firm has announced a number of exciting company developments.

The first is the appointment of one of the team's longest-serving members, Denise Maclean, as Development Director.

Denise has been with the company for over 16 years, working in sales and marketing with her most recent role being Head of Marketing and Communications. She will take on her new role to support the long-term growth plans of the organisation in order to maintain, expand and maximise business potential.

Denise said: "I've been lucky enough to be a part of the wonderful team at SSG for over 16 years. During this time, we have come a long way and, with this new role, I am looking forward to taking the development of SSG to the next level. Our future is extremely optimistic, and as we enter this new phase of business development, I am excited to meet the challenge head on!"

Another big change for SSG is Dr Julie Hutt stepping into the pivotal role of Operations Director, where she will oversee the Service Delivery Team while managing key business processes and day-to-day operations.

With the current market being affected by the pandemic, SSG is focussing on preparing the business for the future while also ensuring it can help clients navigate their way through the challenges created by COVID-19.

SSG has had a very busy 12 weeks, from introducing new online face-to-face courses to providing free webinars on a

range of topics. On top of this, the company has invested in a new online shop, supplying free business guidance packs to help companies returning to work following lockdown. The packs include a range of items, including risk assessment frameworks, tool box talks, webinars, posters and guidance documents on workplace health, safety and HR issues.

Mark Salmon, Managing Director of SSG, said: "COVID-19 has presented many challenges to us over these past few months, but these new board appointments are an important part of our preparations for a really positive and exciting future. Both Denise and Julie are invaluable members of the SSG team and I very much look forward to working with them to ensure that we continue to provide a high standard of health, safety and HR training and consultancy services to those who need them."

For more information on SSG, please visit www.ssg.co.uk.



Pictured, from left, are Mark Salmon, Julie Hutt and Denise Maclean.

Every's Solicitors expands family team

Every's Solicitors has announced the expansion of its family team with the appointments of two new solicitors and a legal assistant. The new appointments come at a time of substantial increase in demand for family law services.

every's
solicitors



Moira Reynolds joins Every's as a Partner and Head of the Family Department. Moira has over 19 years' experience within family law and her career also encompasses three years as a law lecturer at Weston College. Moira is a very experienced lawyer who provides constructive support and expert advice on all aspects of relationship breakdown. In addition, Moira also has particular expertise in dealing with complex and/or high net worth financial matters.

Lisa Miller joins the firm as a solicitor. Lisa undertook her training contract at a firm in Bristol and qualified in April 2018. Lisa specialises in divorce, financial settlements and children matters, as well as non-molestation matters.

Both Moira and Lisa also provide advice on cohabitation agreements and pre and post nuptial agreements. Moira and Lisa are both members of Resolution, the national organisation for family lawyers.

Accompanying them into the Family Department is Holley Fitzpatrick who joins as their Legal Assistant. Holley has an in-depth knowledge of the workings of a Family department and will be the primary contact for both existing clients and

new enquiries. Holley is a dedicated and meticulous legal assistant with excellent administrative skills.

"This is the first time we have brought in a team that has previously worked together, and we are excited to welcome them to Every's," said James Griffin, Managing Partner. "With the current pandemic, we have seen a surge in enquiries for our Family legal services and we have used this time to focus on our clients' needs.

"These appointments will strengthen the team in numbers and will allow us to increase our capacity to provide the service our clients require, particularly in these times. Moira and Lisa are first-class lawyers who are friendly and approachable, and Holley is a very experienced and highly regarded legal assistant with a sunny disposition. We are delighted they have joined our team."

More information is available by telephoning 0800 8840 640.

Jual Branded Clothing adapts to COVID-19 challenges

As the UK went into lockdown in March many small businesses were forced to close-up shop. The owner of Somerset-based Jual Branded Clothing, Alison Brown, was one of the few who was able to quickly adapt from the kitchen table.

"We'd always supplied PPE," said Alison, "but previously it was for specific needs such as face masks for protection from asbestos. The main focus of our business is designing and supplying branded clothing, school uniforms, workwear etc. So, we had to adapt and fast in order to survive."

Alison, who normally employs 13 staff at the factory in North Newton, near Bridgwater, sat down to make a plan with daughter and Head of Marketing and Design, Olivia. The pair identified which products were going to be scarce and then set about finding the right suppliers.

They came across details for Colwith Farm Distillery in Cornwall, one of the South West's only



plough-to-bottle facilities, which had just announced plans to switch from producing award-winning gin and vodka to WHO grade sanitiser. A phone call later and they knew they'd found the ideal partner.



Distillery owner Steve Dustow had initially decided to give away his waste alcohol in response to the hand sanitiser shortage. Stocks were depleted in just 24 hours, with supplies going to frontline staff and those supporting the elderly and most at risk. Ensuing talks with HMRC saw the team fast-track approval to produce and distribute duty exempt alcohol for hand sanitiser throughout the Coronavirus pandemic.

The distillery team quickly found themselves using twice as much alcohol to produce the 80% hand sanitiser than would normally be used in the production of vodka and gin. From the start of the pandemic to the end of April they produced around 20,000 litres of hand sanitiser.

The partnership has led to Jual being able to supply face masks, gloves and hand sanitiser to customers including Western Power Distribution and Brewers, the UK's largest independent decorator's merchant.

BUSINESS NEWS

Domestic reverse VAT charge for building and construction services - a guide to the changes from HMRC

The introduction of the VAT domestic reverse charge for construction services

In June 2020, HMRC announced a delay to the introduction of the new rules for the VAT domestic reverse charge for building and construction services. The new rules will instead come into effect on 1 March 2021. This is to help construction businesses overcome the effects that COVID-19 has had on them and to allow for more time to prepare. This could affect you and the way you need to account for VAT. The new rules apply to VAT registered businesses supplying certain services in the construction sector and they will change the way VAT is accounted for in specific circumstances. A list of services affected by the domestic reverse charge can be found within the guidance, available online at GOV.UK.

Who does it apply to?

The reverse charge applies to standard and reduced rated supplies of construction services made to VAT registered businesses, who in turn also make onward supplies of those services. These are supplies which also need to be reported under the Construction Industry Scheme (CIS). The reverse charge does not apply to supplies made to an end user of construction services. Intermediary suppliers can call themselves end users. Supplies made to end users and intermediary suppliers can be subject to the normal VAT accounting rules, but they must provide written notification of this to their supplier. End users are businesses that are VAT and CIS registered that do not make supplies of construction services themselves. Intermediary suppliers only make supplies of construction services to associated end user businesses, or end users who share an interest in the land subject the works.

How it works

Under the new reverse charge rules, the contractor accounts for and pays the VAT to HMRC. The subcontractor who supplies the service issues an invoice to the contractor



HM Revenue
& Customs



which clearly states that the VAT is due under the reverse charge. The sub-contractor receives the net payment from the contractor, without the VAT. The contractor will pay the VAT to HMRC and can recover the VAT, subject to the normal rules for VAT recovery.

What do I need to do?

Sub-contractors need to contact their contractors to check they are VAT and CIS registered and not an end user or intermediary supplier. Evidence of these checks should be kept for inspection by HMRC. Contractors need to be able to identify whether the reverse charge will apply to the construction services they purchase in order to correctly inform sub-contractors that the reverse charge applies, or that they are end users or intermediary suppliers. Affected businesses need to make sure that their accounting systems and software are updated and can deal with the reverse charge. Staff with responsibility for VAT accounting need to understand the reverse charge and how to operate it.

Other issues

As with any major accounting changes, businesses also need to consider how the changes will affect cash flow. Affected businesses will find that the new way of accounting for VAT will reduce the amount of cash flowing into the business as they no longer have to account for VAT. Some businesses may still incur VAT on their purchases whilst no longer collecting VAT on their sales. This may result in a business being owed a repayment of VAT when the VAT return is filed. If you are likely to receive VAT repayments, you can apply to move from quarterly to monthly returns to accelerate payments due from HMRC. Applications for monthly VAT returns can be made via the VAT online portal.

Further support

You may wish to speak to your agent or accountant about the new rules. HMRC guidance on the new rules is available online. The HMRC VAT Helpline is also available. In the coming months, a series of webinars concerning the reverse charge will be taking place. Check online at GOV.UK for availability.



Government publishes new Border Operating Model

The Government has published a Border Operating Model, which provides clarity about how the border with the EU will work after the transition period ends on 31 December 2020. The model includes the actions that traders and hauliers need to take in preparation for the end of the transition period. These include applying for a GB Economic Operator Registration and Identification (EORI) number, preparing to pay or account for VAT on imported goods and using a customs intermediary.

Read more about the model at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-government-publishes-new-border-operating-model>

£10m for small businesses to kickstart tourism

A new £10 million Kickstarting Tourism Package has been announced by the Government. The package will provide grants of up to £5,000 to small businesses in areas of England that rely heavily on tourism. The grants will help businesses adapt to a different way of working following the Coronavirus pandemic. They will be provided by Local Growth Hubs.

Read more about the package at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-announces-10-million-for-small-businesses-to-kickstart-tourism>

Guidance on collecting personal data for contact tracing

The Information Commissioner's Office has published guidance about collecting customers' and visitors' personal details as part of contact tracing schemes in the UK. The guidance sets out five steps that organisations in England should take when deciding what customer data to collect and how to manage and store it safely.

Read more about the guidance at:

<https://ico.org.uk/global/data-protection-and-coronavirus-information-hub/contact-tracing-protecting-customer-and-visitor-details/>

Review of support for exports

The Department for International Trade (DIT) and UK Export Finance have made good progress developing a strategy to support UK exporters but face significant challenges over the long term. This is according to a report by the National Audit Office, which recommends that the DIT needs to do more to assess the impact of some of the longer-term support it provides. It also recommends that any new export strategy should ensure that the UK is ready to exploit emerging opportunities overseas. For example, this could include an analysis of sector-based opportunities for exporters.

Read more about the report at:

<https://www.nao.org.uk/press-release/department-for-international-trade-and-uk-export-finance-support-for-exports/>

HMRC invites hospitality industry to register for Eat Out to Help Out

Restaurants and other establishments serving food for on-premises consumption can now sign up to the Eat Out to Help Out scheme which is aimed at protecting jobs in the hospitality industry and encouraging people to safely return to dining out.

To read more, go to:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/hmrc-invites-hospitality-industry-to-register-for-eat-out-to-help-out>

HSE publishes COVID-secure guidance

The five steps that all businesses should take to become COVID-secure have been published by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE). The steps include carrying out a risk assessment, allowing people to work from home and managing social distancing. The HSE has also confirmed that inspectors will be carrying out spot checks to ensure businesses are complying with health and safety law.

Read more about the steps at:

<https://press.hse.gov.uk/2020/07/02/hse-urges-businesses-to-become-covid-secure>

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