

Somerset Voice

The Official
Magazine of
Somerset
Chamber of
Commerce

February / March 2022

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Front page: A stunning photo of sunset over The Grand Pier at Weston-super-Mare taken by Dave Crew, of Weston College. The town will be hosting the final of the Somerset Business Awards 2022 on March 11!

Disclaimer

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FIRST WORD

Welcome to my first First Word since I joined Somerset Chamber as Executive Director at the end of last year! It's been a busy first month or so and you can find out more about me and my aims for the future in the Chamber news pages on 14-15.

It's also been a challenging time for local businesses as the impact of the new Omicron restrictions took their toll in the run-up to Christmas. There does seem to be light at the end of the tunnel, though, as cases are dropping and the Government has now reduced the COVID isolation time to five days.

This should help to ease some of the staffing pressures businesses are facing, although job vacancy rates remain at an all-time high.

But I'm delighted to say the Chamber has been doing its bit to help firms fill those workplace gaps through the Kickstart Scheme - in turn, securing more than £1.5 million in Government funding for local businesses. There is more about this in the Chamber news section.

Elsewhere in this edition of Somerset Voice, we find out what our members are doing to keep their workers both mentally and physically fit in our health and wellbeing feature on pages 6-10 and we take a closer look at business consultancies in our sector focus on pages 16-21.

There's a round-up from our Business Partners on pages 11-12 and the full shortlist from the Somerset Business Awards 2022 can be found on page 13. The SBA 2022 final will soon be upon us on March 11 so keep an eye on our social media to find out who has made it through and how you can buy tickets for the big gala evening.

There's also a look back at the major construction milestones at Hinkley Point C on pages 28-29 and you can catch-up with our members' latest news on pages 30-37.

I hope you enjoy this edition of the magazine and I look forward to meeting many of you at our forthcoming events in the coming months.

Emma Rawlings

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

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FEATURE Health and wellbeing

Employers have a duty of care for all their employees but supporting employee health is much more than setting up safety nets or running reactive support programmes. To keep workforces in good shape, employers need to offer a wide range of services – from physical activities to promoting good health and offering dedicated training and support. Somerset Chamber's members already know the benefits of a healthy and happy workforce and here they share some of their initiatives and ideas to boost productivity and retain staff.

Arc

At Arc, we are always looking for gaps in the local service provision for our homeless community, or inequalities that may be faced due to a homeless persons' circumstances. With our innovative approach, we strive to find solutions to ensure anyone who faces homelessness is treated fairly and can access the support needed.

One area we have been heavily focussing in recent years is health. Sadly, many homeless people face inequalities and barriers when attempting to access healthcare, often making their circumstances worse and more difficult to recover from. The

significant waiting times for certain specialised healthcare also means that accessing support at the crucial time for our clients can be very challenging.

During 2020, we were able to renovate an area at our hostel to be used as a clinical space and were delighted to launch this as our in-house GP Surgery in October 2020. Among other successes, it served as a base for all Arc staff and hostel residents to have their three COVID vaccines. Having seen the incredible impact this has had on our client group, we are excited to now be extending this service to offer a 'wellbeing hub', named The Reach Centre.

The Reach Centre will be home to local health and wellbeing services,



enabling the homeless community to easily access support. This will be anything from free counselling sessions to sexual health care, to financial advice. A one stop shop! We look forward to officially launching our centre in February.

Lendology

According to the National Centre for Healthy Housing, a healthy home is housing that is designed, constructed and maintained, in a manner that is conducive to good occupant health.

Improving the condition of private sector housing will not only benefit the housing stock but provide significant improvements in



independence, health and wellbeing that people experience when they live in a home designed to meet their needs.

The cost of making these critical works can often be costly, unexpected and challenging as many of us don't have the ready finance.

For homeowners looking to fund these home improvements, local social enterprise lender, Lendology, may be able to help. We work in partnership with councils across the South West to provide affordable loans to homeowners across the district.

From replacement heating to whole new roofs, to damp remedy and structural repairs, through to updating



kitchens and bathrooms or outdated electrical wiring or plumbing, the eligible works are varied.

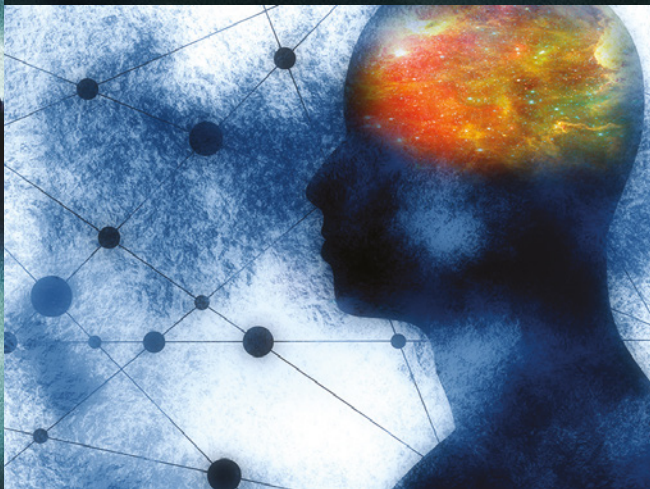
A client who recently benefited from the home improvement loan scheme said: "Lendology made the cost of replacing my boiler affordable. Without them, I would be stuck in winter without any heating or hot water."

For more information about the loan scheme, contact Lendology CIC direct on 01823 461099 or visit www.lendology.org.uk.

HR Go Recruitment

Making sure that employee mental health and wellbeing is firmly on your radar isn't just the ethical thing to do. It also makes sense from a business perspective because employee happiness results in up to 65% lower turnover. And that's not all; productivity also increases 12% according to a Warwick University study.

It's especially important in the current climate when more employees are now struggling with anxieties and loneliness



brought on by prolonged remote working. That's why we regularly blog about this issue – to help both our clients and candidates.



At HR GO Recruitment, we're certain that focusing on mental health can also help boost your employer brand. Conversations with candidates we recruit for their next roles have shown that many appreciate employers who look out for their mental health and wellbeing.

So, keep talking to everyone on your team about how they're feeling - and consider whether it's time to revisit the steps your organisation is taking to support the health and wellbeing of your workforce. This is especially crucial nearly 2 years on from the beginning of this pandemic, when wellbeing is challenged more than ever.

If your team knows that they're not only valued for their work - but their wellbeing counts, too - your business stands a stronger chance of making it through tough times.

Find more on how organisations can help support staff from Mind, the mental health charity.

Helen Lacey, Executive and Principal Consultant - South West, 07725 028113.

SOH Vanilla

In 20/21, 1.7 million working people suffered from a work-related physical and/or mental illness with about 600,000 of those being caused or made worse by the effects of the pandemic.

In these unprecedented times, businesses have needed to be adaptable to the ever-changing situation to not just survive but look after themselves and their staff. We took this time to think about how we can continue to make our customers' lives easier – and that's when it hit. If our customers can't make it us, then we will go to them. As a result, we have invested over £50k on a mobile medical centre that is equipped with the proper equipment to roll out to locations across the South West.

In addition, to being the only Somerset-based occupational health provider that can offer safety-critical medicals on-site, we also have increased our focus on catering to health surveillance and sickness absence.

Our regular health surveillance services are beneficial to employees with increased risk of

medical issues such as exposure to noise, vibration, dust and fumes. Likewise, our sickness absence consultations and have been paramount in providing solutions for workplaces that have wanted to make necessary adjustments for their staff.

This has not only has shown to increase attendance but helped in facilitating employees to feel safe when returning to work. When an employee is off or underperforming due to a medical condition, our team of physicians will be there to carry out management referrals to help employers and their employees. We strive to help employers keeps their employees fit, well and working.



Battens

Discussing mental health issues or symptoms of the menopause with work colleagues would once have been unthinkable as they were regarded as strictly taboo. Recent media campaigns have changed all that and staff at Battens solicitors have been given the opportunity to learn more about these two important issues.

As Battens' HR Manager Cath Knapman explains: "The pandemic had exacerbated mental health issues for many people and the company felt the stigma should be taken away from this subject.

"Our staff undertook a Mental Health First Aid course to raise awareness and we now have 16 mental health champions at Battens who can recognise symptoms in colleagues who may suffer from stress or other issues. They do not provide counselling but act as a signpost as

to where to get help. Our staff found this very beneficial, and we aim to do more courses."

Battens like many companies has a predominantly female workforce and although great strides have been made in terms of flexible working, it was keen to inform staff about the menopause and the implications it can have for the workplace.

Battens' staff of all ages and sexes have been given two presentations on the menopause which Cath Knapman says has been invaluable: "Many women employees do not necessarily feel comfortable phoning in sick and citing menopause symptoms as a reason for absence, so staff now have a better understanding about how the menopause affects women at home and at work."



Nuffield Health

While it's true one in four of us will experience a mental health issue in our lives, everyone has emotional wellbeing needs that change day to day, week to week and year to year. At work, the responsibility to have open conversations about mental health lives with everyone but disclosing personal struggles can be daunting. For employees, speaking to an employer can bring a lot of relief to anyone suffering and help them get the support they need. Don't suffer in silence.

Before you talk to anyone, it's a good idea to really understand where you are with your mental health and how it's affecting you personally and professionally. Your GP or cognitive behavioural therapist can help identify what's really going on. Knowing this information will also enable you to confidently explain how you're feeling to your employer and why you think your condition has been exacerbated.

There are no set rules for who to speak to about your mental health at work, it all depends on the relationships you have. If



you're not close to your boss, it might be better to speak to an HR representative first. They're also likely to have had formal training or previous experience to assist with sensitive issues. If you work for a small business with no HR department, it's best to speak to a senior person you feel knows you best or who has the authority to take positive action quickly.

Somerset Skills and Learning (SS&L)

Encouraging and supporting the wellbeing of our employees is vitally important to us at SS&L. We want our staff to flourish and reach their potential in both their work and personal life.

With 83% of our workforce being women, we've initiated menopause awareness workshops for all staff, aiming to support women, the men in their lives and their colleagues. We promote open conversations about the symptoms and effects

of the menopause and how they can best be managed within the workplace and at home.

As well as the menopause, our staff may be struggling with other issues, such as financial or personal difficulties. Support is offered to all that need it.

Our aim is to continue to embed wellbeing priorities across the organisation - so they continue to be part of our culture, leadership and people management.

SS&L's focus on health and wellbeing in the community extends outside of the organisation, with our Health & Wellbeing courses and workshops also accessible to local



businesses and residents. The range of courses, which are mostly free, covers both mental and physical health. Courses include mental health awareness, menopause, resilience, fitness, nutrition, beauty, arts & crafts, wellness in the outdoors and much more.

To find out more on the health and wellbeing courses on offer visit our website www.sslcourses.co.uk

Somerset Activity and Sport Partnership (SASP)

Get Outside in Somerset is here to help you get outdoors and move more in ways that suit you this winter. We all need to kick start some healthy habits from time to time and moving more doesn't always mean diving headfirst into challenging and extreme activities!

There are so many ways you can take advantage of the benefits of nature, from spending time with family

Explore the outdoors

#GetOutsideinSomerset
www.getoutsideinsomerset.co.uk

and having fun with friends, to enjoying the fresh air, scenery and embracing the weather.

Find the time to venture outside and you will reap the health benefits of the outdoors. Not only is it free, but there are many magnificent green and open spaces to exercise in and for people to enjoy, to alleviate stress and aid relaxation.

So, if you would like to explore things to do near you, check out the #GetOutsideinSomerset website for inspiration, activities, challenges (and more!) www.getoutsideinsomerset.co.uk. Don't forget to sign up to the newsletter for the latest directly in your inbox and follow us on all social media channels too.

Tomorrow try replacing indoor screen time with a lunchtime bike ride or a walk to a local park or try gardening as a new hobby.

The Get Outside in Somerset project is a joint initiative from Somerset Activity and Sport Partnership (SASP), The Community Council for Somerset (CCS), Spark Somerset, and Somerset Wildlife Trust, funded by Somerset County Council Public Health, to inform, enable and empower more people to get outside more often and move more.



New Leaf Life Design

While the virtual world maintains the physical distance among colleagues, the past year has witnessed a greater demand for narrowing the emotional gaps in understanding and experience at the workplace

Here at New Leaf Life Design, we have built wellbeing into our core values creating a "Next Stage" organisational model, promoting wholeness and growth at work. All contractors can attend our mental health first aid training, we encourage social wellbeing, involvement in local volunteering opportunities and emotional

support as and when needed.

We are part of the B Corporation journey which means we're not just focused on profit-making, but we also prioritise the wellbeing of our people, the communities we touch and the environment across all our work.

For other businesses we provide emotional support through our employee counselling service <https://www.newleaf.uk.com/services/employee-counselling/> and pop-up staff wellbeing clinics <https://www.newleaf.uk.com/services/pop-up-wellbeing/> these can be held via zoom or in house where possible. We offer a monthly wellbeing meaning and business group to support business owners.

In addition to the emotional support,



we offer a range of training courses. These range from the two-day mental health first aid training where we have trained 349 people from local businesses and organisations.

We also offer a half day mental health awareness course where 239 employees have attended and a specific training day for line managers and SME owners. Later this month we will be launching a new free service for SMEs in Somerset funded by Somerset County Council.

www.newleaf.uk.com

Somerset Passenger Solutions

As the transport provider for the largest construction project in Europe, working 24 hours a day, seven days a week and managing 8500 passengers, our roles can be a challenge! The health and wellbeing of our team is therefore paramount. We work hard to promote a culture of good health and wellbeing in all kinds of ways including:

- Having a health and wellbeing committee who meet regularly to offer a programme of events and activities to encourage a positive sense of wellbeing
- Having a team of mental health first aiders who are available to support colleagues and discuss any issues openly and confidentially without stigma
- Having our own Chaplain to offer confidential and non-judgemental pastoral and spiritual support to all colleagues
- Providing all colleagues with access to a free confidential helpline and offering face-to-face counselling

- Creating a positive working environment

- Carrying out an annual health and wellbeing survey to see what we need to improve on and take the appropriate actions

- Supporting flexible working and a good work-life balance

- Providing access to on-site 24/7 occupational health

- Providing annual health checks with a GP for all our operations team

- Recognising and rewarding our colleagues for their hard work through our Star of the Month scheme.

Our health, wellbeing and pastoral care strategy is all about putting our people first and creating a community where colleagues bond around shared values, feel valued and have a voice. We do all this because when we feel our best, we can work safely and perform at our best.



Teapot Creative

At Teapot Creative, we pride ourselves on being a company that 'creates change' and we don't limit this to our clients' work alone. We aim to create a positive change in our employees' health and wellbeing which we put at the forefront of our work ethic. Here are just a few of the ways we do this:

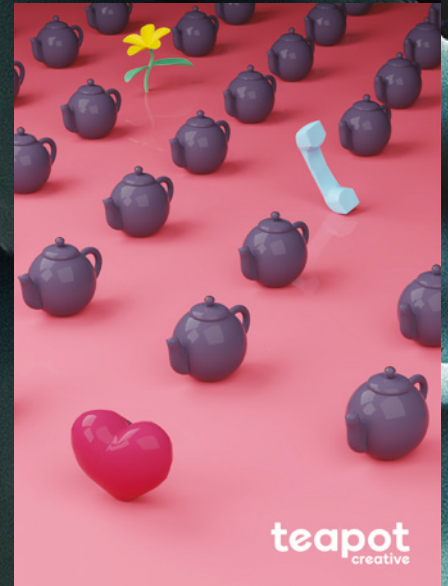
Traditional bonuses are a thing of the past with new 'Teapot Points' providing us with the opportunity to choose our own bonus perks! It could be an extra day's holiday, a pension boost, or a case of wine; Teapot employees can create their very own pick n mix of what benefits they would like to receive.

Benefitting from a team mentality,

we like to take the odd break from work and do something fun and active together. Be it playing football, going for group walks in the countryside at lunch, or taking an hour out on Mondays to learn something new such as mindfulness or playing a game of pictionary to keep our creative minds sharp. We put a focus on preventing burnout and building team dynamics through activities that benefit our minds and bodies.

Providing the mental health support we might need, be it work based or personal, we provide our staff with a 24-hour counselling hotline through a company called Holate. It's 100% anonymous and Teapot picks up the tab.

And, of course, the adorable office dog Moss, is always ready to lend a



helping 'paw' and bring a smile to our faces!

BUSINESS PARTNER NEWS

Weston College forms partnership to open new Weston Employment Centre

The Weston College Group and Seetec Pluss have formed a strategic partnership to create a new employment centre in Weston-super-Mare. The centre will help individuals looking for employment support and training with the shared goal of assisting adults into jobs with local employers.

The Weston Employment Centre, based opposite the college's Knightstone Campus in central Weston, will enable a collaborative approach to support individuals accessing help from Seetec Pluss through its employment support services, and where appropriate then accessing Weston College education and skills programmes to aid a positive employment progression.

Principal Dr Paul Phillips, said: "Seetec Pluss is a leading provider of work and wellbeing services that inspires thousands of people to find and progress in work each year, this is a perfect partner for us in our mission to create brighter futures for our community. If you've found yourself out of work, Seetec Pluss, with Weston College, can help boost your confidence, skills and get you back into work."

Stewart Holdsworth, Strategic Partnerships Director, from Seetec Pluss said: "With many people being affected by the pandemic, Seetec Pluss is excited to be working in partnership with Weston College to offer employment support to those seeking a new job or career. Weston College are a key partner for Seetec, a responsive training provider with excellent training facilities. Together we look forward to ensuring many people across the region receive employability training and support, transitioning into careers with local employers."



There will be a series of one-two-week short courses which are free and have been designed to help unemployed people retrain or upskill to start a career within a new industry. The centre will also offer individual coaching and mentoring plus one-to-one employment support advice sessions. Also employers can utilise this partnership to help fill job vacancies and address skills gaps.

The Weston Employment Centre can be found opposite Weston College's Knightstone Campus on Lower Church Road. The centre will be open during office hours, Monday to Friday throughout the calendar year. The centre is encouraging people to drop in to ask questions, or to view the support and training offer visit: www.weston.ac.uk/seetec or call 0800 334 5525

WPA wins UK Best Healthcare Provider 2021

WPA has just been recognised as the Best Healthcare Provider at the national Corporate Adviser Awards, bringing the total number of awards won in 2021 to five. They include Best Customer Service Delivery, Best Cash Plan Provider for the third year in a row, Best Health Insurance Provider for the second consecutive year and Somerset's Employer of the Year.

Nathan Irwin, WPA's Chief Executive, said: "The awards we have received this year underline our reputation and are testament to the calibre and dedication of our team in Taunton.

"We have remained focussed on customer service throughout the challenges of the pandemic and, as a result, customer numbers are increasing. We continue to recruit talented people to join a team committed to treating our customers as we would wish to be treated ourselves."

Pictured receiving the award from awards host Rob Beckett are WPA Corporate Adviser reporter, Muna Abdi and Business Development Manager, Kathryn Vellacott.



Truespeed increases its investment from Aviva Investors to £175 million to accelerate delivery of full fibre broadband

Truespeed has secured a second tranche of funding from Aviva Investors, the global asset management business of Aviva PLC. The £100 million investment will help Truespeed accelerate the roll-out of its ultrafast, gigabit-capable full fibre network to more homes and businesses across urban, semi-rural and ultra-rural areas of South West England. It follows an initial £75 million investment made by Aviva Investors in 2017.

A full fibre infrastructure provider and ISP, Truespeed's mission is to provide ultrafast, ultra-reliable broadband to the South West of England, helping to level up the digital capabilities of the region and acting as a catalyst for local businesses and communities struggling with substandard broadband.

In the past year, Truespeed has doubled the size of its network to



bring gigabit-capable, fibre-optic connectivity to under-served areas of Somerset. As well as expanding its footprint in hard-to-reach rural areas, the firm has extended its build to the heritage cities of Bath and Wells. And in December 2021 the firm announced the start of its network build in Glastonbury, Shepton Mallet and Street.

High profile local businesses including Yeo Valley and Thatchers Cider rely on Truespeed for full fibre services. The firm's core ethos extends to providing free broadband to local primary schools and community hubs passed by its network.

Sean McLachlan, Senior Director,

Infrastructure, at Aviva Investors, said: "This second tranche of funding reflects our belief that the company and its activities not only represent a sound investment, but also create significant social benefits for local communities across the country."

James Lowther, Truespeed CEO, added: "This will allow us to significantly accelerate our roll-out, enabling us to connect more customers to our ultrafast, ultra-reliable full fibre service. Credit to my predecessor Evan Wienburg and the great team here at Truespeed for the hard work undertaken to get us to this point.

"We are now an established and fast-growing employer in the region with a reputation for excellent staff training and personal development. It is a privilege to lead the business as we embark on our next phase of growth."

Clarke Willmott encourages landlords to embrace green leases

Commercial landlords and their tenants should be embracing so-called 'green leases' now ahead of the introduction of proposed new energy regulations, according to property lawyer Laurence Lacey from national law firm Clarke Willmott LLP.

He says the measures – outlined in a Government White Paper aimed at encouraging landlord and tenants to

reduce their environmental impact – will prevent a landlord from letting out a commercial building if its Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) is below an E rating.

"The time has come for both sides to adopt green leases to create better and more sustainable buildings for the benefit of their respective businesses and the employees who occupy them," said Laurence, a partner and commercial property specialist.

"While we are still some way from the inclusion of green lease provisions in all leases, the environmental and sustainability agenda is having an impact in terms of creating a drive to create better and more sustainable buildings for the future.

"This trend will increase as time goes on, so understanding these provisions is important and may ultimately avoid buildings becoming obsolete in the future."

Green leases are set to become far more common due to the measures outlined in the White Paper with the

intention that rented non-domestic buildings will need an EPC B rating by 2030, with a planned steppingstone of a C rating by 2027.

In August 2021 analysis by commercial property firm Colliers found 57 per cent of central London offices have D to G energy ratings, with only 20 per cent with an EPC rating of A or B.

"If this was replicated across the UK it would indicate that large scale work will be required to meet the new Government objectives," added Laurence.

"Landlords may find themselves without an alternative if they are to comply with Minimum Energy Standards Regulation and need to work out when to carry out the works to minimise the time the property is vacant.

"However, on the positive side, a more energy-efficient building may be more appealing and be part of both landlords and tenants' corporate social responsibility or net zero strategy, delivering added value benefits."



Shortlist announced for Somerset Business Awards 2022

The shortlist was announced for the Somerset Business Awards 2022 at the end of December, with companies, charities and individuals from across the county vying for the honours.

Judges faced a tough time whittling down the huge number of entries for the 2022 awards, which are run annually by Somerset Chamber of Commerce.

The 2022 shortlisted nominees come from all corners of the county, including Bridgwater, Taunton, Wellington, Weston-super-Mare, Cheddar, Shepton Mallet, Yeovil, North Petherton, Westonzoyland, Bradford-on-Tone, Sparkford, Midsomer Norton, Nailsea, Roadwater, Highbridge, Merriott, Glastonbury, Wiveliscombe, Mark, Brean, Compton Martin, Norton St Philip, Ilminster, Henstridge and Langport.

The finalists were being chosen as Somerset Voice went to print – look out for a full list of the winners and runners-up, plus photos from the grand final at Weston-super-Mare's Winter Gardens Pavilion, in the next edition!



This year is the 17th anniversary of the awards – kindly sponsored by Albert Goodman - and the grand final will be hosted by BBC

Somerset presenter and journalist Claire Carter on March 11, 2022.

Somerset Chamber Executive Director, Emma Rawlings, thanked everyone who had entered the awards and said the most hotly contested categories had included Medium Business of the Year, Service Excellence and Environmental Achievement.

She said: "It was great to see so many entries from both Chamber members and non-members from all corners of the county and representing a wide range of sectors and industries.

"These awards are the largest in Somerset and are a fantastic opportunity to celebrate all that is great about our diverse business community and I'm looking forward to the grand final in March."

The 2022 shortlisted nominees are:

Albert Goodman Family Business of the Year (sponsored by Albert Goodman):

Alpha Housing Services Limited, Taunton
J&K Aquatics, Bridgwater
Musgrove Willows, Westonzoyland
Protek Products, Shepton Mallet
Walker and Ling, Weston-super-Mare

Small Business of the Year (sponsored by Enterprise South West):

Introtweet Ltd, Taunton
AIP Welding Supplies Ltd, Bridgwater
Long Hazel Park, Sparkford
Reflex Medical Limited, Shepton Mallet

Medium Business of the Year (sponsored by Brook Financial):

Haven Timber Holdings Ltd, Norton St Philip
Hippykick Ltd, Bridgwater
Lendology CIC, Bradford-on-Tone
Race At Your Pace Ltd, Taunton
Transformations, Ilminster

Large Business of the Year (sponsored by PKF Francis Clark):

Bradfords Building Supplies, Yeovil
Civils Store Ltd, Shepton Mallet
Regency Purchasing Group, Weston-super-Mare
Sansum Solutions Group Limited, Cheddar
Somerset Larder, North Petherton
Ten Three Cleaning Ltd, Yeovil

Best Use of Technology (sponsored by Porter Dodson):

Berry & Escott Ltd, Bridgwater
Double Brace, Bridgwater
Race At Your Pace Ltd, Taunton
Rotec Hydraulics Ltd, Taunton
Talick Group Ltd, Glastonbury

Charity of the Year (sponsored by Clarke Willmott):

Age UK Somerset, Taunton
bibic, Langport
Dorset and Somerset Air Ambulance, Wellington
St Margaret's Hospice Care, Taunton
The Community Council for Somerset, Taunton

Employer of the Year (sponsored by Elite Staffing Solutions):

Alpha Housing Services Limited, Taunton
Poolbridge Accountancy Limited, Highbridge
Singer Instruments, Roadwater
Somerset Larder, North Petherton
WPA, Taunton

Investing in Somerset (sponsored by Hinkley Point C):

Bridges Electrical Engineers Ltd, Midsomer Norton
Cake Box Bakery, Yeovil
MMES 2012 Ltd, Bridgwater
Turnbull Infrastructure and Utilities, Nailsea

Start-up of the Year (sponsored by Teapot Creative):

Coffee Blue Somerset West and Taunton Ltd, Taunton
Emily Thompson Social media Coach (formerly Socially Styled), Ilchester
Otterhead House, Taunton
Owley Woods Glamping, Cheddar
South West Removals Ltd, Chard
The Birch Dementia Centre Ltd, Weston-super-Mare

Employee of the Year (sponsored by Weston College):

Ryan Werner, AIP Welding Supplies Ltd, Bridgwater
Rebekah Blake, The Willow Set
Preschool, Taunton

Environmental Achievement (sponsored by Gravity):

Holiday Resort Unity (Brean), Brean
Kinetic Kitchen, Ubley near Compton Martin
Long Hazel Park, Sparkford
New Leaf Life Design, Bridgwater
Somerslap Forest Products Ltd, Mark
Somerset Larder, North Petherton
Talick Group Ltd, Glastonbury
Towens Group Ltd, Weston-super-Mare
Green Goblet Ltd, Highbridge

Service Excellence (sponsored by CETSAT):

Alpha Housing Services Limited, Taunton
Container Team Ltd, Weston-super-Mare
House Fox Estate Agents, Weston-super-Mare
Jays Logistics (South West) Ltd, Highbridge
New Leaf Life Design, Bridgwater
The Levels Financial Ltd, Langport

Somerset Manufacturer and Producer Award (sponsored by Garador):

E-FS Ltd, Highbridge
EPS Services and Tooling Ltd, Wiveliscombe
Greenbest Ltd, Henstridge
Rotec Hydraulics Ltd, Taunton
Somerslap Forest Products Ltd, Mark

Rebuild and Thrive (sponsored by Barclays):

ARK at Egwood CIC, Merriott
Introtweet Ltd, Taunton
Lendology CIC, Bradford-on-Tone
Long Hazel Park, Sparkford
Regency Purchasing Group, Weston-super-Mare
Sansum Solutions Group Limited, Cheddar

CHAMBER NEWS

Meet Somerset Chamber's new Executive Director, Emma Rawlings

I joined the Chamber at the beginning of December 2021. Previous to this I was CEO for a charity based in Swindon, offering services to victims of domestic abuse. I was also the Director of a spiritual retreat just outside Bath, with conference rooms, accommodation of 42 bedrooms, full catering facilities and a comprehensive programme of courses for all.

I was also in the Further Education Sector as Head of Student Services for Strode College, where we gained

Outstanding from Ofsted. At Weston College I was also Head of Student Services, across all three campuses. My other skills are in retail, as Store Manager for Safeway and opening new stores across the region.

I have a strategic and visionary role at the Chamber, ensuring we are positioned and equipped to be at the forefront of business support across Somerset, through the many services we provide. I want us to be the driving force for bringing innovation and boosting the economy in Somerset.

Central to this will be enriching and growing the many services the Chamber already offers to businesses to ensure we can continue to meet all our members' needs, both now and in the future.

I want Somerset to become the place to do business, start a business and run a business – we have so much to offer in this county and, through the Chamber network, I will continue to lobby to ensure our members have the services and infrastructure they need. From upgrading the A303 to expanding Bristol Airport and ensuring everyone has full-fibre broadband throughout the county.

All these things are vital for our business community and it's only right our members are able to trade on a level playing field with their counterparts in more urban areas. It is also important that organisations work collaboratively across the county, enabling our workforce to have the right skills for now and into the future.

I was born in Somerset and my parents have firm roots in the county so I know the area extremely well. My experience working in different sectors – from further education, retail and charity – also means I have a wide range of experience and skills to help both the Chamber and our members.

In my spare time I am a keen runner and cyclist, which has helped me to intimately know most cycle routes, lanes and villages, plus where most coffee shops are located!

I am looking forward to the challenges my role brings and working with the incredibly talented Chamber team, seeing businesses and people grow and develop. I look forward to meeting many more members at our many events in the coming months.

Emma Rawlings



Chamber launches new website

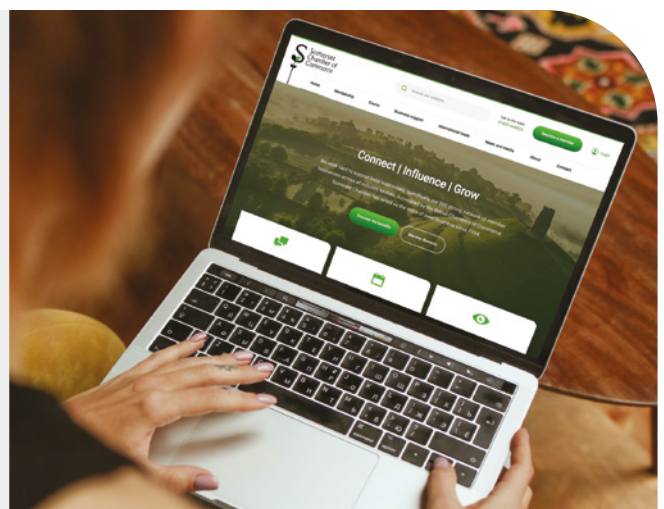
Somerset Chamber has started 2022 with a new-look website to make it even easier for members to find out about events, benefits and the services we offer.

The new website also includes all the latest news from our members, business partners and the chamber network, lets members read the latest Chamber magazines online and book onto upcoming Chamber events.

There is also a useful directory with details of all Chamber members and a photo gallery of past Chamber events.

Alistair Tudor, Somerset Chamber Operations Manager, said: "The website was designed and built by Chamber member Cognique and we think it looks great!

"It's easy to navigate and we hope members will find it easier to find all the information they need about what the Chamber does and how we can help support them and their businesses."



Nigel Reece, Managing Director of Cognique, added: "The Somerset Chamber of Commerce has always been a valuable part of Cognique's growth plans, so working with the team on such a prestigious website project has been a genuine privilege."

Somerset Chamber helps to secure more than £1.5 million in business funding

Somerset Chamber is proud to have helped the county's businesses secure more than £1.5 million in Government funding to support young people into work and help firm's find new talent.

The Chamber has been acting as an official gateway for the Government's Kickstart Scheme and some 300 young people have already been given placements, with 121 business taking part through the Chamber.

Kickstart helps companies cover the cost of employing a 16 to 24-year-old for six months, for 25 hours a week, with no cost to the business. Government pays 100% of the National Minimum Wage for those 25 hours, plus National Insurance contributions. Employers can increase the hours worked each week, but at their own cost.

Employers also receive a £1,500 set-up grant for the placement to cover the cost of training, equipment or even travel.

Emma Rawlings, Executive Director of Somerset Chamber, said: "The figures are absolutely phenomenal and I'm

KICKSTART[®] SCHEME

proud the Chamber has played such a significant part in the success of this scheme in the South West. All credit to the Chamber's Jenn Chidley-Sanders and our own Kickstarter Hayley Nicholson who spearheaded our involvement in the scheme."

Jenn and Hayley were able to meet Employment Minister Mims Davies MP, in Taunton last year, to highlight the work the Chamber has been doing as an official gateway for the Kickstart Scheme.

Ms Davies also met businesses supported through the application process for a Kickstarter by Somerset Chamber, including Braunability, Rexquote, Gardner Creative and The Emporium, Yeovil, as well as several of the Kickstarters themselves.

Jenn, the Chamber's Member Engagement and Policy Manager, said: "When we heard about the Kickstart



Jenn and Hayley are pictured (front, right) with just some of the Somerset businesses helped by Somerset Chamber.

scheme, it seemed the perfect opportunity for businesses to support young people.

"It has not been without its challenges, but, overall, it has been an exceptional scheme to be involved in. We have been able to help 121 businesses and given 300 young starters the opportunity to find work and learn new skills, which has been absolutely wonderful to see."

Somerset Education Business Partnership Awards 2022 – entries open from April 25



It's time to celebrate again! Despite the challenges of the last two years Somerset's businesses, schools and colleges have continued inspiring young people about future opportunities.

We want to recognise these efforts and the real impact they have made on young people's lives, on business growth and the Somerset economy.

So, if your business has a story to tell about its work to develop the next generation, you can share it with us from April 25, by entering the Somerset Education Business Partnership Awards 2022.

Categories include:

Careers Inspiration in Business (1 - 249 employees)

Careers Inspiration in Business (250+ employees)

For businesses that have inspired young people about future opportunities

Careers Inspiration in Education

For schools and colleges with quality careers programmes

Proactive young person

For young people who have taken steps to prepare for their future career

Removing Barriers

For organisations that have helped disadvantaged young people move towards employment

Overcoming Barriers

For disadvantaged young people who have overcome barriers to employment

Best Placement Employer

For employers who have provided high quality work experience

Best Placement Employee

For a young person who has excelled on placement

Continuing through COVID

For an organisation that showed tenacity to continue inspiring despite COVID challenges

Outstanding Personal Contribution

For an individual who has inspired young people consistently over a long period

Visit www.somerset-ebp.co.uk/awards to find out more:

If you would like to sponsor an award category please contact andrew.hanson@somerset-ebp.co.uk



FOCUS

Business consultancy

ABL

Raising finance for business has changed and how do you navigate the complex market ensuring you get a facility that works for you and not just the lender?

At ABL we believe people like speaking to people, especially when it comes to commercial finance there is a lack of awareness for where to go, not only from business owners but their advisors. We provided the knowledge needed so that all involved know the options available to make informed decisions.

The ABL family is made up of a team of individuals that work closely together, to deliver a down-to-earth service - making complex finance simple.

We don't need to use jargon, but we are FCA authorised and always put the customer at the heart of everything we do.



So, if you're looking to purchase your business premises, purchase vehicles or machinery, access cash for growth, buy a business or restructure your current finance, contact us on 01278 263990.

Cornish Mutual

Resilience is a quality crucial to all businesses during periods of change. Recognising the challenges currently seen in agriculture, and as part of the Future Farming Programme, Cornish Mutual spoke to business coach Marcus Child to learn about nurturing resilience.

There are five elements or fibres of resilience to consider:

Physical resilience comes when we're in good physical health, Marcus says: "How robust are we physically? Do we feel healthy?"

The next is mental resilience. "This is the capacity to think clearly under pressure and remain able to solve problems," explains Marcus. "Emotional resilience is about composure and confidence, our ability to manage and regulate our emotional state when under attack."

Social resilience comes from strong relationships: "We feel more robust and assured when we are with others

who we trust, believe in and who have a similar sense of purpose to us."

The final fibre is the game changer - having a sense of cause or purpose: "A major, definite purpose can give you power, discipline, conviction and self-control."

All fibres support each other, concludes Marcus: "Ultimately though, if we're really working on the purpose or spiritual aspect, I think we can achieve all kinds of things."

Within the Future Farming Programme 'Mindset' topic, Cornish Mutual also spoke to an international agribusiness expert about how resilience can help farming businesses withstand external change and an economist who suggested ways for farmers to survive the removal of direct payments.

Read the full articles on our website: <https://www.cornishmutual.co.uk/future-farming-programme/>

Cornish Mutual
Farming Insurance Experts



C2 Safety

As the helpful safety company, C2 Safety takes great care in its dedication to helping individuals and businesses in any way they can. This not only applies to their Somerset headquarters but resonates throughout the UK at their various locations in the north. Even as one of the best-known consultancies, not many people know about what goes on behind the scenes.

We prefer a hands-on approach to their health and safety as we don't just give advice, we are happy to roll up our sleeves and get stuck in! In addition to health and safety, we can provide businesses with other services such as fire safety, human resources, principal design and facilities management to name a few. Additionally, we are proud to be working in partnership with SOH Vanilla to offer occupational health services to our customers as well.

Together, our clients benefit from increased opportunities to free up valuable time so they can focus and grow their business. This gives them peace of mind that they are compliant and are provided pragmatic advice from advisors who are specialists throughout a multitude of industries.

Each customer has a dedicated advisor that knows their business and how they prefer to work in order to provide the best-tailored services. Lastly, our customers are under no contractual obligations because we feel that they should stay with us because they want to – not because they have to. Clearly, we cannot advise you on ways of fashion, but we can with health and safety!



Impact Design & Marketing

In today's world, it's fair to say that most sectors have been impacted in some way by the pandemic. Many are experiencing unprecedented changes to the day-to-day running

of their businesses. Reviewing and aligning all aspects of a business has never been more important to ensure a long-term sustainable future.

To achieve optimum success in all aspects of a company's performance, it is often seen highly beneficial to seek support and direction from an external consultancy who can work closely with your business to guide and assist you in achieving your business objectives.

At Impact, as well as creating our clients' marketing collateral, we regularly work closely with many internal management teams to define and refine their strategic business goals, whilst in parallel conceiving and developing a visionary plan to ensure longer-term performance objectives are met.



To evoke change and to realise your own business objectives, we can call upon our three decades of experience and expertise. It's what we call our Impact Know-How, focusing on what can make the difference, whilst supporting and guiding our clients to achieve the best results.

One thing is for sure, the business world is fast changing, so make sure your business has the strategic support and tools to adapt and thrive. If you would like to discuss your own business requirements, we would be delighted to hear from you. Please contact richard@impactdm.co.uk





THE
FAMILY BUSINESS
PARTNERSHIP

The Family Business Partnership

There are many things family businesses do incredibly well without outside help, creating an entrepreneurial culture, a wise perspective on borrowing, continued reinvestment in the business, a long-term vision of what success means, a business built on the values of you and your family, a deeper sense of purpose, and much more besides.

However, there are some things family businesses find difficult, if not impossible, to do on their own such as talking about passing the business on from the current generation to the next, exploring

what the senior generation might do once they leave the business, the best ways to discuss with the younger generation what their life options are, how, if at all, the family business fits in with these and how best to prevent, or skilfully handle any tensions that may arise.



You may feel as though you are the only family facing these challenges and complexities, but whilst your family is unique, the challenges that you are facing are not.

As a specialist family business consultant, I work with families to help deliver the clarity necessary to harness the power of family ownership and address these challenges, I provide the expertise, frameworks, and support needed for you to thrive in business together.

If you'd like to learn more about the complexities of family business, I am also the host of the widely acclaimed Family Business Podcast (supported by the Institute for Family Business), you can find the show wherever you get your podcasts or at www.fambizpodcast.com

Morledge and Co

Business consultancy isn't immediately something that as business owners or managers we necessarily decide one day that we need, but often it can take a fresh pair of eyes to see things differently. Strategic marketing for businesses and organisations is paramount to success, however, after all, how else can you effectively inform your customers and target audiences about what you offer and how you can help them?

Not all businesses have the skills, experience or internal resources available to devise, and successfully implement, a marketing strategy and plan.

Morledge & Co specialises in supporting businesses in Somerset and the South West can act as your marketing and PR department, and offer the following:

- Marketing strategy
- PR and media relations
- Reputation management and crisis communications
- Content and copywriting
- Digital and social media marketing

Founder, Karen Morledge and her experienced team offer support on a project or ongoing basis, tailoring their services to fit the requirements of individual businesses and organisations' needs.

If you're looking to raise your company profile this year, communicate your offering more effectively and ultimately increase the bottom line of your business, then find out more and arrange a free, no obligation initial meeting with Karen.

Website: www.morledgeandco.com
Email: karen@morledgeandco.com



Direct Asset Finance

Starting up any business can be resource and cash hungry at the best of times. But when James Robinson set up his new specialist haulage business at the start of 2020, he hadn't quite banked on a global pandemic in his first couple of years of operation!

Combine this with quick growth and a business that relies on specialist assets and infrastructure, meant James needed to find the right financing solution to enable him

to free up the working capital to continue to meet the growing demand.

Direct Asset Finance has supported James' Duke Distribution over the last year or so to successfully put in place asset finance arrangements on the purchase of 11 trucks and trailers, enabling James to acquire over £750k of assets, driving the growth in his next generation business.

"It's been quite a couple of years! Without the support of Simon Knowler and his team at Direct Asset Finance, we wouldn't have been able to make the necessary investment quickly enough in our



fleet of specialist vehicles to meet demand," said James.

Founded in Bristol in 2008, Direct Asset Finance is a leading independent asset finance broker. Our goal is simple, we want to make business growth more affordable. With access to a dedicated panel of specialist lenders, we are able to provide a complete range of asset funding options to enable clients to purchase all kinds of new and used assets, including vehicles, machinery and equipment, without having to worry about the upfront cost.

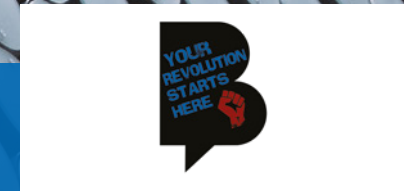
Be Astute

Be Astute are business revolutionaries – we help our clients to grow and do things better. Think people, processes, technology.

Our seamless bespoke mix of training, coaching and consultancy help clients to create success. Unlike the competition we do not have a specific fixed curriculum, nor is our service one size fits all. We love working with ambitious business owners who want to grow significantly, or those people who are so successful they are struggling to cope.

We start by understanding clients' goals, the business vision, and then reverse engineering that to create a sensible plan. This bit is pretty standard, the next step is where we are different. Rather than glib consultancy frameworks or charging a lot of money to do it for you, we work with our clients to help make things happen. By looking at the reasons why things are not happening we can help people to overcome the key barriers to success – lack of skills, knowledge, confidence, resources.

What does this look like in practice? Lots of accountability calls, but



then working with people to help them complete the necessary business tasks. Many coaches will set a target, but not help their clients to physically achieve. Many consultancies do the work for you so you do not develop the skills to do it yourself in future. We teach good practice by working with people to achieve the tasks and not just tell them how. The result? Much quicker progress, to a better standard.

SRD Technology UK

SRD Technology UK enables your business to work smarter by providing enterprise level information and communication technology solutions. We not only offer solutions that include a full suite of reliable and scalable managed services but extends much further with its business consulting to take your company farther than before.

Whether you are experiencing challenges with your current IT or need a tailor-made solution, by looking to outsource your technology requirements to lower capital and operation costs, SRD Technology UK can ensure and help you adapt to today's ever-changing digital world.

SRD Technology UK understand that finding the right solution with several different suppliers is difficult, contradictory and frustrating. We make it easy to move all your



technology requirements to one reliable supplier by minimizing or prevent disruption in your operations.

Our solutions have been selected and designed to ensure a perfect fit for your business now and in the future. Not sure what you need? Contact us to learn and discover what SRD Technology UK can do for you!

C | S | F

Chalk Stream Finance

Chalk Stream Finance

The need for analytical, visible and meaningful financial information has never been greater. Financial intelligence cannot be underestimated or undervalued as it is fundamental for every business decision.

The challenge - every business sector in the UK has faced unprecedented challenges over the last two years. In the face of new trade agreements, regulations, workforce challenges and the emergence of new technologies, the next five years are predicted to create significant disruption for vulnerable, unprepared businesses. Organisations will need to accept that business as usual is not an option, change is inevitable and managing change effectively will be essential.

The partnership - Chalk Stream Finance (CSF) has closed the financial expertise gap, commonly present in SMEs. For the last nine years businesses across all sectors have engaged CSF services to provide professional expert advice and solutions, hands on delivery and project management.

The benefit - sustainable value. CSF works in collaboration with clients to provide individually tailored and cost-conscious project delivery. Our services include but are not limited to:

- Optimising systems functionality to report practical, relevant operational and financial management information.
- Shaping finance controls and providing working capital health checks
- Advising on sustainable performance and growth

- Provision of interim finance leadership
- Project management, accountability and governance
- Forecasts, gap analysis, planning and prospect profitability
- Defining operational and finance roles to improve ownership, management culture and addressing the skill gap
- Process optimization flow, developing KPIs and breakeven points
- Cashflow management, expenditure controls

For further information about our services, please contact neil.goode@chalk-stream.co.uk

Ethical Sales Pro

At Ethical Sales Pro I work with people in business to increase their sales, customer service and leadership skills. My mission is to support and challenge clients to grow in confidence and appreciate their own value. Using ethical principles, I enable clients to create behaviours and actions that are positive for themselves, their stakeholders and cause no harm to others.

I coach and mentor people to bring insight and practical applications based on real world experience of leading

several businesses to national awards for sales and customer service. This is backed by the latest thinking and strategies from the Institute of Leadership and Management.

I focus in five areas to enable businesses to:

- Find and create market opportunities to differentiate themselves and generate enquiries.
- Win customers by giving them a reason to buy, so turning enquiries into business
- Implement customer retention strategies to build loyal customers for repeat business and referrals
- Increase sales volume through consistent sales processes and management.
- Optimise leadership skills and processes to engage staff and find efficiencies

I offer an initial consultation without fee or obligation, to ensure I can add value to your business before you need to commit. So, if you want to find out more over a cup of coffee call me on 07739 939347 or email Stuart@ethicalsalespro.com



Nigel Browne Business Mentoring (T/A UK Business Mentoring)

Is your business and life exactly where you want it to be? For many small business owners, maybe not! As a business mentor, I work with clients to firstly understand very clearly where they want to be, and then accompany them along the journey to get there.

It sounds frivolous, but I do this through putting SPAM in their business!

S = SEE: you must very clearly define the VISION for both you and your business. Without knowing

exactly where you are going, it's hard to get there!

P = PLAN: once you have a clear vision of where you want to be, you can start planning to get there. This means a financial plan, understanding where your revenue will come from, and the costs involved to create this.



Most businesses financially look backwards – what has already happened but can't be changed; more important is to look forwards.

A = ACTION: with a financial plan in place, it will become very clear on what actions you need to take; you can clearly see where your priorities and focus must be.

M = MEASURE: frequently businesses just do not measure the right things. It is not about measuring turnover and profit - measure those things that create the result (number of enquiries, conversion rate, etc.).

I offer all Chamber members a free mentoring session, during which I'll find at least a couple of useful pointers for you. E-mail nigel@ukbusinessmentoring or telephone: 07771 920972.

Smart Quality Services

After the roller-coaster businesses have been on over the last two years, dealing with the combined impact of COVID and Brexit, there's a degree of optimism about the outlook in 2022.

However, inflationary pressures, staff shortages and supply chain challenges prevail and more than ever now companies need to drive for increased efficiency and productivity to stay competitive in their markets.

Sadly, too many business owners spend too much time in the business

rather than on the business. They're still keeping too much information in their heads, largely running manual processes, and working from disparate word documents/excel spreadsheets which are often out of date and not easily accessible to their increasingly remote workforce.

The time comes for every business to recognise that although this worked when they started up, as they grow, they need to systemise what they do – i.e., to put well defined systems and processes in place which can be easily understood and followed by all their employees.

An excellent framework for achieving this systemisation is through the implementation of

smar+
quality services

an ISO 9001 compliant Quality Management System which has been adopted by over one million companies in over 170 countries.

This standard is based on a number of quality management principles including a strong customer focus, the motivation and implication of top management, the process approach and continual improvement.

Smart Quality Services is a specialist management consultancy based in Bristol helping companies to adopt best practice and drive operational efficiencies. <https://www.smartquality.co.uk>



BRITISH CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE

QUARTERLY ECONOMIC SURVEY Q4 2021

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 for Q4 2021 show that the economic recovery stalled in the fourth quarter, with firms facing unprecedented inflationary pressures.

“ Our latest survey suggests that UK's economic recovery slowed in the final quarter of 2021 as mounting headwinds increasingly limited the key indicators of activity. The persistent weakness in cash flow is troubling because it leaves businesses more exposed to the economic impact of Omicron, rising inflation and potential further restrictions.

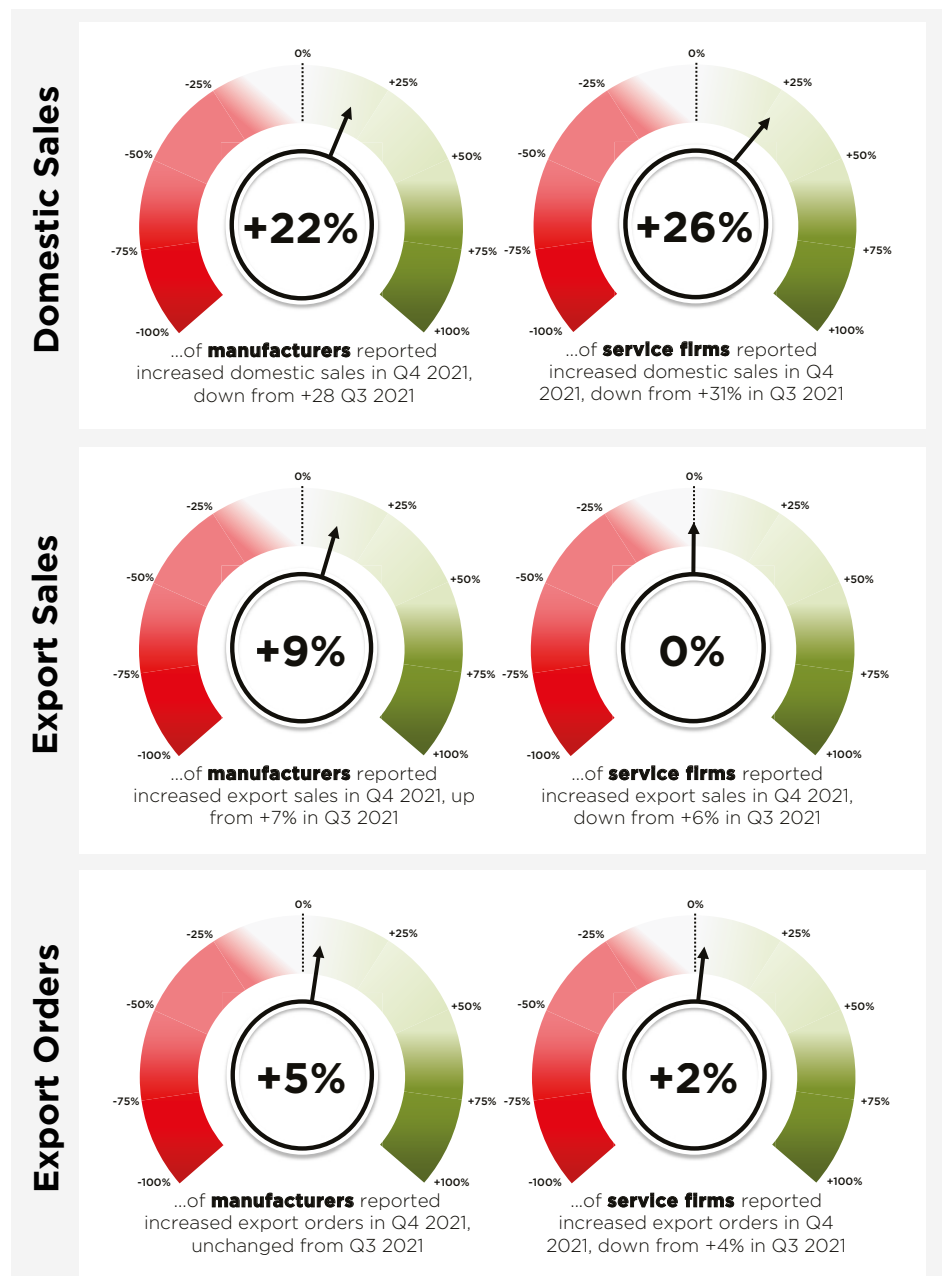
The record rise in price pressures suggests that a substantial inflationary surge is likely in the coming months. Rising raw material costs, higher energy prices and the reversal of the VAT reduction for hospitality are likely to push inflation above 6% by April. The UK economy is starting 2022 facing some key challenges. The renewed reluctance among consumers to spend and staff shortages triggered by the Omicron variant and Plan B may mean that UK GDP falls in the near term, particularly if more restrictions are needed. ”

Suren Thiru
Head of Economics, British
Chambers of Commerce

For the full BCC
QES Q4 2021 results
see our website
www.somerset-chamber.co.uk

AT A GLANCE

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





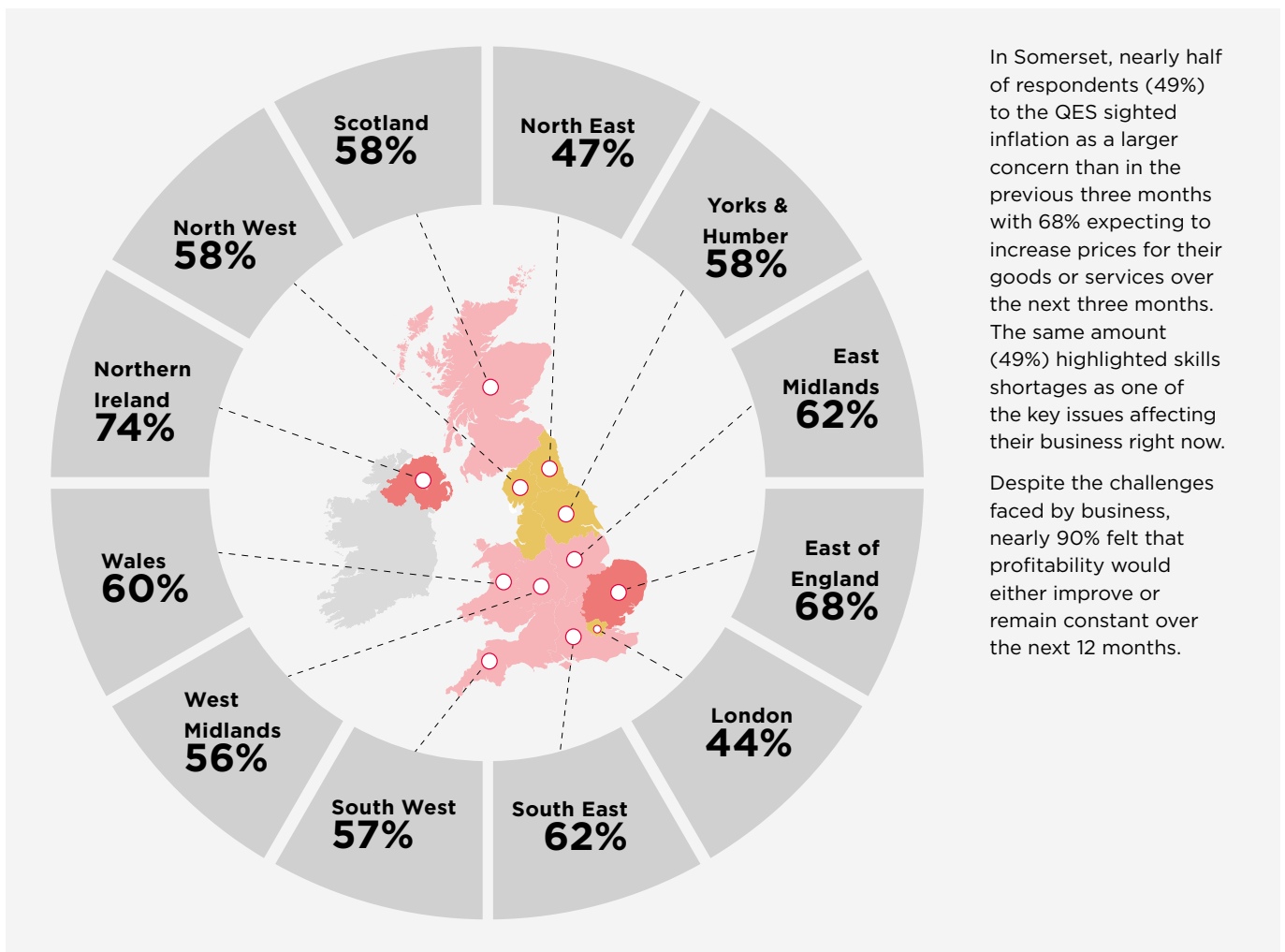
SOMERSET CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

QUARTERLY ECONOMIC SURVEY Q4 2021

In Q4 2021, the balance of manufacturing firms expecting prices to increase over the next three months rose to its highest level on record. Furthermore, when asked which factor was more of a concern to their business than three months ago, 'inflation' is now cited as the top answer. 66% of firms overall and 73% of manufacturers cited this as a concern above other factors listed including 'interest rates', 'exchange rates', 'business rates', 'competition', and 'taxation'. This is the highest since records began for this indicator in 2009.

The below chart shows the geographical breakdown of the percentage of firms expecting their prices to rise in the next three months.

PRICE EXPECTATIONS



In Somerset, nearly half of respondents (49%) to the QES sighted inflation as a larger concern than in the previous three months with 68% expecting to increase prices for their goods or services over the next three months. The same amount (49%) highlighted skills shortages as one of the key issues affecting their business right now.

Despite the challenges faced by business, nearly 90% felt that profitability would either improve or remain constant over the next 12 months.



#WELL CONNECTED

Somerset Chamber AGM



▲ Mike Dyer of Begbies Traynor and Emma Rawlings, Executive Director of Somerset Chamber of Commerce.



▲ Receiving their 10-year Chamber membership certificates - Graham Potts of Wessex Commercial Solutions Limited, Robert Brown of Lewis Brown Ltd Chartered Land Surveyors and Nick Farrant of PKF Francis Clark.



▲ Alistair Tudor of Somerset Chamber of Commerce, Leona McDonald of Marston Foods and Robert Brown of Lewis Brown Ltd Chartered Land Surveyors.



▲ Stuart Martin of Ethical Sales Pro, Lizzie Ginbey and Barry Tottle of Teapot Creative, Nigel Gass of SDS Ltd and Mike Cahill of Albert Goodman.



New Members

Welcome to our newest members of the Somerset Chamber.

Alpha Housing Services

Block and Estate Management, Residential Property Management

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UPCOMING EVENTS

Recruitment forum

Join us for a round-table discussion on the pertinent employment issues. This event will be held under Chatham House rules and will be an excellent opportunity to discuss issues relevant to the recruitment sector and gain valuable advice and expertise from other professionals in the room.

Time: 10am – 12 noon
at the Holiday Inn, Taunton

Cost: £15.95 plus VAT

Wednesday
16
February

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Sector focus: manufacturing and engineering - raising awareness of UK manufacturing

We will be joined by Leigh Howarth, Business Development Manager of M-CNC Engineering, who will explain how engineering has shaped his career path and his passion for championing the future of UK manufacturing. Discussions and demonstrations will take place on the innovation in the UK manufacturing sector. Sponsored by

Time: 10am – 12pm at Ibis Bridgwater
Cost: £9.95 plus VAT



Wednesday
16
March

Harnessing internal communications to grow your business

Do you want to develop an internal communication strategy that helps you work more collaboratively? Whatever size your business is, effective internal communication is the lifeblood of an organisation. Getting it wrong will almost certainly have a negative impact on your business. Join Jenny Walford, of ADPR, to devise your own effective internal communications strategy to harness the strength of your team.

Time: 9.30am – 1.30pm
Equity House, TA1 2PX

Cost: £49.50 plus VAT

Thursday
17
February

Sponsored by



Using Canva effectively for your business

Presented by Kirsten Rae, of Somerset Design Studio, discover how to use Canva Pro in-house. Perfect for businesses that don't have an in-house design team or graphic designer. Canva is a cost-effective online publishing tool to ensure brand consistency throughout your business. Sponsored by

Time: 9.30am – 1.30pm
Equity House, TA1 2PX

Cost: £49.50 plus VAT

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Thursday
17
March

Ladies' afternoon tea and networking

Enjoy a delicious afternoon tea and some valuable business networking with like-minded Somerset businesswomen. We will hear from Kenda Macdonald, of Automatic Ninjas, about marketing automation and event sponsor, Laura Joyce, of Laura Joyce Wealth Management, who will explain more about her company and how she helps people plan and prepare for their future.

Time: 2pm – 4pm
at Taunton School

Cost: £20.95 plus VAT for members

Wednesday
23
February

Sponsored by



Business-to-business dinner

We will be catered for by Weston College's talented hospitality students for this evening of great food and excellent networking. Our B2Bs are the ideal way to raise the profile of your business, while learning about other firms and forging valuable business relationships. Early booking recommended.

Time: 6.30pm – 10pm at
Weston College,
Knightstone Campus

Cost: £28.75 plus VAT for members

Sponsored by



Thursday
24
March

*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.

HINKLEY UPDATE

Hinkley Point C - a look back at year of progress

2021 saw significant progress on site at Hinkley Point C, using pre-fabrication and innovation to increase quality and productivity - with big gains between unit one and two. Here are some of the major construction stories from 2021, each of which has contributed to shaping the landscape of the project and moving Hinkley Point C closer to delivering low-carbon electricity to millions.

February

The final concrete pipe in unit two was installed. This will transport the cooling water needed for the nuclear reactor.



March

In March, the 15 blue columns that will make up a vital part of the support structure of the turbine hall were successfully installed.



March

The domed roof, which will sit on top of the reactor building, is one of the most significant future milestones for the first reactor. Earlier this year the first of the 37 steel panels that make up the dome arrived on site. These were transported by sea and moved to a pre-fabrication building where work welding them together has continued throughout the year.



July

In July, one of Hinkley Point C's Tunnel Boring Machines (TBMs), known as Emmeline, completed its journey mining the outfall tunnel to complete the second of the three tunnels needed. Over 100,000 tonnes of earth was excavated 24m underneath the seabed. The third TBM, Beatrice, is currently busy mining the third of the three tunnels. Work also took place on the two intake tunnels, which will bring water from the Bristol Channel into the power station's turbine hall.



September

The Framatome warehouse was completed. Some of the most important project components will be stored and maintained in the building.



October

The first section of what will be the largest turbine in the world was delivered to Avonmouth. The turbine is essential in generating the electricity.



November

The first steel liner ring was installed into unit two. It forms part of the containment building for the nuclear reactor and weighs over 500 tonnes.



MEMBER NEWS

Brainwave celebrates 40 years with ambitious £40,000 fundraising campaign

Brainwave is a charity supporting children with disabilities and their families. The charity has its roots firmly based in Somerset and this year will be celebrating its 40th anniversary – and is hoping to raise £40,000 to mark the occasion to fund the costs of recruiting a full-time therapist to support even more children with disabilities.

As an independent charity, Brainwave does not receive any Government funding, with all its income being self-generated through fundraising and its own charity shops.

Brainwave supports children with physical and/or cognitive disabilities such as cerebral palsy, Downs Syndrome, autism, or developmental delay. It does this through specialist therapies.

The staff's work is based on the principle of neuroplasticity, which helps the brain find new pathways by providing regular repetition of newly acquired skills. The aim is to maximise each child's potential by taking an integrated approach to their physical and cognitive development, enhancing their social skills and emotional well-being.

Importantly and uniquely, Brainwave empowers families to deliver therapy with their child at home – children respond best with the people whose love and care is unparalleled. Staff work alongside each family to devise a programme that is bespoke to their child's needs.

They show them how to carry out each exercise, in what order, for how long and explain why. The charity also provides families with equipment, a written therapy programme and copies of exercises filmed during sessions.

Keith Sinclair, Chief Executive, said: We continually see

children achieve amazing outcomes, often defying their original prognosis. Families who were told that their children may never move, are able to sit and walk, who were told they would never communicate are able to make sounds and some can talk and others who were told they would never be independent, have been to university and are now working and living independently.

“With the help of our kind supporters, we are hoping to raise £40,000 for our 40th year in 2022, to fund the costs of recruiting a full-time therapist, which will enable us to support more children with disabilities.”

Since 1982, Brainwave has:

- Delivered over 13,000 assessments and over 95,000 hours of therapy
- Awarded over 4,400 Certificates of Achievement to children who have improved in areas such as walking, talking, gross motor skills, independence and many more!
- Supported hundreds of parent/carers and siblings
- Provided families with over 26,000 pieces of equipment for their children to use, whilst carrying out their individualised Programme at home, including wedges, peanut balls, and communication development aids
- Innovated by implementing Brainwave Online, so that families could still access support, during the 'lockdown' restrictions

Fundraising ideas and inspiration can be found on the website www.brainwave.org.uk.

Somerset student wins Cornish Mutual Young Farmer Bursary

Bridgwater and Taunton College student Alexander Barback has been awarded a Cornish Mutual Young Farmer Bursary. Having impressed the judges with his knowledge of the agricultural industry, Alex will receive £500 to support course-related costs.

Alex is studying for his Level 3 Diploma in Agriculture at the college's Cannington Campus. After college he plans to pursue a career in farm management but hopes to travel abroad after leaving college.

“I'd really like to travel to different parts of the world to learn more about how they farm,” said Alex. “I'm particularly interested in understanding how new technology can be used to help farm in a more

productive, sustainable, and efficient manner. However, I'd like to get my college diploma first, so this bursary will help to fund the equipment I need such as a laptop, overalls, wellies and waterproofs.”

The Cornish Mutual Young Farmer Bursary is part of the Future Farming Programme supporting the future of agriculture in the South West. Four bursaries have been awarded to students at agricultural colleges in the region. Applications were judged by a panel including Cornish Mutual Managing Director Peter Beaumont.

“We were hugely impressed in the quality of applications for our first Young Farmer Bursaries,” said Peter. “All applicants displayed a clear



passion for agriculture, but Alex showed a clear understanding of the challenges facing the industry and a desire to be part of its future.”

To find out more about the Cornish Mutual Young Farmer Bursary, visit <https://bit.ly/CMBursaries>.

C&D South West wins national logistics award as a brand ambassador

A Somerset company has won a prestigious national transport award for its exceptional efforts to keep the country moving during a year in which the nation's supply chains were tested.

C&D South West Ltd was named as a Brand Ambassador at the Palletforce Gala Awards for its work in supporting the national supply chain effort during a challenging year for many transport and logistics companies.

Palletforce is the UK's premier express freight distribution network - handling more than 45 million pallets - and runs a network of more than 100 member companies across the UK and Europe. Palletforce members have helped to deliver medical supplies, vital equipment and everyday essentials during the pandemic and have helped keep shelves stocked in stores and supermarkets.

C&D South West was selected as a Brand Ambassador because of the quality of its work over the past year. The company impressed the judges and Palletforce management with its



commitment and dedication to its customers - delivering an exceptional distribution service in the face of tough operational challenges.

At the awards ceremony, which this year was held virtually, Palletforce chief operating officer Mark Tapper said: "This award is based on nominations from the Palletforce team and recognises members who have gone the extra mile to support and promote the network during the year.

"Despite the challenges, Palletforce and its entire membership have been equal to the task. C&D stands out as having put in extra effort and impressed our management."

Lorna Hammond, Managing Director said the company was delighted that the hard work of its staff had been rewarded.

She said: "This honour is a tribute to all of our dedicated employees, from the drivers to office staff, who have gone above and beyond in the past year to ensure that we deliver a consistently high level of performance for our customers.

"Palletforce is the UK's premier distribution network and to receive recognition from them is a vindication of all the efforts that our workers have put in over the past year to ensure vital deliveries are always made efficiently and on time."



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Church House Investment Management appoints new CEO

After over ten years as Church House Investment Management CEO, James Mahon is stepping down. Jeremy Wharton (pictured) will take the reins of the business that manages over £1bn of investments.

He has been with the firm as a fund manager since 2004 and specialises in fixed interest investing. The new CEO will split his time between the



company's two offices – Mayfair, London and Sherborne, Dorset.

Jeremy said: "Some things will change, but we are not trying to reinvent a wheel that rotates very successfully already. It will be more of a case of evolving over time rather than going for all-out growth."

James will continue to play an active role in the business as Joint Chief Investment Officer and manager or co-manager of several Church House Investments funds. These include the very successful Tenax Absolute Return Strategies Fund which is designed for cautious investors.

James said: "I have every confidence that Jerry will be able to build on the success we have enjoyed over the last twenty-plus years. We offer investors a simple but powerful formula that



combines sound advice, considered investment management and personal service. This has helped us to serve generations of families."

Having previously held the role of Operations Director, Roger Davis has now taken on the broader remit that comes with a Managing Director role: "My goal is to work closely with Jerry and the Board to shape strategy and then engage with the talented and committed people in our businesses to deliver on our plans. The qualities that have made Church House a success will remain, and we will refine them over time to ensure we continue to meet our clients changing expectations."

Dorset and Somerset Air Ambulance scoops trio of prestigious awards

Dorset and Somerset Air Ambulance (DSAA) came out winners in three categories at this year's National Air Ambulance Awards of Excellence. The life-saving charity was shortlisted as a finalist in five categories, highlighting the broad scope and high standard of the service they provide and the incredible motivation and professionalism of their people.

Dr Phil Hyde, DSAA's Medical Lead, was awarded 'Doctor of the Year'. Despite his punishing schedule as a paediatric intensivist in a major trauma centre and as a member of the DSAA clinical team during one of the busiest and most challenging years in living



memory, Dr Hyde continues to explore what can be achieved for patients, particularly in the pre-hospital environment.

A collaboration between DSAA, Southampton Oxford Retrieval Team (SORT), Wales and West Acute Transport for Children Service (WATCH) and Bristol Children's Hospital Trauma Team Leaders, was awarded 'Innovation of the Year' for formally supporting the time-critical inter-hospital transfer of paediatric patients in the South West Region.

The new capability took five years to develop and mature and was the first of its kind in the UK. The paediatric time-critical, inter-hospital service that is now being provided by DSAA, is in addition to their normal critical care activity and their regional adult time-critical, inter-hospital service.

The prestigious Lifetime Achievement Award was presented to DSAA's Chief Executive Officer, Bill Sivewright (pictured left), for his outstanding contribution to the work of DSAA and the air ambulance community over the past 11 years.

Bill's leadership has enabled DSAA to become one of the most innovative



and highly respected air ambulance charities in the country. He has led from the front across all areas of the charity, empowering others to do the same.

Mr Sivewright praised the whole team and added: "With 21 air ambulances across the country operating in an environment that demands high performance, to stand out in that company, is a real mark of quality. But for three of our nominations to then be held up as not one of the best, but the best in the country is simply outstanding.

"Congratulations to our whole team, who are all winners in our eyes and who continue to work tirelessly, for the benefit of the patients we serve."



Kaiasm presented with prestigious Queen's Award for Enterprise - Innovation

Steve Johnston and Liam McGee, joint founders of Kaiasm, a data technology company based in Frome, were presented in December with a Queen's Award for Enterprise by Mrs Annie Maw, Her Majesty's Lord-Lieutenant of Somerset and Deputy Lieutenant John Haycock.



One of only eight awarded in the South West in 2020, the award for innovation recognises Kaiasm's pioneering approach to data technology. The company helps clients - such as National Highways, the NHS, Screwfix and Wilko - to structure large, complex data sets so they can better serve their customers and other users.

Steve and Liam founded Kaiasm in 2011. The growing company currently employs 30 people, who work from the stunning Grange Offices or flexibly from their homes in Somerset and across the UK.

Liam said: "The ceremony was a big deal for us, because when the winners were announced in 2020, we couldn't commemorate it due to COVID restrictions. So, it's great that we

managed to find a COVID compliant window when we could celebrate with a good handful of colleagues. This award is thanks to all of their hard work."

The Queen's Award for Enterprise is the most prestigious accolade for UK business. It is designed to recognise and encourage outstanding achievement in the fields of innovation, international trade, sustainable development and promoting opportunity. The awards are valid for five years, during which time winners can expect to benefit from worldwide recognition, increased commercial value and a boost to staff morale.

December's award presentation followed a royal reception at Windsor Castle in November, when Steve took the opportunity to meet fellow inspiring winners from 2020 and 2021 and share a tipples with His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales and Her Royal Highness The Princess Royal.



Taunton School announces appointment of new Head and CEO

James Johnson, currently Head of Senior School at Ardingly College in Sussex, will take up the position in September 2022, replacing Lee Glaser who is standing down after eight years at the helm.

Chair of Governors, Henry Keeling, said: "We are thrilled that Mr Johnson will be taking over the reins at Taunton School. His passion for heading up an all-through, co-educational school such as ours with its breadth of provision and global outlook shone through at every stage of the selection process.

"Mr Glaser's successful leadership of Taunton School had set a very high benchmark when it came to choosing a successor," said Mr Keeling.

"Mr Johnson brings a wealth of experience and talent with him," he added. "We believe he is the perfect fit for Taunton School."

Mr Johnson is married with two children. He began his career as an English teacher at Cheltenham College, before becoming a Housemaster at Tonbridge School in Kent, joining Ardingly College in 2016.

As a student he read English at University College London, took an MPhil at Trinity College, Dublin and completed his PGCE at Cambridge University.

Mr Johnson said: "It is a privilege to have been appointed as the next Head of Taunton School. I am especially excited about meeting pupils, staff, parents and alumni in the coming months."



He said the school's 'lack of pretension, its breadth of academic pathways and its co-curricular opportunities as well as Taunton's focus on wellbeing and the global community' were all huge attractions to the role for him.

Mr Glaser said he was delighted about Mr Johnson's appointment. "As much as I will miss Taunton, I am thrilled that James will be taking over the running of this amazing school from me.

"This year we are celebrating our 175th anniversary and with James at the helm, I have no doubt that Taunton School is entering a very exciting phase of its ongoing development.

"He is a very caring man who shares my passion for challenging, nurturing and inspiring young people to succeed in a global community."

New People Development Director appointed at employee-owned law firm

Following the arrival of Alex Mackie as Stephens Scown LLP's first Chief Operating Officer in September 2021, the employee-owned law firm has made another strategic appointment with the announcement that Mark Shepherd has joined as the firm's first People Development Director.

Having previously held a range of senior leadership roles across the John Lewis Partnership - including Regional Branch Manager and Integration Lead for John Lewis and Partners - Mark



brings with him vast experience and expertise, inspiring and empowering people within the largest employee-owned business in the UK.

In addition to his professional career, Mark also holds senior roles within the broader business community in the South West, from his role as Chair of the Greater Exeter Skills Partnership, Board Member of the Local Enterprise Partnerships Skills Advisory Panel and Deputy Wing Chair of Devon and Somerset Air Cadets.

Mark said: "I could see from the outset that Stephens Scown has built an incredible foundation of ethics and values through its employee ownership model, which has seen them not only survive but to thrive through two incredibly challenging years.

"I look forward to nurturing our talented people so they can realise their true potential, all within an employee-owned business that puts

people first and involves the workforce in key decision-making."

Stephens Scown's Managing Partner, Richard Baker, added: "In combination with Alex Mackie joining the Firm to support the achievement of our strategic goals, Mark's appointment will help us to forge a path through the continuing challenges of COVID and onto an exciting time of growth, new ways of working and establishing an outstanding employee experience.

"We want to make sure we retain talent of our existing employees, while attracting new people to the Firm from across the region and beyond."

With clients ranging from individuals to SMEs, FTSE and international companies, Stephens Scown is consistently ranked highly in the UK's top two independent legal guides, Chambers and Partners and Legal 500. It has also been ranked for seven consecutive years in the UK's 100 Best Companies to Work For list (formerly Sunday Times Top 100 Best Companies To Work For).

For more information visit www.stephens-scown.co.uk

NRL Group achieves the Carbon Neutral International Standard

Engineering recruitment and contracting specialists the NRL Group is celebrating achieving the Carbon Neutral International Standard, after undertaking an in-depth exercise to manage the Group's carbon footprint across the businesses.

As part of the commitment to understand their carbon usage, NRL also signed up to participate in the United Nations Climate Neutral Now Initiative, designed to give organisations decisive and measurable actions to reduce their impact on the environment.

To achieve this important milestone the NRL Group launched a new partnership with One Carbon World a global resource partner of the UN Climate Neutral Now Initiative. One Carbon World is a not-for-profit organisation that advises and supports organisations to measure and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Operating in 24 countries, they work with businesses to access funding and help them invest in carbon credits to support international projects that offset carbon usage.

After calculating the organisation's annual carbon footprint, NRL worked with One Carbon World to secure carbon credits to invest in decarbonisation projects across the globe



to offset any remaining carbon consumption. Two projects were chosen, supporting a reforestation project in South America and progressing clean energy in developing countries.

The move to become carbon neutral aligns with the NRL Group's involvement over recent years in supporting green energy projects across the globe - including onshore and offshore wind energy for projects such as Beatrice Wind Farm in Scotland and Ras Ghareb Wind Farm in Egypt, as well as supplying labour to construct the Tees Renewable Energy Plant and providing innovative Ultrasonic inspection qualification services to help bring Hinkley Point C to life.

NRL Group's CEO, David Redmayne, said: "As a major provider of engineering recruitment and contracting services to the energy sector, we've been on a journey with our clients to support their energy transition to greener, cleaner resources.

"It's therefore of great importance to us that we're doing everything we can as a Group to make our own improvements to support this collective effort to strive for net zero."



Bridgwater's £16 million leisure regeneration project celebrates another major milestone

Sedgemoor District Council and main contractor Willmott Dixon held a topping out ceremony to celebrate the final steelwork being installed at the highest point of the structure on the Northgate Yard site ahead of its planned opening in Autumn 2022.

Reaching a total height of 41.8ft, the last piece of steel was secured on the roof of the 40,000 sq. ft scheme which will boast a state-of-the-art seven-screen cinema and an eight-lane bowling alley and sports bar. The development will also feature 12,000 sq. ft of flexible restaurant space in five restaurant units with outdoor dining areas, available for local, regional and national food and drink brands.

Cllr Alan Bradford, Chairman of Sedgemoor District Council, said; "Northgate Yard is a huge investment in the town centre and is set to be a landmark destination for both locals and tourists.

"We're delighted that so much progress has been made on the construction and that we're already at such a landmark stage in the build - it won't be long before we'll all be enjoying the leisure and entertainment facilities that will be on offer."

Rob Woolcock, Director at Willmott Dixon said; "The topping out ceremony marks a key stage in the construction of Northgate Yard, and we're delighted to be working with



Sedgemoor District Council to deliver this landmark project."

The scheme will also feature outdoor meeting places and landscaping. The adjacent green space, Brewery Field, will be improved and updated to feature an outdoor children's play area and parkland with a pond and landscaped planting.

Northgate Yard is the culmination of many years of planning for a central entertainment and dining hub for Bridgwater, led by Sedgemoor District Council.

For more information visit www.northgateyard.co.uk.

Pictured, from left, are: Michael Mackey, Willmott Dixon, Cllr Gill Slocombe, Sedgemoor District Council, Cllr Alan Bradford, Chairman, Sedgemoor District Council, Cllr Mark Healey MBE, Sedgemoor District Council, Mark Williams, Scott Cinema, Cllr Kathy Pearce, Sedgemoor District Council, Doug Bamsey, Sedgemoor District Council and Rob Woolcock, Willmott Dixon.

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Somerset Passenger Solutions wins Gold and Silver at the HPC Excellence Awards

Somerset Passenger Solutions was proud to be named as winners of the Gold award for Health and Safety Performance and Silver award for Best Onsite /Regional Supplier at the HPC Excellence Awards 2021.

The annual Hinkley Point C Excellence Awards celebrate work on the prestigious national infrastructure project across three themes of project delivery, supply chain and people. Finalists, their nominators and senior leaders gathered together at the glittering event and got an insight into individuals, teams and supplier's achievements.

EDF in the UK's CEO Simone Rossi praised the winners and reinforced their role in helping Britain achieve Net Zero.

Following two rounds of judging, SPS was chosen as the Gold winner for Health and Safety Performance based on consistently excellent performance over the last 12 months.

A company spokesman said it was another fantastic achievement for SPS who also scooped the Silver award in the Best Onsite /Regional Supplier category for their continued dedication and outstanding customer service.

The HPC Excellence Awards are open to all businesses working on, or for the HPC Project. SPS provides a bespoke transport solution for the HPC Project, carrying almost all people who go to the construction site either for work or to visit. SPS transport thousands of clients to and from the construction site every day, working 24/7 to ensure that construction remains on schedule.

Simon Cursio, Managing Director, said: "We beat tough competition from many great companies and I am supremely proud of the team for their dedication, leadership and expertise in the health and safety space.

"Landing the very prestigious accolade at the HPC Excellence Awards is



Pictured, from left, are: Emma Warr, Joanna Funnell and Martin Webb.

just reward for their efforts. This recognition rounds off a challenging but very positive year for SPS as the business continues to grow and we hope to exceed the expectations of our client and passengers once again in 2022."

Battens Solicitors expand their agricultural and rural property team with two new appointments

South West law firm Battens Solicitors has expanded its agriculture and rural property team with the appointment of two new members of staff.

Senior Associate Solicitor Rachel Saltonstall and Conveyancing Executive Michelle Lane are joining the team of agricultural law specialists at one of the area's largest and longest-established legal firms.

Rachel and Michelle bring with them a wide breadth of experience in agricultural and commercial law. Rachel has worked in the South West for the past 17 years, acting for a diverse range of clients in the private, commercial, charitable and agricultural sectors. This includes sales and acquisitions, all aspects of non-contentious landlord and tenant matters, telecommunications, and renewable energy projects.

Rachel said: "I have had a long association with Battens dating back to 2004 and I re-joined the company last year. I am very pleased now to be part of the agricultural team, which is very well respected in the area for both its in-depth legal expertise and its pragmatic advice on farming and rural estate matters."

Michelle is also returning to the agricultural team after spending some time away to bring up her young family.



Pictured, from left, are: Michelle Lane, James Owen, Rachel Saltonstall, Tracy Neal.

She is a Graduate of the Chartered Institute of Legal Executives and has specialised in agriculture and rural property since 2014. She advises on matters associated with the ownership and occupation of land and rural properties, such as sales, purchases, easements, tenancy agreements and borrowing secured on land.

Michelle also helps on her parents' dairy farm in North Dorset: "When you talk to farmers during site visits, it definitely helps if you can speak the same language and understand the challenges they have to deal with.

"Most farms are family businesses, some going back for generations, so it is important to understand the family dynamics as well as the complexities involved in rural land transactions and negotiations."

Milsted Langdon goes for growth with a series of promotions

With a growing demand for its tax, accountancy and business advisory services across the South West, Milsted Langdon has announced the promotion of seven staff members.

The firm, which has offices in Bath, Bristol, Yeovil, Taunton and London, has recognised the many talents of its staff with their latest round of promotions, the most senior of which sees Jon Edge named as a Director.

Yeovil-based Jon has worked in the profession for many years, assisting various local businesses, predominantly assisting them with audit and accounting work.

Martin Johnson has also been named as the firm's latest Senior Manager and is joined in the raft of promotions by new Manager Nilesh Mashru, and Assistant Manager Dan Trace.

Alongside these senior appointments within the firm, Steph Eddy, Joe

MILSTED LANGDON

Stefanotti and Harriet Banks have been promoted to Supervisors.

Tim Close (pictured), Partner and the Chair of Milsted Langdon, said: "It is great to see so many members of our team progressing through their careers as we look to grow and expand our services to even more businesses.

"Our team work incredibly hard to achieve outstanding results for our clients, and so we are always delighted when we can promote our talented staff."

Earlier this year, the firm also welcomed a record number of new trainees, with 14 new staff added to its team.

Rachel Hotham, People Partner at Milsted Langdon, added: "We are proud of our commitment to the



support and development of our team.

"We now have many Directors and Partners who have trained with the firm and risen through the ranks to the top of the profession."

To find out more about Milsted Langdon's services and career opportunities, please visit www.milstedlangdon.co.uk.

Bristol Airport Achieves Level 3+ Carbon Neutrality Status

Bristol Airport has been independently accredited as having carbon neutral operations for its direct Scope 1 and 2 emissions, making it just a handful of airports to receive this prestigious certification.

The award recognises that Bristol Airport has continued to fulfil the requirements of the scheme with reducing direct greenhouse gas emissions from its operations and offset the remainder using internationally recognised offsets.

The accreditation is awarded by the Airports Council International (ACI) whose priority is to recognise and certify airports globally which map, calculate, reduce, optimise and, where necessary, offset residual carbon dioxide emissions.

The Airport Carbon Accreditation Scheme is the only institutionally endorsed carbon management certification standard for airports; with independent assessment and verification requirements as an airport progress from just mapping its direct emissions footprint to transitioning to and



recognises airports' efforts to manage and reduce their CO2 emissions.

This award is the second highest level of accreditation issued by ACI and requires the mapping of all sources of carbon emissions at Bristol Airport. This includes aircraft ground movements, transportation access to the airports, electricity and fuel consumption. The accreditation is externally verified in two stages, the first by an independent, qualified assessor and secondly by ACI against the requirements of the Airport Carbon Accreditation Scheme.

Bristol Airport had set a target of carbon neutral operations by 2025, but has achieved this target four years ahead of schedule. It is a major step forward in the Airport's next aim to achieve net zero operations by 2030,

where emissions will be reduced as much as technology allows, with any small remainder being removed from the atmosphere.

Dave Lees, CEO, Bristol Airport said: "The achievement of the neutrality accreditation is another huge milestone in our commitment to reduce our carbon dioxide emissions. This award supports our long-term strategy in reducing our carbon emissions and is another example of us demonstrating our commitment to addressing climate change.

"The airport will continue to work closely with stakeholders and business partners in the aviation industry to help reduce and drive down carbon emissions as we have set out our own target on all airport operations being net zero by 2030.

"Sustainability is at the heart of Bristol Airport and everyone's collective involvement is a testament to our team's commitment and recognition in managing, reducing and offsetting carbon dioxide emissions under our control."



BUSINESS NEWS

Bank of England summary – staff shortages and increased costs continue to take their toll

By Malindi Myers, Bank of England Agent for the South West



@BoESouthWest

Even after the end of the furlough scheme, recruitment difficulties were reported to have become more widespread and acute, particularly for experienced hires. Companies in a wide range of sectors reported severe shortages of staff, and staff turnover and vacancies remained higher than normal for many companies. Demand for staff was particularly strong in professional services, hospitality, logistics distribution and warehousing, construction and engineering.

Companies attributed labour shortages to a combination of factors, such as structural shortages in professional services, IT and engineering. Some reported a reduction in the availability of EU workers due to travel restrictions relating to EU withdrawal and Covid. Many migrant workers were not expected to return to the UK due to travel restrictions and improved opportunities in their home countries.

There were also reports of lower participation, particularly among older workers or people wanting to work more flexibly. This had affected sectors, like haulage, which has an ageing workforce and often involves working unsociable hours. However, there were a few reports of HGV drivers being incentivised to return to the sector with higher wages.

Pay settlements continued to increase, with awards, to date, typically around 2%-3.5% compared with 1%-2% earlier this year. There were reports of companies making mid-year salary adjustments to retain staff, and some instances of pay settlements of 5%-7%, especially among companies where pay had been frozen over the past couple of years.

And contacts reported significant upward pressure on pay for skills in short supply, such as construction, hospitality, IT, accountancy and legal, with staff being offered pay increases ranging from 10% to 40% to switch firm. One-off retention bonuses were also reported to have become more common.

A number of contacts expected further upwards pressure on pay growth next year, as the labour market was expected to remain tight, while the recent and expected further increase in consumer price inflation could encourage workers to demand bigger pay settlements.

Input price inflation remained elevated, mostly reflecting global factors, and companies appeared to be more willing to pass through higher costs to prices.

Companies reported significant upward pressure on costs from energy prices, with some reporting increases ranging



BANK OF ENGLAND

from 50%-70% as existing contracts came to an end. This meant that a degree of pass-through to prices would be unavoidable, particularly among those in energy-intensive sectors. Contacts expected energy to be a significant factor driving higher output price inflation in the first six months of 2022.

In manufacturing, output price inflation continued to increase, reflecting lags in the pass-through of some input costs. Construction contacts reported passing through increased materials costs in full to new contracts, but much less so on work already in progress.

In business services, fee inflation varied depending on demand and the extent of competition. Distributors reported passing through higher transport and logistics costs as a result of increased fuel prices. And wholesalers continued to pass on higher product prices. Contacts in sectors where demand is high and labour constraints are most acute, such as professional services and distribution, said they expected fee inflation to remain elevated, in part driven by upward pay pressure in 2021 Q1.

Retailers also reported rising inflation. Food price inflation was rising to 3%-4%, and some contacts expected further increases in the coming months as retailers appeared to be more willing to accept price increases from suppliers in order to avoid product shortages. Car prices continued to pick up, especially for used vehicles.

Overall, reports from consumer services contacts were consistent with moderate increases in prices. Some contacts in the hospitality and leisure sector reported increasing prices in response to high demand and rising costs. But prices were flat at cultural and sporting venues.

Nonetheless, service price inflation was expected to pick up in the coming months amid growing pay pressure in the hospitality, leisure and retail sectors. Contacts said that much of the phased restoration of Value Added Tax for companies in hospitality and tourism was also likely to be passed through to consumer prices in order to support margins.



Making Tax Digital for VAT becomes mandatory

HMRC has reminded businesses to start preparing for Making Tax Digital for VAT before it becomes mandatory for all VAT-registered businesses from April 1, 2022. To sign up to Making Tax Digital for VAT, businesses, or their agents, need to visit GOV.UK and choose a compatible software package, keep digital VAT records and submit their VAT return through Making Tax Digital.

Read more about the reminder at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/making-tax-digital-for-vat-is-coming-are-you-ready>

HMRC gives self-assessment taxpayers more time to file

HMRC has announced that late-filing and late-payment penalties for self-assessment taxpayers have been waived for one month, for 2020/21 tax returns and payment of any tax due. The deadline to file and pay is still January 31, 2022 but anyone who cannot file their return by the deadline will not receive a late-filing penalty if they file online by February 28, 2022. Anyone who cannot pay their tax by the January 31, 2022 deadline will not receive a late-payment penalty if they pay their tax in full, or set up a Time to Pay arrangement, by April 1, 2022.

Read more about the deadlines at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/hmrc-gives-self-assessment-taxpayers-more-time-to-ease-covid-19-pressures>

Plan for post-EU land and farming subsidies criticised

The Public Accounts Committee believes that the plan for post-EU land and farming subsidies has many of the same issues that have undermined other government programmes. The committee has reported that a lack of information from Defra is preventing farmers from future planning and taking advantage of new opportunities. The committee has also accused Defra of not explaining how the subsidies will prevent more food imports and failing to demonstrate how the £2.4 billion a year it plans to spend on agricultural schemes will provide value for money.

Read more about the committee's concerns at:

<https://committees.parliament.uk/committee/127/public-accounts-committee/news/160106/defras-plan-for-posteu-land-and-farming-subsidies-based-on-blind-optimism/>

Health and Care Visa scheme expanded

The Department of Health has temporarily expanded the Health and Care Visa scheme to address workforce shortages.

Read more about the extension at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/biggest-visa-boost-for-social-care-as-health-and-care-visa-scheme-expanded>

Only 2% of levelling-up funding spent on social infrastructure

The Government's existing levelling-up funding programmes are too focused on hard infrastructure projects and neglect social aspects, according to charity think tank NPC. In a white paper, NPC warns that if funding does not offer more support for social infrastructure then the Government's levelling-up programme will fail.

Read more about the concerns at:

<https://www.civilsociety.co.uk/news/as-little-as-2-of-levelling-up-funding-has-so-far-gone-to-social-infrastructure-warns-npc.html>

PPE responsibilities extended

From April 2022, employers will be obliged to provide personal protective equipment (PPE) to workers, as well as employees, who may be exposed to health and safety risks at work. Organisations will need to undertake a risk assessment to establish whether a worker requires PPE to carry out their work tasks.

Read more about the change at:

<https://www.personneltoday.com/hr/employers-ppe-responsibilities-extended-to-workers-from-april/>

Source: BAD News (Business Advisers News)



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