

# Somerset Voice

The Official Magazine of  
Somerset Chamber of Commerce

October /  
November  
2022

## Somerset Business Awards 2023

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THE BIGGEST COUNTY-WIDE  
BUSINESS AWARDS



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Commerce

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*Front page: judges and sponsors of the Somerset Business Awards 2023 at the official launch at Hurds Hill, near Langport.*

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In remembrance of our Patron  
Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II

1926 – 2022

Photo: PRESS ASSOCIATION / Danny Lawson.

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## FIRST WORD



I must start by offering Somerset Chamber's condolences to the Royal family following the death of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. The Queen was a Patron of the British Chambers of Commerce and had spoken of her pride in the support offered by the Chamber network post pandemic. We wish her successor, King Charles, a happy and successful reign.

As a mark of respect, we postponed all Chamber events during the national mourning period, including the launch of the Somerset Business Awards 2023. We rescheduled the launch for October and you can find a photo round-up of the event plus all the details of this year's awards' categories on pages 14-15.

We are always delighted when new businesses join the Chamber network and last month we welcomed National Highways as a new Business Partner. The Chamber has long supported plans to dual the A303 and A358 and the highways team has given us an update on the works on pages 6-7.

We have also been working closely with another Business Partner, Bridgwater & Taunton College, to support the Department for Education's plans to address skills shortages across all industries. The aim is to put businesses at the heart of the learning and skills programme and Somerset Chamber is proud to be helping to build stronger, more dynamic partnerships between employers and further education providers. You can find out more on both page 11 and page 22.

Elsewhere in the magazine, we shine a spotlight on our legal, insurance and finance members in our sector focus on pages 16-21 and there is a photo round-up from recent Chamber events on pages 24-26.

I hope you enjoy reading this edition of the magazine and I look forward to seeing you at an upcoming event soon!

*Emma Rawlings*

CHIEF EXECUTIVE

## OUR BUSINESS PARTNERS

Contact us to find out what benefits Somerset Chamber Business Partners receive.

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# OPEN EVENTS

JOIN US AT OUR OPEN EVENTS TO  
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Saturday 5th November 2022, 9.30 – 1.00pm

Monday 7th November 2022, 4.30 – 8.00pm


Wednesday 19th April 2023, 5.00 – 8.00pm

Learn more about our huge range of courses available, including A Levels, Vocational Level 3, Level 2 Pathway, GCSE resits, Apprenticeships and Professional Accountancy courses.

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Register here



## National Highways - working to drive regional growth



National Highways, the Government owned company charged with operating, maintaining, and improving England's motorways and major A-roads, has recently joined Somerset Chamber of Commerce as a Business Partner. Here, the agency explains more about itself and its plans in Somerset, specifically the all-important A303 and A358 upgrades.

National Highways exists to ensure that England's major roads are dependable, durable and – most importantly – safe, is actively working across Somerset, to both keep the county's main roads moving and to deliver several major planned improvements.

In 2015, as part of a plan to improve connections to and from the South East and bolster the economic prosperity of the South West, the Government asked National Highways to look at options for dualling single carriageway sections of the A303 and the A358.

Three schemes were progressed, one looking at the A303 between Sparkford and Ilchester, another considering the A358 between the M5 at Taunton and Southfields roundabout, and a third looking at the A303 between Amesbury and Berwick Down near Stonehenge.

And in 2020, at the start of the second five-year road investment period, the Government asked National Highways to look at the A303 between South Petherton and Southfields roundabout, as part of a potential pipeline of work for the third road investment period (from 2025-2030).

Improving the A303 / A358 is important to support growth and investment in the South West

The A303 and A358 link the M3 in Hampshire with the M5 in Somerset, creating one of the most direct strategic routes between the South West and the South East. Around 26,500 vehicles use these roads on an average day - and many more during the summer months. But they're well known for being unpredictable, with accidents and congestion frequently causing delays.

This unreliability causes concern. One report, A303 Corridor Improvement Programme Outline economic case and



proposed next steps (commissioned by the Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership, Devon County Council, Somerset County Council and Wiltshire Council) noted that 89% of businesses asked thought that the unreliability of the route was harming their business and restraining development and business growth along the corridor.

In delivering against the objectives set by the Government, National Highways is working hard to deliver the necessary improvements to the road.

In 2021, having been granted a Development Consent Order (the special type of planning permission needed for Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects), National Highways began work to build the A303 Sparkford to Ilchester Dualling Scheme. Construction is now well underway, with completion expected in spring 2024.

Throughout construction, every effort is being taken to minimise the impact of roadworks on users of the A303, with feedback from road users closely monitored. In May 2022, a temporary bridge was installed for construction traffic to use. This was designed specifically to ensure that site traffic didn't add to the overall volume of vehicles on the A303, and to allow workers and construction materials to be moved more easily across the site.

This temporary bridge will be removed later this year (during a weekend closure of the A303), and when this happens it will signify another major milestone being passed.

Other recent milestones have included the bridge beams for the new permanent Steart Hill Bridge being lifted into place. This happened in September.



The A358 Taunton to Southfields scheme is also approaching a major milestone. It's due to submit its application for a Development Consent Order by the end of this year. This project will lead to the dualling of an 8.5-mile stretch of road, including a new section of road between the M5 and Mattocks Tree Green, bypassing Henlade, and a widening of the remainder of the road to Southfields roundabout.

This scheme is needed to support economic growth, and will provide a safer, more reliable, and resilient road. It will also help address long standing air quality issues in Henlade near Taunton.

Further east along the A303, work is continuing to progress the A303 Stonehenge scheme, with a decision awaited from the Secretary of State for Transport over whether to grant

planning consent. To keep the programme for this scheme moving, a preferred bidder to deliver the main works was named in May 2022.

The joint venture comprises internationally renowned companies FCC Construcción, WeBuild and BeMo Tunnelling. They will be making best use of UK skills by using a range of local, regional and national suppliers and contractors to help them deliver the scheme.

Finally, a programme of stakeholder engagement around the A303 South Petherton to Southfields scheme will begin in the coming months, with a view to understanding issues from the local perspective to guide its development.

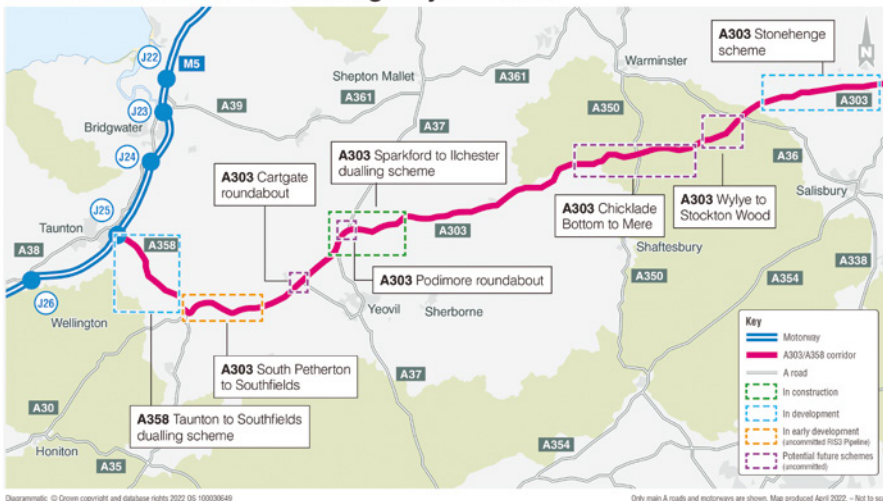
Somerset Chamber has long supported the need for improved physical

infrastructure and the need to dual the A303 and A358. Chamber Chief Executive Emma Rawlings said: "This investment will widen Somerset's labour market and open greater opportunity to our business and our local communities.

"From large international organisations to your small independent traders, it will allow them to become part of a larger supply chain across the country and be able to compete for bigger contracts. It will allow us to be on a level playing field, and will allow greater flow, greater movement, and greater growth in Somerset."

If you'd like more information about the schemes being progressed by National Highways, log onto their website to find more information or sign up for regular scheme updates, [www.nationalhighways.co.uk/A303-A358-Corridor](http://www.nationalhighways.co.uk/A303-A358-Corridor)

### A303/A358 corridor - National Highways schemes



### Supply chain opportunities

Businesses wanting to understand more about the opportunities to become part of the wider supply chain for these major infrastructure projects, should log onto the Supply Chain Sustainability School website, [www.supplychainschool.co.uk](http://www.supplychainschool.co.uk).

The school is part funded by National Highways and contains free training resources to help businesses understand how to become part of the supply chain.

A recording from a National Highways 'meet the buyers' held in August 2022 can be found on the supply chain school website, or directly accessed at [www.supplychainschool.co.uk/partners/national-highways/rdp-meet-the-buyers-18th-august-2022/](http://www.supplychainschool.co.uk/partners/national-highways/rdp-meet-the-buyers-18th-august-2022/)

Businesses interested in working on the proposed A303 Stonehenge project can also find out more by logging onto <https://nationalhighways.co.uk/our-roads/a303-stonehenge/supply-chain/>





## Events and conferencing

Many of our members offer exceptional facilities for events and conferences – and even Christmas parties! So if you are looking for a modern hotel, a museum, an historic venue, a cultural one or even one with some four-legged friends looking for new homes, our members can help!

### Taunton Brewhouse

Situated at the heart of Somerset's county town, centred around a Grade II listed Georgian building and on the bank of the River Tone, rich industrial history meets modern art, conferencing and meeting facilities at Taunton Brewhouse.

In addition to a lively programme of artistic events we play host to corporate conferences, meetings, and awards evenings. Whatever your occasion, our versatile venue and dynamic team can facilitate a fully bespoke event.

We have six dedicated spaces which

can accommodate anything from a small meeting to a group of 352 in our auditorium.

The smaller studio space has removable seating, black-out and conference facilities. Workshops and classes benefit from the sprung floor and mirror wall.

The Creative Hub (pictured) is an adaptable teaching space. Located under the saw-tooth roof of our modern wing, it's ideal for training or workshop events.

Our Gallery is a simple white cube, with high ceilings and natural light making it a highly versatile room.

Facing the riverbank and newly

developed Coal Orchard, the reception room of the Old Brewery House is elegant and cosy. With café-style seating, the Westward Room can be configured for group meetings and talks with seating capacity of 40 or standing for 50. Adjacent to this is our Foyer area for less formal events incorporating our fully licenced bar proudly stocking many local Somerset brands.

All Taunton Brewhouse facilities are fully accessible. We offer competitive rates and a range of optional extras – from technical support to catering. For more information, please email [hire@tauntonbrewhouse.co.uk](mailto:hire@tauntonbrewhouse.co.uk).

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## Haynes Motor Museum

Haynes Motor Museum boasts one of the top conference and hospitality venues in the South West. The flexible, purpose-built rooms by day accommodate up to 400 theatre-style and provide a fantastic space for a range of events from regional conferences to exhibitions and product launches, while by night, they come alive with DMX lighting providing an unrivalled party venue.

Add to the conference suites the opportunity of hiring a range of external areas, or hosting drinks and canapes among one of the museum's exhibitions and you can begin to understand the versatility of the museum's exceptional facilities.

Focus is already on the festive season when two party nights on December 16 and 17 offer the opportunity for smaller companies to come together with others to celebrate. The party nights offer fizz on arrival, a two-course casual dinner and disco. For larger companies we can offer exclusive use of our suites, and tailor your festive celebrations to suit your requirements, be it a sophisticated lunch, a festive buffet or your very own exclusive party night.

All profits made from the hire of our conference suites and events are used to support the charitable aims of the museum, which opened in 1985, with 29 fine cars and three motorcycles, a collection amassed through the passion of John Haynes OBE.

John wanted this growing collection to be open to the public and a charitable trust was formed to ensure the collection would also be accessible to future generations with the aims of preservation, restoration and education.

**HAYNES**  
MOTOR MUSEUM



**HAYNES**  
MOTOR MUSEUM

## Christmas PARTY NIGHTS

**Fri 16 & Sat 17 December**

Enjoy a glass of fizz, a festive dining experience then *dancer and prancer* the night away with a magical disco ending when the clock strikes twelve. The perfect night for your team's festive celebration.

**Just off the A303, near Yeovil,  
Somerset, BA22 7LH**

For more information or to book  
**[venue@haynesmuseum.org](mailto:venue@haynesmuseum.org)**

**[haynesmuseum.org/events](http://haynesmuseum.org/events)**



## Ferne Animal Sanctuary

If you're looking for the ideal venue to host your next meeting or event, we have the perfect solution at Ferne animal sanctuary. Situated in the beautiful Blackdown Hills and set within 72 acres why not take advantage of our spacious conference room. The conference room can accommodate up to eighty people in a range of room layouts and offers a tranquil venue for corporate away days and meetings.

Our competitively priced conference package includes use of projector and screen, coffee on arrival and

mid-morning refreshments or we can cater for your event with a range of buffet options available. Menus can be viewed on the Ferne Animal Sanctuary website [www.ferneanimalsanctuary.org](http://www.ferneanimalsanctuary.org)

We have over three hundred resident animals on site and conference visitors have free access to the Sanctuary to enjoy the peaceful surroundings. This is a really special venue and has ample free parking. Booking your event at Ferne will help support the work of the sanctuary and make a real difference to the animals in our care.



## ibis Bridgwater

Celebrate the festive season in style at Keepers Kitchen and Bar, found within the ibis Bridgwater hotel.

From festive parties and lunches to Christmas Day dining, the team has created a Christmas menu packed full of old favourites, with a Keeper's twist. From traditional turkey to the special Keeper's Christmas burger, there is something for everyone to enjoy.

You can choose to dine in the



spacious and modern restaurant, or there are private dining spaces for bigger parties. The venue has ample free car parking, electric charging

points, and is handily located just off Junction 23, only one minute from the M5.

Why not stay the night? Ibis Bridgwater is offering post-party stays from only £50 per room with breakfast included, meaning the celebrations don't have to end. They're also giving you the chance to book early and save on your festivities - you can get 10% off your meal if you book by the end of October.

Find out more and book today: [keeperskitchenandbar.co.uk/keepers-bridgwater](http://keeperskitchenandbar.co.uk/keepers-bridgwater)

## The Castle at Taunton and Brazz

Experience the magic of Christmas at The Castle With festive lights and a Christmas Tree to dazzle The last few years have not been all that we anticipated Let's raise a glass to this year being what we eagerly awaited

Step through our beautiful & iconic revolving doors Celebrating with family and friends with memories to last forevermore

Christmas at The Castle Hotel is a magical time, full of good food and festive cheer. From our three-course Christmas Party menu caters for business gatherings or family and friends' get-togethers, which includes a glass of prosecco and offers complimentary room hire for those groups 16 or more. To our Christmas Eve dinner with a choir adorning our main staircase on arrival and a glass of champagne to start the delights of our four-course dinner.

Christmas Day Lunch begins as it should, with a glass of champagne leading nicely into Executive Chef,

Andrew Swann's, delectable five-course meal. Enjoy a glass of prosecco on arrival followed by a three-course Christmas Party Menu.

Christmas at Brazz is a wonderful time of year to spend celebrating with family and friends. From large office parties to smaller gatherings, Brazz offers a glass of prosecco on arrival followed by a three-course Christmas menu created by Andrew Swann and his team.



## College consortium awarded £2.5m to address regional skills needs

Bridgwater & Taunton College (BTC) is leading a consortium of Further Education and training providers to deliver skills to the South West. Working alongside Somerset Chamber of Commerce and the Devon and Plymouth Chamber the consortium has been created to act as a catalyst to align educational provision with business needs in the region.

Consortium members, City College Plymouth, Exeter College, Petroc, South Devon College, Strode College, Yeovil College, Focus Training and SWATPRO (DSTPN) have been awarded a share of £2.5m from the Department for Education two projects "The Heart of the South West Collaboration for Success" and "Green Skills for the Future".

Members of the consortium will collaborate to deliver regionally significant projects which focus on delivering skills and training in construction, automotive, digital, engineering and advanced propulsion.



Andy Berry, Principal and CEO of Bridgwater & Taunton College, said "This is a fantastic initiative, we have significant skills shortages across the South West which this consortium aims to address." He continued "Members of the consortium will collaborate to create exciting opportunities for people within our region, deliver skills our employers need to drive prosperity and development."

Emma Rawlings, Somerset Chamber of Commerce, CEO added: "This has been needed for a long time, these projects will bring businesses and education partners together to deliver skills this region needs." she continued "Educational

establishments have a challenge to keep pace with industry needs, this fund and these projects will unlock the capacity to achieve this. I'm looking forward to seeing the impact on our local and regional economy."

For more information visit [www.btc.ac.uk](http://www.btc.ac.uk).

## Taunton's Toneway/Crech Castle junction reopens after a year of work

Somerset County Council has completed a multi-million Pound revamp of the new Crech Castle/Toneway junction which is aimed at improving traffic flow and giving better access for cyclists and pedestrians.

Work on the Toneway/Crech Castle junction project includes additional lanes on the approach to the junction, as well as new crossings for those on foot and bike.

A key feature of the project involved widening of the Bathpool Bridge on the A38 Bridgwater Road, which has been closed since August 2021 to enable the work to be undertaken. This is to increase the capacity at the junction as a result of local development and growth, and widen cycling and pedestrian facilities.

The new innovative cycling and pedestrian crossing is the first in Somerset. Pedestrians will cross in two phases, whilst cyclists will be able to cross in a single phase.

Now the road is fully open to the public, the project team will concentrate on the finishing works around the junction and undertake additional landscaping works to enhance this key route into the county town.



The junction was opened after a small ceremony which saw a bus make the first journey through from Bridgwater Road to highlight Somerset County Council and Somerset Bus Partnership's current BUS IT campaign, which aims to encourage more people to use buses.

A spokesman for Somerset County Council said: "The Toneway is the main gateway into Taunton for commuters, shoppers and tourists. As well as vastly improved access for cyclists and pedestrians, the improved junction will ensure increased capacity to keep pace with the town's continued

economic and residential growth."

Pre-construction Director, Simon Dunn, added: "Griffiths is proud to have been part of this Active Travel Improvement and are delighted to see the scheme open to the public. The success of this challenging project has been achieved through a collaborative partnership developed with Somerset County Council and our Project Stakeholders.

"I would like to thank the local community for their patience during the construction and to congratulate the project team for the drive they have shown to achieve this ambitious opening deadline."

## Strong results for Clarke Willmott LLP

Clarke Willmott LLP has reported another year of positive results from 2021/22, with revenue of £59.6 million - up 12 per cent on the prior year on the back of strong results across the firm's teams and sectors.

The firm remains committed to the long-term growth of a diverse commercial and private client practice. At the heart of the firm's strategy sits a commitment to delivering excellent client service underpinned by a culture built around fully flexible and sustainable ways of working.

Stephen Rosser (pictured), CEO, said: "The last two years have been transformational for the firm.

"After a decade of improvements, we have moved the firm onto an excellent footing for future growth. Our results are a consequence of the hard work undertaken by everyone at the firm and the great support from our diverse client base from whom we have received more instructions

than ever, on increasingly complex and interesting work.

"Changes implemented during the pandemic have become our new normal and we have a thriving culture built on flexible, collaborative and supportive working."

Clarke Willmott has continued to focus on staff, wellbeing, inclusion and developing the social aspects of work in a flexible hybrid working model.

A wide range of social activities continues and more new initiatives and events are tested each month. Feedback from staff suggests that the strategy is paying dividends that go beyond the financial results.

Large numbers of people responding to the latest firmwide survey reported:

- Hybrid working is delivering benefits for our people and the wider business - 96 per cent of our people who are in the same or similar roles to the role they



had pre-pandemic now perceive that they are now working more effectively

- Not only are staff more effective now, they enjoy working flexibly - 95 per cent are enjoying the days that they work at home
- While working in a successful law firm can be hard work, almost 60 per cent of staff say that they have "a great work life balance"
- Virtually all staff would recommend Clarke Willmott as a place to work

For more information visit [www.clarkewillmott.com](http://www.clarkewillmott.com).

## HR & Employment Law Specialists

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We offer employers a free, no obligation, employee contract and handbook review confirming if your documents are up to date, legally compliant or could benefit from expansion or amendment to better protect your business.

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## Huish class of 2022 achieve exceptional A Level and Vocational results

Richard Huish College students celebrated outstanding A Level and Level 3 vocational results.

Across A Levels, an impressive 64% of students achieved high grades of A\*-B, with 83% of students gaining A\*-C. The overall A Level pass rate is an outstanding 99%. Of the students that took Vocational Extended Diplomas, an amazing 66% of grades achieved were the very highest Distinction\* or Distinction grade.

An incredible 68 students achieved three or more A\*/A grades in their A Levels. Huish top performers did extremely well across a very wide range of courses, with 19 students gaining straight A\* grades in their



A Levels. In addition, 27 students gained the very top outcome of triple Distinction\* in their vocational qualifications. Huish students have more than earned today's results through persistent hard work and commitment, showing that they are a very talented group of young people with exciting and bright futures ahead of them.

The college not only celebrated fantastic results this year but also the vast and interesting range of destinations students on their A Level and Vocational Study Programmes progress onto, from film production at the University for the Creative Arts

(UCA), medicine at Birmingham and music at Oxford, to modern European languages at Durham and a software engineering apprenticeship with world-leading security and aerospace contractor, BAE Systems.

Emma Fielding, Principal of the College said: "I am immensely proud of the hard work our Huish students put into preparing for these examinations and could not be more delighted with their success. As one of the country's highest performing Sixth Form Colleges, these results show that we are the best place to study regionally for increasingly rigorous A Level and Level 3 vocational qualifications.

"Our students' achievements begin with the efforts of our partner schools and are consolidated by the commitment, work and expertise of our wonderful college staff. 2022 has been an incredible year for the Huish community. After receiving an Outstanding Ofsted inspection earlier this year, these results build on our successes and reinforce to me what a privilege it is to be Principal of such a phenomenal college."



## Hildy announces retirement from Somerset County Cricket Club

James Hildreth has retired from professional cricket, almost 20 years after making his debut for Somerset in 2003. Since then, he has gone on to make more First XI appearances for the county than any other player.

In over 700 matches for the club across the three formats, the former Millfield School pupil has amassed over 27,000 runs and 54 centuries.

He is Somerset's third highest all-time run scorer in first class cricket, scoring in excess of 17,000 runs at an average of 40.46 with a best of 303 against Warwickshire in 2009. Only Marcus Trescothick, Harold Gimblett and Viv Richards have scored more first class hundreds for the county.

The 37-year-old is the club's all-time leading run scorer in T20 cricket, and he was a key member of Somerset's last two one-day trophy victories, scoring the winning runs when the

Club lifted the Twenty20 Cup in 2005 and the Royal London One-Day Cup in 2019.

His consistently impressive performances for Somerset saw him awarded with his county cap in 2007 and he was granted a testimonial year in 2017.

After announcing his decision to hang up his pads, James said: "The thing I'll miss most is the pride that you feel when you pull on that shirt to represent the club and the whole of the South West.

"The Somerset members and supporters have been incredible to me. They've always been so supportive and I've always felt that, whether that's walking through town or being out on the pitch."

Somerset CEO, Gordon Hollins, was full of praise for James: "The name James Hildreth is one that will live long



in the memories of Somerset members and supporters and rightly so. His record on the field is outstanding and he has been a mainstay of the success that this club has achieved over the last 20 years.

"He is held in the very highest regard by those who have played alongside him and against him over the last two decades and he is recognised as one of the finest batters of the modern era."

## Entries now open for the Somerset Business Awards 2023

Judges, sponsors, would-be winners and past finalists gathered at Hurds Hill, near Langport, for the official launch of the Somerset Business Awards 2023.

The awards are the county's biggest and most prestigious annual business awards and are organised by Somerset Chamber of Commerce to celebrate the very best of the county's businesses.

They are free to enter and businesses do not need to be a member of the Chamber to take part. Once again, leading accountancy firm Albert Goodman will be the main sponsor, with the awards culminating in a gala final on March 24.

Michael Cahill, a Partner at Albert Goodman, said: "The Somerset Business Awards are a brilliant opportunity to showcase everything that is fantastic about your business.

"Over our many years as main sponsor, we've seen some excellent business

enter the awards and then go on to even greater things. Entering the awards is a great chance to boost your profile, boost staff morale and ultimately boost your business."

This year there is a new award - Apprentice of the Year - and new criteria for the hotly-contested Small, Medium and Large Business of the Year Awards.

Businesses have until November 25 to submit their entries via the Somerset Business Awards website at [www.somersetbusinessawards.org.uk](http://www.somersetbusinessawards.org.uk). Full details of the 'how to enter' online workshop can be found on Somerset Chamber of Commerce's website at <https://www.somerset-chamber.co.uk/>.

Emma Rawlings, Chief Executive of Somerset Chamber of Commerce, said: "I am grateful for the sponsorship of so many of Somerset's leading businesses who, like me, are keen to celebrate Somerset's incredible



▲ Michael Cahill (right), of Albert Goodman, with Emma Rawlings, of Somerset Chamber of Commerce and Kevin Smith, of Brook Financial Management Ltd.

business community, especially when so many are working exceptionally hard to tackle today's challenging business conditions."



▲ Tula Knight, of PROMISEworks and Simon Darch, of SRD Technology UK.



▲ Vivien Cioma, of St Margaret's Somerset Hospice and Kevin Smith, of Brook Financial Management Ltd.

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**David.Collins@global.com**

## Awards this year are:

**Small Business of the Year**  
(turnover up to £0.5 million)  
sponsored by Enterprise South West

**Medium Business of the Year**  
(turnover up to £6 million)  
sponsored by Higos Insurance Services

**Large Business of the Year**  
(turnover over £6 million)  
sponsored by Brook Financial

**Albert Goodman Family Business**  
**of the Year Award**

**Best Use of Technology Award**  
sponsored by Porter Dodson

**Charity of the Year Award**  
sponsored by Clarke Willmott

**Employer of the Year**  
sponsored by Elite Staffing Solutions

**Investing in Somerset Award**  
sponsored by Hinkley Point C

**Start-up of the Year Award**  
sponsored by Teapot Creative

**Apprentice of the Award (new award)**  
sponsored by Weston College

**Environmental Achievement Award**  
sponsored by Gravity

**Service Excellence Award**  
sponsored by Stephens Scown

**Somerset Manufacturer and Producer Award**  
sponsored by SRD Technology UK

**Rebuild and Thrive Award**  
sponsored by Barclays UK



▲ Emma Lang and Evelyn Adfield, of Porter Dodson.



▲ Charlie Lilley, of Global and Duncan McKechnie, of ActionCOACH Ilminster.



▲ Dave Crew, of Weston College and Barry Tottle, of Teapot Creative.



▲ Ges Green, of Enterprise South West and Paul Lowndes, of This Is Gravity Limited.

## Media sponsors:

Somerset County Gazette Series and Global



## Legal, insurance and finance

### ABL South West

ABL South West is an independent commercial finance brokerage with offices on Express Park, close to Junction 23 of the M5.

We help businesses find the right type of finance to help them reach their growth potential. We do this by listening to what they want to achieve then mapping out the funding options available to help them achieve this. Quite often the funding structure is different to their initial idea!

As an independent broker we are not limited to the number of funders we use and will work with the one that we feel best meets the needs of the client

Types of finance we frequently arrange include business loans, asset finance, invoice finance, development finance and commercial mortgages

We're not a transactional business and always look to build longstanding relationships with our clients so that whatever their needs of a financial nature, whether it's finance for a new vehicle, a new accountant, a Finance Director, new accounts package, we can help.

With increasing pressure on costs, a number of clients have engaged with us recently to simply review their existing finance arrangements and ensure that they still meet the requirements of the business.

Established in 2020, we have recently recruited an additional Director, Louise Hamilton, to the ABL South West office to help service the requirements of South West businesses. If you are looking for finance or simply want to review your existing arrangements, we can help.



### Andrew English

A Relevant Life Plan is a life assurance plan which can include critical illness, providing benefits for employees of a business. The plan is established and paid by the company on the life of the employee or director. Any benefits from the plan is paid to a discretionary trust.

The beneficiaries of the trust will be the family members and dependants of the life assured.

Relevant Life Plans are suitable for businesses which are too small to warrant a group life scheme or high earning employees/directors who have substantial pension funds and do not want their death-



in-service benefits to form part of their Lifetime Allowance. Existing group scheme members can top-up their benefits limited in the amount provided by their current scheme.

Relevant Life Plans have been designed for use by any employee, including the directors of a business. They are not available to Equity Partners of a Partnership, Equity Members of a Limited Liability Partnership, sole traders or anyone not an employee. Shareholders of a limited company who are not employees or paid directors are also ineligible.

Contributions are paid by the company and will not be treated as a benefit-in-kind so will not be taxable on the life assured for whom the plan has been established.

The contributions paid to fund the plan should be treated as an allowable business expense for the company.

To receive a complimentary guide covering wealth management, retirement planning or Inheritance Tax planning, contact Andrew English on 077 342 58 342 or email [andrew.english@sjpp.co.uk](mailto:andrew.english@sjpp.co.uk).





## WPA

WPA is an award-winning not-for-profit health insurer with a heritage of more than 120 years. We look after the healthcare of hundreds of thousands of people across the UK – from families, small businesses, to some of the UK’s best known companies.



Not-for-profit means that we’re not hampered by the demands of shareholders motivated to make a profit, meaning we’re free to act differently from the rest, treating our customers as we would wish to be treated ourselves.

Our environment is important to us. We are carbon neutral and have committed to reducing our usage of power, paper and plastic in 2022. We have created a healthier environment for our team, including planting a wildflower meadow, building a walking track and outside meeting spaces to increase access to natural light, fresh air and exercise.

As a growing company we are always on the lookout for talented and enthusiastic people to join our team in Taunton. Join WPA and take your first steps towards a great career: <https://www.wpa.org.uk/about/careers>.



## Your employees’ health and wellbeing is in safe hands with WPA

The UK’s highest rated health insurer on Trustpilot, award-winning Somerset based WPA offer a range of healthcare solutions for businesses of all sizes.



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Rated 'Excellent' at 6.7/22

## Church House Investment Management

You've seen the advert with the chipped windscreen. The owner ignores the chip, it cracks. The replacement service can help, it takes longer and costs more. Managing your investments can be like this.

When managing your own investments, it can be easy to let things drift. Having a wealth manager take responsibility means you don't have to find time, leaving time for other things that matter.



You've worked hard for your wealth, or perhaps you inherited and carry the responsibility of generations. Either way, it can be emotional.

Ask yourself, do you always make the right decision when you're emotional?

Might it be better if decisions regarding investments are made by someone whom you trust, free from emotion and more objectively.

When things change, we can benefit from advice. For example, if you've built a successful business and decide to sell to enjoy a different pace of life, do you have the skills to ensure your wealth supports your new lifestyle?

A wealth manager will bring expertise to help make the most of the wealth for which you have worked so hard.

In tougher times too, like divorce or bereavement, it helps to have someone objective to give some advice and guidance.

So, why do you need a wealth manager?

I have barely scratched the surface here. Find someone you trust, you enjoy dealing with and who talks in language you understand. In an ideal world, you'll find all three in one person!

**CH** Church House Investment Management

## Jo Pavey Insurance Services part of Lloyd & Whyte Community Broking

Jo Pavey Insurance Services became part of Lloyd & Whyte Community Broking in March 2021.

Originally established in 2008, Community Broking Taunton is led by Jo Pavey, and the team has over 27 years of experience in insurance broking.

The focus of Taunton team is to provide a professional yet personal service, ensuring that advice is on hand whenever clients require it. When it comes to business, nothing beats local knowledge for a personal service and accurate quotes to meet your insurance needs.

While getting you a good deal is always important, it's not just about price. We seek to add real value, through risk management and advice.

We're different because we combine the strength of a larger network of insurance brokers with the quality,

personal service you expect from a smaller business. Knowing an area has always meant we can provide more accurate quotes as we understand the issues in any given area.

The team has a wide range of industry experience dealing with business insurance including liability, property owners, leisure, hotels, conference centres, wedding venues, commercial combined, construction, haulage, fleet.

What makes us different? We are proud to be part of the Benefact Group – a charity owned family of financial services companies that give all available profits to charity and good causes.

In a world that lives online – we're bringing insurance back to the community!

For more details visit our website here [www.jpinsurance.co.uk](http://www.jpinsurance.co.uk), telephone 01823 252198 or email [info@jpinsurance.co.uk](mailto:info@jpinsurance.co.uk).

**JO PAVEY**  
INSURANCE SERVICES  
Part of  
**Lloyd & Whyte**  
Community Broking



## eCapital Commercial Finance

We are cashflow financiers, which means that we break the cashflow cycle for businesses waiting for customers to pay them and struggling to pay their own suppliers and staff while they wait for payment.

When our clients invoice their customers they upload a copy of that invoice to us. Then we advance money against that invoice; generally between 80-85% of the total. Clients owe us that money, but when their customers pay, usually direct to us, we are repaid. Payment can also be to our client who then repays us. After the invoice is settled the client has the remainder of the invoice value less our fee.

In the majority of cases we do the credit control also for our clients, included in the fee, which saves administration

and the awkwardness of asking for both more business, and payment for previous business. An optional extra service is bad debt protection cover.

We offer a personal approach tailored to the individual business, similar to how bank managers used to work in the past. We visit our clients to understand the business's activities and how it is managed before we offer a facility.

Clients are encouraged to talk to their Relationship Managers and Credit Controllers who are on the phone building good working relationships. We ask our clients to tell us if they have financial problems so we can help. During 2020, we overpaid in cases more than 100% of invoice value to keep our customers able to pay staff while waiting for furlough money.



## Laurel Finance

Laurel Finance exists to help business owners to get the very best from their business. The data that is collected and stored by our everyday processes and systems is vast, and useful. Lots of people feel bored or even intimidated by the thought of looking at their business figures.

However, by not looking at what these figures are telling you, you can find yourself feeling stressed, tired, or uninspired.

Finding that the work life balance is unhealthy or unsustainable, or perhaps spending too much time on admin as opposed to doing what you are good at. Being kept awake at night wondering if you will be able to cover the wages bill, or pay the VAT. Not having as much cash in the bank as you would expect, or repeatedly finding that there is too much month at the end of the money.

These are all problems that Laurel Finance will help you to identify, understand and rectify. Offering varying levels of support, and various solutions, we will work together to get you on the pathway you want to be on. From free resources, to outsourced Finance Director support, Laurel Finance is here to get your business working for you on your terms, with a smile and friendly disposition thrown in for good measure.

Please get in touch with Laura via email [laura@laurelfinance.co.uk](mailto:laura@laurelfinance.co.uk) or call 07859 259 308 to discuss further.



## Gallagher

As specialists in helping businesses in the region with their insurance and risk management needs, Gallagher's South West team of over 150 risk professionals is fully aware of the challenges that businesses in Somerset are currently facing. Firms of all sizes and in many different sectors across the region are dealing with an uncertain economic outlook and evolving range of risks.

Gallagher recently interviewed 1,000 business leaders to identify the top risks affecting their organisation

currently - with the increasing cost of energy and rising inflation meaning that the cost of materials is seen as the top risk to local companies. In fact, one in five businesses (19%) put cost of materials at the top of Gallagher's risk index - almost twice as many who said it was a leading risk pre-pandemic - with issues including supply chain delays, cybercrime and employee retention also appearing in the top 10.

For more information please contact [Cheryl\\_Phillips@ajg.com](mailto:Cheryl_Phillips@ajg.com)



## Positive Wealth Creation Ltd

Positive Wealth Creation Ltd has been helping clients navigate the challenging economic outlook. Addressing the concerns of rising inflation, higher interest rates, changes to national insurance, the invasion of Ukraine and UK's own political uncertainty, have all been part of daily conversations.

Directors and Chartered Financial Planners, Jenni and Alex Turco have lengthy experience of various financial conditions. We understand that clients want safe pairs of hands, to gain peace of mind and to have reassurance through troubled times.

The business has been awarded the title of 'Chartered Financial Planners' from the Chartered Insurance Institute for the 15th consecutive year. This involves meeting high standards relating to professionalism and capability.

This year, we have been pleased to see recognition for the ongoing development of our colleagues. Our paraplanner, Sioned James, won the Insurance Institute of Bristol 'Pandemic Perseverance' prize for using the lockdown periods to complete the regulated Diploma in Financial Planning. Our operations executive, Jonathan Walter, completed his Certificate in Financial Planning

and our trainee paraplanner, Suraj Singh, has balanced getting married with passing exams.

We continue our 'Course Connect' partnership with the University of the West of England through offering a paid placement, prize sponsorship and delivering a guest lecture to Personal Financial Planning module students.

In 2021, our carbon emissions were 9% lower than in 2020, and the residue offset fully via tree planting in South West. Later this year, we launch of our new website and refreshed approach to marketing.



## Battens Solicitors

Battens Solicitors has a dedicated specialist team dealing with corporate and commercial matters across all sectors, from aerospace to hair products to distilleries.

Based entirely in the South West, dealing with matters nationwide and internationally, guiding clients through business issues with dependable and pragmatic advice. This experience, combined with a personable and proactive approach, helps our clients turn business challenges, large or small, into opportunities.

We offer clients a one-stop shop for all matters corporate

or commercial, including property (real and intellectual) and employment law, liaising with other specialist colleagues where necessary.

The work we handle is wide-ranging: from the buying or selling of companies, businesses, or assets to commercial agreements of all varieties, including shareholders' and partnership agreements. Perhaps a merger or joint venture, or new terms and conditions, or a new investor.

Battens provides clarity and certainty in a world of doubt, leaving our clients free to focus on achieving their business goals. Start the conversation 0800 652 8373.



Up next in the December/January edition of Somerset Voice:

Sector focus - health and safety

Feature - all things digital, from websites, to design and business solutions



## SWIG Finance

As the South West's Enterprise Lending Community Development Finance Institution (CDFI), SWIG Finance uses its lending as a catalyst for sustainable economic growth.

CDFIs don't compete with the banks, but rather help to increase the overall share of SMEs accessing finance. To achieve this, we focus our efforts on viable SMEs which fall outside of the scope of mainstream lenders. In fact, nine out of 10 of the businesses CDFIs lend to have been declined by another lender.

CDFIs work closely with their customers. By providing support throughout the application process and for the duration on the loan, they get to know them to give their business the best chance for success.

We have dedicated funds available to support SMEs and Start Ups across the region. Our funding can be used for most sectors and a range of purposes, including growth

finance, working capital, product development and relocation.

Our hands-on approach, knowledge and expertise helps businesses avoid challenging issues before they happen. It could also help to accelerate growth.

Perhaps the biggest differentiator for CDFIs is our ability to lend by looking at the bigger picture. Consequently, we base our lending decisions on professional judgement rather than automated credit-scoring methods.

Plus we're growing every year. In 2021/22, we lent £10.8m to 502 businesses, helping to create and secure over 1,000 jobs and generate £32.3m.

If you would like to discuss your requirements, please get in touch on 01872 227 930 or hello@swigfinance.co.uk.

For more information about SWIG Finance, please visit [www.swigfinance.co.uk](http://www.swigfinance.co.uk).



## Business Loans for Somerset

**Loans up to £250k are available**

**Our decisions are made by people, not computers, which means we can lend by looking at the bigger picture.**

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## Somerset Chamber of Commerce to help employers and trainers bridge the skills gap

Somerset Chamber of Commerce will ensure local employers are at the heart of the learning and skills system as part of the Department for Education's (DfE) plans to address skills shortages across all industries.

The Chamber is working with the DfE on the development and delivery of its Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) in the county which will build stronger, more dynamic partnerships between employers and further education providers.

The aim is to create a more responsive education and training system to meet the needs of employers across Somerset.

Emma Rawlings, Chief Executive of Somerset Chamber of Commerce, said: "LSIPs are an exciting opportunity to bring together employers, training providers and other key stakeholders to

identify the key priorities and changes needed in our skills provision locally.

"This will help to ensure post-16 technical education and training is more closely aligned to local employer and labour market needs in the future.

"We are looking forward to driving this important agenda forward with our partners to ensure the LSIP is fully representative of the needs of our region's businesses and young people entering employment while ensuring that our further education providers can be truly responsive to their future needs."

Somerset Chamber is one of 32 Accredited Chambers of Commerce which will lead LSIPs across the country, supported by the British Chambers of Commerce (BCC).

Jane Gratton, from the BCC, said: "We are delighted that so many Accredited

Chambers have been designated by the Secretary of State. The Chamber Network will use its convening power and deep knowledge of their local economies and communities to develop clear plans to address skills challenges faced by businesses.

"This is an opportunity for employers to shape how their current and future workforce can access the right training to thrive in the modern, more digital and greener workplace.

"More than 10,000 businesses were engaged in the eight Chamber-led trailblazers. Building on this learning and success, we will ensure that planning for local skills is aligned with the job opportunities and growth ambitions of employers. An efficient, network approach will enable the sharing of best practice to boost outcomes for people wherever they live, work and train."

## Build your talent pool your way

Despite price increases and talk of recession, recruitment remains a key challenge for many Somerset businesses. Whilst covering tomorrow's shifts may be the immediate priority, building the future talent pool is the long-term solution.

Whether you have two, 20 or 200 employees, Somerset Education Business Partnership can help you create an outreach plan that fits with your needs, resources and preferences. Here are just some of the opportunities available:

- If digital is your thing you can share your career journey on the 'Made in Somerset' platform - scan the QR code below to get started
- If you've got a great company we can showcase this in our 'Industry insights' [insights.somerset-ebp.co.uk/](https://insights.somerset-ebp.co.uk/)
- If you prefer to inspire young people in person then sign up to our newsletter to get details of local careers events: [somerset-ebp.co.uk/subscribe.htm](https://somerset-ebp.co.uk/subscribe.htm)
- Or if you'd rather influence the senior people you might like to be an Enterprise Advisor or Governor at a local school

To find out more about these and other ways to build your talent pipeline contact: [andrew.hanson@somerset-ebp.co.uk](mailto:andrew.hanson@somerset-ebp.co.uk); 07912 264531 or [Imelda.leetch@somerset-ebp.co.uk](mailto:Imelda.leetch@somerset-ebp.co.uk); 07519 124546.



## Duo of Somerset Chamber Business Partners



Somerset Chamber is delighted to welcome a new Business Partner and the return of a second.

Bridgwater & Taunton College has renewed its existing partnership with the Chamber, while National Highways has joined.

The Chamber works closely with its business partners to support and promote them as part of their partnership.

Bridgwater & Taunton College operates across main centres in Bridgwater, Taunton and Cannington, catering for 22,000 full and part-time students - including 2,600



## Buses, cricket and a smart campus – all in a day’s work for Chamber CEO Emma

Somerset Chamber Chief Executive Emma Rawlings has been out and about across Somerset and beyond, meeting businesses, business leaders and the British Chambers of Commerce (BCC) Director General, Shevaun Haviland.

Emma was one of the lucky few who were invited by Somerset County Council to board a bus to celebrate the official opening of the multi-million Pound revamp of the new Creech Castle/Toneway junction in Taunton.

The improvements are designed to improve traffic flow and give better access for cyclists and pedestrians.

She was joined by Chamber Project Manager and Hinkley Supply Chain Lead, Scott Jenkins, for a tour of the Gravity Smart Campus site near Bridgwater with Paul Lowndes,

Gravity’s Programme Director.

Work is well underway on the 616-acres site, which will offer a new, low carbon way for businesses to operate.

And while the sun was shining, Emma also managed a visit to Somerset County Cricket Club to find out more about their LBW Business Club and to welcome the club back as a Chamber Business Partner for another year.

Then it was off to London for a CEO meeting at the BCC, hosted by the BCC’s Director General Shevaun Haviland. Shevaun will be making a return visit to Somerset this month when she attends our Business Leaders’ Dinner and has a tour of the ever-changing Hinkley Point C site.

apprentices and 950 Higher Education students – and employing 1,200 staff.

It has one of the broadest curricula of any school or college in the United Kingdom and the only college in the country to have been awarded both a National College (the southern hub of the National College for Nuclear) and an Institute of Technology.

National Highways is a Government company which plans, designs, builds, operates and maintains England’s motorways and major A roads, known as the strategic road network.

The team manages and improves the strategic road network to make journeys safer, smoother and more reliable.

Its priorities are safety, customers and delivery and since 2015 it has invested billions of Pounds to improve road safety and increase capacity on the road network.

## Book your place at Somerset Chamber’s AGM

Somerset Chamber will be holding its AGM next month, giving members the chance to find out more about our activities over the last year.

There will be financial updates, an insight into the last year’s events calendar, an update from the Hinkley Supply Chain and details about how the Chamber has helped and supported businesses.

We will also be looking to appoint new non-executive directors to the Chamber Board. The Board of Directors is there to provide support and guidance to the management and leadership of the Chamber, as well as ensuring proper governance and responsible use of your Chamber’s resources.

Non-executive Directors are appointed on a non-remunerated basis for an initial three-year term, and applicants must be employed by or are an owner/operator of a Chamber member.

Additionally, they should have relevant and appropriate experience to bring

to this important role, as well as a commitment to the future success of Somerset Chamber of Commerce and its membership

This year’s AGM will be held at Somerset County Cricket Club, in Taunton, on Thursday, November 17, from 6.30pm to 10pm.

There will also be the chance to network, find out about the Chamber’s plans for the future and have a chat with both Chamber staff and directors. There is also the additional draw of a fabulous three-course dinner!

Places can be booked online via the events section of the Chamber website at [www.somerset-chamber.co.uk](http://www.somerset-chamber.co.uk). Booking is essential and early booking is advised!

To find out more about joining the Board of Directors and for an application form, please email [manager@somerset-chamber.co.uk](mailto:manager@somerset-chamber.co.uk).



## Annual summer barbecue at WPA, Taunton



▲ Josh Nicholson and Jeff Tyndall of Jatech Limited.



▲ Sharon Shier of WPA and Julie Callun of Cooper Associates.



▲ Fiona Mahoney and Shane Mace of Reminiscence Learning.

▼ Phil Wilson and Ross Browne of Gallagher with Emma Rawlings of Somerset Chamber of Commerce.







▲ Derek Smart of Amberley Management Recruitment and Graeme Crosbie of Level Up South West.



▲ Deborah Hyde of April People and Shelley Poole of Wellington HR.



▲ Somerset Chamber of Commerce CEO Emma Rawlings and Charlie MacEwan of sponsors WPA.



▲ Richard Oliver of Impact Design and Marketing with Elizabeth and Kate who kept everyone's glasses topped up during the evening.

### Bank of England annual update at Taunton Racecourse

### Handelsbanken



▲ Attendees enjoyed networking and a cooked breakfast before hearing from the Bank of England's Deputy Agent for the South West, Jamie Barber.



▲ Oliver Howse of sponsors Handelsbanken, Emma Rawlings of Somerset Chamber of Commerce and Jamie Barber, Deputy Agent South West for the Bank of England.



▼ Elaine Simpson of Pitman Training and Kevin Hodges of Ferne Animal Sanctuary.



Let's network over breakfast  
at Monks Yard, Ilminster

BLOCK  
WORKSPACE



▲ Lisa Brammer of sponsor BLOCK Workspace and Emma Rawlings of Somerset Chamber of Commerce.



▲ Ben Grave of Mark One Consultants and Tony Pizii of Temple Health.



▲ Miranda Coleberd of Albert Goodman and Duncan McKechnie of ActionCOACH Ilminster.



▲ Paul Lowndes of Gravity and John Revill of Strode College.

## Meet the Neighbours - Devon

Thursday  
**3 Nov**

Always one of our most popular events, our annual networking lunch, run jointly with Devon and Plymouth Chamber of Commerce, offers an excellent opportunity to make new connections with business across Somerset and Devon. There will be a two-course lunch and early booking is advisable with spaces limited to two people per company.

Sponsored by



**Time:** 12.30pm - 2.30pm  
at Courtyard by Marriott, Sandy Park, Exeter  
**Cost:** £28.50 plus VAT

## Training workshop - How to foster creativity

Tuesday  
**15 Nov**

One of the most common myths surrounding creativity is that it's a skill you either possess or you don't. However, when you strip it back, being creative is simply about having the ability to bring something valuable into the world. Jenny Walford, Associate Director at ADPR, will focus on how to ensure creative thinking is at the forefront of your business.

Sponsored by



**Time:** 9.30am - 1.30pm at Equity House, Taunton  
**Cost:** £49.50 plus VAT

## Construction Connections

Thursday  
**10 Nov**

Our Construction Connections events are a great way to make new contacts who specifically work in the construction and associated industries. The event offers informal networking over a buffet lunch and refreshments. Attendance is strictly limited to those who work in the construction and associated industries.

**Time:** 12 noon - 2pm at ibis Bridgwater  
**Cost:** £17.95 plus VAT

## MD and CEO forum - Bridgwater

Thursday  
**1 Dec**

Somerset Chamber of Commerce invites members to attend the next round table policy discussion specifically for MDs and CEOs. There will be opportunities to network, but this is primarily a forum where you can share your business challenges and speak openly on issues affecting your business. All discussions will be held in full confidence.

**Time:** 12 noon - 2pm at ibis Bridgwater  
**Cost:** £20.95 plus VAT

## Ladies' afternoon tea

Wednesday  
**16 Nov**

Whether you are new to networking, new in business, or just want an opportunity to meet new contacts, our ladies' events are an ideal way to raise the profile of your business. Our popular afternoon tea provides the perfect platform to enjoy some informal networking in a friendly and professional environment.

Sponsored by



**Time:** 12.30pm - 2.30pm  
at Oake Manor Golf Club, Oake  
**Cost:** £24.75 plus VAT

## Christmas drinks and nibbles

Wednesday  
**14 Dec**

Save the date! Christmas is fast approaching and as a thank you for your support over the past year Somerset Chamber will be inviting members to join us for a glass of bubbly and some festive nibbles. Keep an eye on our website and our e-newsletter Pulse for more details.

**Time:** 10.30am - 12.30pm  
**Cost:** Full details to follow!

\*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.



## Education is key to combating mental health issues in the construction sector



As a member of Somerset Chamber, businesses automatically receive membership of Quest, a national British Chambers of Commerce scheme which offers Chamber members access to advice on HR, legal, health and safety, tax and VAT at no additional cost to their annual membership fee. Here, the Quest experts look at the implications for employers of increasing mental health issues in the construction sector.



The construction industry faces inherent health and safety issues which are obvious. But what is not so clear is that mental health issues are on the increase. With the long return to normality post COVID-19 restrictions, building firms and employees have been put under pressure to resume deferred projects and meet tighter deadlines.

With the physical demands of the job, this often leads to working longer hours, creating fatigue. Add to this, a poor work-family balance and supply chain issues, it's not surprising that mental health has been affected.

The industry is male dominated, and there is a 'macho' image. This often means staff are reluctant to even think about their mental health, let alone raise or discuss it.

2019 research by the Chartered Institute of Building found that 26% of building professionals considered suicide yet 56% of organisations did not have any mental health policies, meaning mental health remains a hidden danger. Almost certainly this has increased since returning to normality.

The 2022 HSE Accident Statistics Data revealed that stress and anxiety accounted for 20% of all work-related illnesses leading to 70million absences at an estimated cost of £70m. Stress is a genuine issue.

The construction industry needs to change its approach and offer more help and support. To start with, employers and employees must recognise and accept that stress can affect anyone and everyone. Raising awareness is crucial, and encouraging staff to be open and honest, to discard this 'macho' image.

Employers need to devise and implement mental health policies and procedures. Education is the best tool. This can be done easily and often as part of daily toolbox safety talks.

Employers have a statutory duty to safeguard the health and safety of their staff. Conducting frequent assessments of work-related problems may identify common stressors allowing employers to take appropriate actions.



This may involve being more flexible by changing work patterns, shifts or workloads, to minimise risks. Regular team meetings or toolbox talks are an effective way of raising issues and allowing free speech to find areas of concern. Creating an open environment for dialogue is crucial.

Staff should be assured that their safety is paramount, and that help is available. They should be encouraged to speak to their managers and supervisors. External help can also be accessed via the employees GP to get counselling. The Construction Industry Helpline can also offer advice via the telephone, online as well as in-house support to those who seek help.

In a male dominated industry, with a 'macho' image where mental health issues are seen as a taboo, it is important that employers recognise that mental health affects all industries and every employee. Getting guidance and then formulating plans, procedures and policies is a good start.

Quest can recommend you on your statutory obligations and suggest options and alternatives. We can offer consultancy services to draft these policies for you to ensure you are and remain compliant and help safeguard the safety of your staff. Call us on 01455 852028.

## EV transitioning: the green challenge of staggered grey fleet take-up

Somerset Chamber works with the AA to offer members a substantial discount on their AA breakdown cover. The AA also comments on numerous motoring issues. Here, Stuart Thomas, Director of Fleet and Accident Management Services at the AA, says grey fleet lag is causing firms a headache when it comes to their environmental credentials.



Business grey fleets are likely to be experiencing something of a lag when it comes to EV (electric vehicle) transitioning, thanks in part to the levels of driver hesitancy we are seeing emerge.



The phenomenon known as grey fleet refers to fleets comprising employee-owned vehicles, rather than company cars. The pandemic has seen grey fleets surge in popularity, as businesses strive to cut costs. There are now around 14 million grey fleet vehicles on UK roads.

However, grey fleets present an environmental headache for managers striving to reach sustainability goals, thanks to the lack of control over the type of vehicles purchased and owned by employees.

Indeed, a recent policy paper from the Urban Mobility Partnership found that a grey fleet reduction is critical to

decarbonisation plans for both public and private sectors (May 2022).

New AA research shows that one in 10 used vehicle drivers are putting off updating their vehicle. Indeed, 9% of drivers with models aged more than four years old are holding off swapping their car for an EV until the 'right time'.

The most common reason drivers are choosing not to upgrade is that they don't feel the need for a new one (63%). Meanwhile, younger drivers were significantly more likely to be waiting for finance or a loan to end before they upgrade their car (11% of 25-34-year olds) than older drivers.

## Latest Member-to-Member Offers

As a member of Somerset Chamber why not take advantage of our great range of member-to-member offers?



If you have an offer you would like to add to our list, visit [www.somersetchamber.co.uk/membership](http://www.somersetchamber.co.uk/membership)



Welcome to our newest members of the Somerset Chamber.

### Alchemmy

#### Business Consultancy

Award-winning management consultancy Alchemmy, with offices in Bristol, London and Nottingham, use their expertise across private and public sectors to help clients, employees, and partners to thrive by addressing their biggest growth, operational improvements, digital, data and change challenges.

**Di Howard, 07552 868399**  
**di.howard@alchemmy.com**  
**<http://www.alchemmy.com>**

### Haynes Motor Museum

#### Events and Conferencing

This unique conference and event suite, two minutes from the A303, offers a diverse range of inside space catering for up to 400 theatre style and enough outside space to hold an array of events from team building to country fairs.

**Sarah Berry, 01963 407038**  
**sarah.berry@haynesmuseum.org**  
**[www.haynesmuseum.org](http://www.haynesmuseum.org)**

### cottages.com

#### Hotel and Tourism

Cottages.com are proud to be the UK's leader in holiday home rentals, we have dedicated Business Development Managers in each region to recruit new properties to our portfolio through expert local knowledge and a passion for delivering exceptional stays to our guests.

**Kerry Govier, 07787 534331**  
**kerry.govier@cottages.com**  
**<http://www.cottages.com>**

### Hotpod Yoga Taunton

#### Health and Wellbeing, Sports and Leisure

Join us for one of a kind immersive experience. You will stretch further, breathe deeper, sweat harder and melt fully into the Hotpod experience. A balanced flow of postures to work the body and calming the mind in equal measure.

**Christine Tan, 07876 203215**  
**taunton@hotpodyoga.com**  
**<https://hotpodyoga.com/studios/taunton/>**

### Creative Risk Solutions Limited

#### Insurance and Risk Management

Creative's ethos is to be entirely focused on our client's needs, we're focused first and foremost on what is important to our client's business and not our own balance sheet. Now with an office in Taunton, we are ready to assist!

**Jonathan Swainbank, 07943 820739**  
**jswainbank@creativerisksolutions.co.uk**  
**[creativerisksolutions.co.uk](http://creativerisksolutions.co.uk)**

### Seetec Pluss

#### Government, Health & Wellbeing, Recruitment.

Seetec Pluss is a leading provider of work and wellbeing services. We empower individuals, businesses, and communities to thrive. Seetec Pluss offers a wide range of employment, health, and wellbeing opportunities. We support people from all walks of life to break down barriers and achieve their goals.

**Emma Blackburn, 0800 334 5525**  
**Emma.Blackburn@seetecpluss.co.uk**  
**<http://www.seetecpluss.co.uk>**

### Edward Martin Computer Services Ltd

#### ICT

Bringing you peace of mind for all things IT. Repair - maintenance - PCs - supply/install - printers and cartridges - IT security services support when you need it, remotely or in person. Retail and commercial.

**James Richmond, 01963 633603**  
**james.richmond@edwardmartin.co.uk**  
**[www.edwardmartin.co.uk](http://www.edwardmartin.co.uk)**

### WBW Solicitors & Chartered Financial Planners

#### Legal

WBW Solicitors has 12 offices across the South West, in Somerset, Devon and Cornwall. Our philosophy is simple; every customer has a unique set of requirements, and our service is driven by this. We offer tailor-made solutions for the best possible results.

**Faye McCarthy, 01460 269700**  
**fayemccarthy@wbw.co.uk**  
**<https://www.wbw.co.uk>**



## SDS celebrates milestone 20th anniversary

SDS is delighted to be celebrating its 20th year of trading. Starting in 2002 in a shared office in Edington, the company looked at how the industry had traditionally been viewed and decided to take on a different service-led approach.

The early days of SDS coincided with the dramatic change of photocopiers becoming linked to IT networks and transforming into printers and scanners, this meant they had to adapt the service and support accordingly.

They took on the dealership of Konica Minolta in 2005 and have now become their premier partner in the South West and are proud to supply and service these premium products and solutions. The team has now grown to nine staff who all care passionately about doing their best for the client.

Subsequently, SDS has diversified into print management solutions such as PaperCut and document workflow offerings such as invoice approval systems and tailored scan routing to



20 YEARS OF EXCELLENCE

clients own back-end software. The company ethos is around providing solutions rather than just selling a machine.

Nigel Gass, SDS Sales Director, said: "We have built up a machine base of 1,200 plus and over 600 clients from every business sector. Alongside a willingness to go that bit further to ensure the customer is left feeling appreciated and the job has been carried out by people who genuinely care.

"At the heart of our business is fair and transparent pricing from initial proposal to the ongoing service. This may sound obvious; however, it is sometimes lacking from our competitors.

"Our personal approach to account management means that you will have the continuity of one point of contact to initially take care of enquiries, allied with our friendly and knowledgeable service and admin team all based at our offices in Somerset make us something special."



## Business mentors needed to support Barclays LifeSkills

As part of Barclays' Rebuilding Thriving Local Economies initiative, Barclays LifeSkills is seeking local businesses and representatives to join and participate in workshops by volunteering as a mentor.

Barclays LifeSkills aims to help people build the confidence, knowledge and core transferable skills businesses are looking for, as well as improve money skills.

The Talent Foundry, an education charity and Barclays LifeSkills delivery partner, will be delivering a series of employability workshops across secondary schools in Taunton this academic year 2022-23.

Mentoring through this initiative is a chance to support students to develop

core transferable skills and prepare them for the next stage of their lives. Specifically, it will involve:

- Supporting seven employability sessions from October 2022 - July 2023, these will be a mixture of in-person (usually in-school) and virtual, each approximately three hours long
- Providing insights to students into key employability skill areas including writing CVs, interview skills and being enterprising
- No prior expertise in mentoring or working with young people is required - comprehensive training and guidance will be included
- Having an up-to-date DBS check - this will be paid for by



Barclays LifeSkills so there will be no financial cost to either the volunteer or their organisation. We would just need a few details to complete the check!

The workshops are also an opportunity to strengthen your connection with the local community and build your organisations' reputation in the area. Mentors will not only interact with nearby schools but also have the opportunity to network with Barclays team members and other local organisations.

For more information email Nick Porter at [nicholas.x.porter@barclays.com](mailto:nicholas.x.porter@barclays.com).

## Local Social Enterprise lender launches second Social Impact Report

Lendology CIC, working with council partners, provides access to low cost, responsible finance. Unlike other lenders, Lendology makes decisions with people, for people and puts impact before profit.

The CIC's second Annual Social Impact Report has been prepared to evidence how this translates into tangible improvements to individuals, communities and councils across the UK. The report has been independently audited by The Financial Inclusion Centre, a not-for-profit research organisation, to verify the results.

With over 51% of households in the South West not having access to emergency savings, over 11% of households in fuel poverty and 24.2% excess winter deaths each year, the Report highlights the stark challenges already faced in the region, even before the energy and cost of living crisis hits this winter.

Healthy homes are critical to the health and wellbeing of its occupants and reduce the impact on local services, such as the NHS. Housing is a 'social determinant of health' that can dramatically impact physical and mental health inequalities throughout life. Ensuring homeowners have access to fair finance to maintain their homes means that homes are kept healthy for the families who live within them.



Emma Lower, CEO at Lendology, said: "2021-22 was our best year on record for lending with over £1.7million lent to homeowners to enable the provision of home repairs, improvements, adaptations or energy efficiency and renewable energy measures.

"However, as a Social Enterprise we look beyond the numbers and the case studies throughout the report highlight how affordable finance has transformed lives with improved living conditions and better health and wellbeing as a result. The standout figure for me is that for every £1 invested by councils in the scheme, £2.58 of impact is generated locally"

Read the full Social Impact Report:  
<https://www.lendology.org.uk/about/our-social-impact/>.

## Alchemy goes west!



Somerset Chamber member Alchemmy has opened a new office at 101 Victoria St, Redcliffe, Bristol, to bring Alchemmy's change guaranteed services to clients in the West of England and beyond.

Ben Middleton, MD, said: "We are delighted to be taking the next steps of our growth journey with our new presence in the South West. We are looking forward to creating the special Alchemmy impact and experience for our clients in the area and look forward to welcoming many more Alchemmists to the company."

Henry Monelle, Director, added: "We are excited to be bringing our Financial Times Award winning Management Consultancy skills and capability to the South West, serving clients in their most challenging of times whether that's executing new strategy, driving operational improvement, or delivering digital transformation in a responsible way."

Businesses and public services located anywhere, from Land's End, through Hardy's Wessex, to the Bristol Channel, Wales and beyond, seeking support on growth, transformation or Intelligent Automation, should visit [www.alchemmy.com](http://www.alchemmy.com) or send an email to Di Howard, Associate Director at [di.howard@alchemmy.com](mailto:di.howard@alchemmy.com) for more information.

## Cognique welcomes Hannah as first in-house content writer

It's been an exciting year of growth for Cognique. An increased focus on digital marketing to complement the company's bespoke website design services meant the moment had come to employ a full-time content writer to meet an ever-growing demand for website copy. Hannah Burnett joined in June, bringing the team to six full-time members.

COGNIQUE



Hannah has worked in various content roles since graduating from Bath Spa University with a degree in creative writing. Not only is she Cognique's first in-house content writer, it is also Hannah's first full-time content-based role.

She brings another layer of expertise to the firm's existing marketing team, writing unique content with SEO in mind.

Cognique has doubled in size over the last 12 months and is ready to hit the ground running as there's plenty to look forward to in 2023 - including Cognique's 20th anniversary, an excuse to pop a few corks if ever there was one!

To find out more visit [www.cognique.co.uk](http://www.cognique.co.uk).





## Staff at Somerset Passenger Solutions raise funds for air ambulance

Staff at Somerset Passenger Solutions (SPS) in Bridgwater have raised over £1,200 for Dorset and Somerset Air Ambulance (DSAA) through a variety of in-house events including a golf day and day trips to Weymouth and the Bath and Cardiff Christmas Markets.

As a specialist transport provider, SPS provided coaches and fuel for the trips and tickets were sold to friends and family where 100% of the money raised was donated to the charity. During these trips, raffles were held and there were tins and buckets for donations.

Simon Cursio, Managing Director at SPS, said: "Much of the activities we do to raise money are also seen as an opportunity to socialise and come together as a team outside of work. The day trips are a great opportunity for our staff to have fun while raising money for a very worthy cause. The air ambulance needs to raise £5 million every year to continue its lifesaving service for the people of Dorset and



Pictured, from left, are Debbie Birtwhistle of Dorset and Somerset Air Ambulance, Neil Clements of the SPS parking team, Sally Anne Collins, Head of Customer Services at SPS, Simon Cursio the Managing Director of SPS, Clive Noble of the SPS parking team and Malcolm Higgs SPS driver and SPS Charity Causes Committee.

Somerset. Donations, like ours, will help save more lives."

SPS is a world class transport provider

and provides the entire passenger transportation service for the Hinkley Point C Project serving the whole of Somerset. Formed in 2016, SPS has seen huge growth growing from 40 employees to almost 500.

Emma Jones, Dorset and Somerset Air Ambulance Fundraising Manager, said: "The charity partnership between Somerset Passenger Solutions and DSAA started in February 2020 - just before we went into lockdown. Despite this, once restrictions were eased, they managed to raise an incredible £1,230.62 by organising staff coach trips and a raffle.

"Their logistical support was also invaluable when they offered DSAA the use of their park and ride site at Washford Cross to be used as the start area for our 2021 Coast to Coast Cycle Challenge. Instead of having to cancel our event, SPS enabled it to go ahead and with support from all those who took part, the event raised a staggering £27,267."

## Watchet Festival internet powered from space with the help of Elon Musk's Starlink and EMCS

Edward Martin Computer Services (EMCS) has worked for a number of years with Watchet Festival to provide Wi-Fi services for retailers and artists backstage.

The festival site had never benefited from the best internet and the connection had been haphazard in previous years due to its rural location

This year, however, was different. The tech had finally arrived to be able to deliver faster internet than many people enjoy in their town homes... and out in the middle of the countryside.

EMCS started offering installation of Elon Musk's Starlink satellite internet service in June and came to the conclusion that this would be the best solution for Watchet Festival's Wi-Fi service to connect retailers to the banking services and artists to their social media.

Instead of a crackly, intermittent and slow line, all retailers and artists alike were able to enjoy and benefit from



lightening quick links to their card service providers or YouTube.

Mark Bale, Watchet Festival's organiser, said: "The equipment [EMCS] recommended and installed worked fantastically."

James Richmond, the new managing director of EMCS, added: "I remember seeing the line of satellites crossing the night sky early in lock down and thought there must be great benefit to

be gained from Elon Musk's initiative. This big leap in technology ensures everyone who lives or runs businesses in remote areas with poor internet cover can get a cracking connection with everything that comes with it."

If you would like to find out more about how this tech (or other technology!), please call Kim at EMCS on 01984 633603 or email [kim@edwardmartin.co.uk](mailto:kim@edwardmartin.co.uk).



## Rotec team signs up to Santa Abseil challenge in aid of St Margaret's Hospice Care

It may be too early to mention the festive season, but St Margaret's Hospice Care is gearing up for Christmas already with the launch of its new fundraising event - Santa Abseil.

Sponsored by Rotec Hydraulics Ltd, volunteer fundraisers will abseil a 60ft drop at Cheddar Gorge, one of Britain's most spectacular natural landmarks, all while dressed as Santa!

Never one to walk away from a challenge, six Rotec employees will be taking on the challenge on Saturday, December 3.

The team, consisting of Stroud Branch Manager, Dale Lockart, Quality Manager, Josie Chamberlain, Marketing Manager, Rachel Worth, Design Engineer, Isaac Anderson, Production Stock Control Manager, Glyn Cattle and Sales



Office Manager, Alex Pounce, have all volunteered and, as part of the challenge, have pledged to raise a minimum of £125 each to support the charity's vital work.

Last year St Margaret's Hospice supported more than 5,000 people. This care is provided because of fundraising events like the Santa Abseil, with supporters raising thousands of pounds to help provide care across Somerset.

£125 sponsorship could pay for a specialist Community Nurse visit for one of the hospice's local patients being cared for at home and an hour's support to one of St Margaret's patients at home by one of their Adviceline nurses.

Paul Prouse, Managing Director of Rotec Hydraulics Ltd said: "It is our great pleasure to support the hospice by sponsoring their Santa Abseil. The vital work they do to help patients with life-limiting illnesses, together with their families and carers is remarkable."

The hospice is hoping participants will raise enough to pay for a weeks' worth of community visits across Somerset. Around a hundred visits each week are made by one of the five community teams and are a vital part of the care and support offered to patients and their families.

For those wishing to donate, please visit <http://bit.ly/rotecsanta>.

## Church House Investment Management appoints new Client Director

Church House Investments, the wealth and investment manager, is pleased to announce the appointment of Rob Hunter as a new Client Director, with responsibility for wealth management for private clients in the north of England and Scotland.

Rob joins the company from Brown Shipley, which acquired the investment management department of his previous firm, the Edinburgh-based Gillespie MacAndrew in 2011, where he had been for a number of years. Rob has been well-known to Church House for many years as a long-term buyer of its award-winning Church House Investment Grade Fixed Income fund (CHIG) which he deployed in client portfolios.

Church House is a specialist investment business formed of two divisions, wealth management and investment management. Through its six portfolio funds, Church House is widely recognised by wealth managers for its independent, index-agnostic



approach and focus on long-term management of risk.

Rob said: "I am delighted to be joining a private and independent firm like Church House, whose reputation stands out in our industry. Church House's commitment and approach to client service will enable me to look after clients in the way that I believe they should be and I look forward to connecting with investors who

appreciate Church House's focus on capital preservation and risk-adjusted returns, free from all the current industry fads."

James Johnsen, Head of Wealth Management at Church House, said: "Rob has been a long-established friend of Church House for many years and we look forward to welcoming him, his experience and his many connections into the business, and to helping us expand our client base in the north of England and Scotland."

Jerry Wharton, Chief Executive Officer at Church House, added: "Hiring Rob is another important step forward in the fulfilment of our vision for Church House as being the natural home for clients and their managers who appreciate our service ethos, and the refreshing freedom to act that our size and market position afford us. We welcome high quality investment professionals who can make a personal contribution to the development of our business and brand."



## Battens Solicitors celebrate as three staff qualify as Chartered Legal Executives

Leading South West Law Firm Battens Solicitors is celebrating the achievements of three staff members who have all qualified to become Chartered Legal Executives (CILEX).

Jen Haynor and Emma Taylor from Battens' Residential Property Department and Lizzie Seall from the firms' Family Department have all become CILEX fellows.

A Chartered Legal Executive is a qualified lawyer who specialises in a particular area of law and has trained to the same standard as a solicitor in that area, whereas solicitors have expertise in many areas of the law. The qualification involves on the job training while also attending classes in law and practice either at accredited sites or through distance learning.

Lizzie Seall joined Battens as a Legal Secretary in 2010 and became a Paralegal in the Family Team before deciding to progress further in her career: "Studying in my spare time and continuing to work full-time was often challenging. I have since started a new role in Battens' Family Team as a Costing and Compliance Coordinator managing our firm's Legal Aid contract."

Jen Haynor began working as an apprentice at Battens before studying to qualify as a Chartered Legal Executive: "I was fortunate enough to obtain an apprenticeship in business and administration with Battens and from there

became a legal assistant. I am now a qualified Legal Executive in an area of law that I really enjoy, already having gained years of experience within the area of law I practice which is invaluable."



**Battens**  
SOLICITORS

Emma Taylor has worked in residential law for almost a decade but also wanted to progress further in her career: "I was so pleased and proud to finally qualify as a Chartered Legal Executive earlier this year. It means so much to me after many years of hard work, studying towards CILEX and also working full time, progressing in my job role alongside."

Managing Director of Battens, Ceri Stephens, added: "Battens would not be able to deliver an exceptional service to clients without talented staff such as Lizzie, Jen and Emma. We recognise the important role they play in the success of our business and the hard work and commitment

they have shown in gaining these qualifications."



Pictured, from left, are Jen Haynor, Emma Taylor and Lizzie Seall.

### Business has been in our DNA for 300 years

We know all about running a successful business during challenging times. Whatever the future may hold, we have the expertise to support your business.

**Our experience, your future**



**Battens**  
SOLICITORS

[www.battens.co.uk](http://www.battens.co.uk)

## Old Mill continues on its path to 'retain, recruit and promote'

Financial experts Old Mill has promoted a fifth of its 30 strong tax team as part of its 'recruit, retain and promote' strategy, putting it on course to become the fastest growing practice in the South West.

In this latest round of promotions, the tax team – which celebrated 100% success in exams earlier this year – has promoted Marketa Pasova to Tax Senior Manager, Steve Ford and Joe Campbell-Orde to Tax Seniors, Callum Anderson to Tax Assistant Manager, and Dan Wilton and Aisha Perrott both become Tax Managers.

In addition, the company has also further strengthened its wealth



management team with the appointment of Chartered Financial Planner Tom Parry (pictured).

Aisha Perrott, who recently passed her final two CTA exams said: "I didn't think I'd be up for promotion this early so I am really chuffed and absolutely ready and willing to take on everything my new role encompasses."

Dan Wilton joined Old Mill straight from college on a trainee programme. He said Old Mill had been incredibly supportive at every stage: "One of the things I love about Old Mill – and working in the tax team specifically – is the flexibility to explore different passions and mould your career around this. There is no set route dictating what you need to do, and that enables us to develop professionally and personally."

While the company-wide growth strategy is to double the size of the business within five years, the tax team has already increased from 20 to 30 in just eight months, while income from tax services alone is up 20%, meaning recruitment is going to have to accelerate significantly – to at least 50 by 2026 – to support this fast-growing area of the business.

David Maslen, Director of Tax said: "I am so proud of the team and what

**OLD MILL**  
Financial experts, fuelling ambition

they have achieved this year, and these promotions are testament to how much we value the fantastic work they have done. But if we are to continue on this trajectory, we are going to need more people."

Meanwhile, Tom, 43, has more than 20 years' experience in financial services, bringing his specialisms in retirement planning and business protection to Old Mill. He will be based at the company's Exeter office where he will provide comprehensive planning to individuals, family businesses, corporates, trusts and charities, drawing on his corporate planning expertise to focus on providing business protection, legacy and succession advice.

Paula Hodge, Head of Wealth Management at Old Mill, said: "Tom has been working in financial services for more than 20 years', he shares our ethos, and has some great ideas for how we can further enhance our offering in Exeter and the wider South West region, so we are thrilled to welcome him to Old Mill – I am confident he will be a huge asset to the team."

## Bath & West Showground proud to sponsor local U12s football side

The Bath & West Showground is proud to support the Shepton Mallet 'Team Black' Under 12s football side by sponsoring their kit for the 2022/2023 season.

Zoe Purcell, Marketing Executive at the Bath & West, said: "We are so pleased to have the opportunity to continue supporting the Shepton Mallet 'Team Black' U12s Football Team. Their new kit looks amazing and we are really excited to see what this young team achieve over the season!"

Jeremy Watch, 'Team Black' football coach, added: "We are so grateful for our new kit sponsored by Bath & West Showground, they have been so supportive of our team. The young players look absolutely fantastic in their new football kit and they can't wait to play their games in them this season."

While the Bath & West Showground is best known for the annual Royal Bath & West Show, there are a plethora of other events that take place throughout the year, including some new and exciting sporting events coming to the Showground next year.



Visit [www.bathandwestshowground.com](http://www.bathandwestshowground.com) to find out what is happening at the Bath & West Showground for the rest of 2022.



## Charity opens refugee Welcome Hub in Bridgwater and welcomes new CEO

The Mayor of Bridgwater has formally opened a new refugee Welcome Hub run by Bridgwater-based charity and Somerset Chamber member Diversity Voice who help refugees to settle into the community throughout Somerset.

They champion intercultural understanding, providing support and services to prevent marginalisation and social exclusion while working towards equality for all. Most of their team are multilingual and have experience of living and working in the UK as migrants. Diversity Voice does not receive core funding and relies on income from project-led initiatives.

The new refugee Welcome Hub operates at Victoria Park Community Centre, Bridgwater, on a Monday and Westfield United Reform Church,



Bridgwater, on a Wednesday and Friday offering a drop-in facility where refugees can go for all sorts of help and advice including information on employment, benefits, and housing. Interpretation support is also available and English classes run on all three days.

Diversity Voice is on the lookout for local partners to help put on a variety of craft workshops for the refugees who attend the Welcome Hubs. Anyone who is able to provide activities such as art, crocheting, knitting, flower-arranging, jewellery

making, wreath making or anything else craft related and would like to get involved, or can help donate materials, is asked to email [communities@diversityvoice.org.uk](mailto:communities@diversityvoice.org.uk)

The charity is also delighted to announce Natalie Dyson as their new CEO. A qualified lawyer, Natalie was awarded the BEM and the Somerset Medal for voluntary work during the COVID-19 pandemic. Prior to joining Natalie founded a volunteer group which has helped to match many hundreds of Ukrainian guests with Somerset based sponsors under the Homes for Ukraine Scheme.

To find out more about the work of Diversity Voice visit [www.diversityvoice.org.uk](http://www.diversityvoice.org.uk)

## New construction Partner at Stone King

Stone King has welcomed Partner Sean Randall Morris and Paralegal Grace Souter to the firm, representing an expansion of its construction law practice. They join the firm from RWK Goodman.

Sean is an award-winning advocate and arbitrator with extensive experience in the construction and infrastructure sectors, handling contentious and non-contentious legal matters, drawing on his background as a civil engineering surveyor and chartered surveyor.

Tony Pidgeon, Partner and head of Stone King's Dispute and Resolution

team, said: "Sean has a great wealth of knowledge and legal experience in the construction sector and we're excited for him to increase and further strengthen our offering to clients in this area of law. We're also very pleased to welcome Grace, who will continue to work alongside Sean and support the growth of our construction group."

Sean added: "I have had the good fortune to support a great variety of clients including developers, contractors and consultants on some very complex and technical legal issues and look forward to bringing



this experience to Stone King and working alongside my new colleagues at the firm."

Sean specialises in alternative dispute resolution and has broad experience in the public and private sector. He also retains his membership as a Fellow of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS).

## Somerset Community Foundation launches cost-of-living crisis appeal to support charities

Somerset Community Foundation (SCF) has launched a Somerset Cost-of-Living Crisis Appeal with an urgent call for donations which will support local charities helping local people living in poverty through the cost-of-living crisis.

The Somerset Cost-of-Living Fund will provide rapid support to local charities and community organisations across the county, many of which are already experiencing record numbers of people seeking help.

Justin Sargent, Chief Executive at SCF, said: "As everyday costs rapidly outpace wage and benefit growth, many of our neighbours are living through exceptionally challenging circumstances. Many are already struggling to meet basic needs such as adequate food, transport and energy costs, and

that will only get worse as we head into the winter and more people are plunged into poverty due to increased energy costs.

The appeal has already been boosted with an initial donation of £50,000 from Somerset County Council.

The charity is now inviting local people, businesses and organisations who can and wish to help, to donate to the Somerset Cost-of-Living Crisis Appeal to help SCF provide funding to vital local charities supporting local people in poverty. Visit: [www.somersetcf.org.uk/costofliving](http://www.somersetcf.org.uk/costofliving) or call 01749 344949.



## Bank of England summary

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



@BoESouthWest



Agency contacts reported a modest slowdown in activity between mid-July and late August, with squeezed household incomes weighing on demand for some consumer goods and services. Output continued to be constrained by shortages of goods and labour in some sectors. But demand for business services and some manufactured goods remained robust.

Companies' employment intentions slowed and recruitment difficulties appeared to have stabilised. However, pay settlements had increased further and a large number of contacts said that they had given, or were considering giving, interim one-off payments to staff to help to offset rising living costs.

Companies reported that energy, pay and the weaker sterling exchange rate were becoming the main sources of cost pressures. Many contacts expected to continue to pass on higher costs into prices to protect margins, which remained squeezed.

Consumer services contacts reported that squeezed household incomes had weighed on demand. In hospitality, sales volumes were below pre-COVID levels and many pubs reported falling revenues, though demand for takeaways and fast food remained robust.

Contacts reported strong demand for financial services and legal advice, for example tax and wealth planning, equity release, debt consolidation and early repayment. Third sector organisations reported a large increase in demand for debt advice.

Business services contacts continued to report strong annual growth in turnover, particularly in IT, recruitment services and consultancy. Within professional and financial services, investment banks and accountancy firms reported strong demand. Insolvency practitioners also reported a modest pick-up in demand.

Annual growth in manufacturing output slowed as demand weakened; supply constraints also continued to hold back production though to a lesser extent than previously.

Output growth was very weak, reflecting a drop in demand for consumer goods and retailers reducing order sizes. Demand for capital equipment, for example for mining and construction machinery, also slowed, reflecting higher operating costs and heightened uncertainty about the economic outlook.

However, contacts operating in pharmaceuticals and healthcare, engineering, electronics, and suppliers of products for infrastructure and some types of commercial and industrial property development said demand remained strong.

Shortages of goods and labour continued to weigh on output, though to a lesser extent than previously, and most contacts said that supply disruption had eased or stabilised in recent weeks.



## BANK OF ENGLAND

Construction output growth weakened as high materials costs, labour shortages and economic uncertainty weighed on activity.

Investment intentions were positive but had eased due to uncertainty about the economic outlook, rising costs and softer demand. Contacts reported that they were continuing to spend on improving IT and automation, on energy-saving measures and on refurbishment and repurposing of premises.

However, a growing number of companies said that uncertainty about demand and the broader economic outlook and tighter financial positions had caused them to delay investment. High materials costs were also given as a factor in delaying investment plans.

Credit availability tightened for companies of all sizes, while demand for credit was broadly flat.

Contacts said that the availability of bank and non-bank finance for small and medium-sized enterprises had tightened, in particular for consumer-facing firms or those exposed to higher costs.

Employment intentions slowed and recruitment difficulties stabilised, though many companies continued to struggle to find staff. Pay awards continued to increase, with more firms offering one-off payments to help with rising living costs.

Companies slowed the pace of their hiring plans overall. Contacts still wanted to retain skilled staff and said they would respond to weaker demand by slowing the pace of recruitment, reducing hours, redeploying staff or not replacing leavers.

Recruitment difficulties appeared to have peaked, with staff turnover lower than previously as employees became more cautious about changing jobs. However, companies continued to struggle to find staff and contacts in a wide range of sectors said that labour shortages were constraining growth. Many companies said that vacancy and attrition rates were higher than normal.

Companies said that energy, pay and the weaker sterling exchange rate were becoming the main sources of cost pressure; many contacts expected to continue to pass on higher costs into prices to protect margins, which remained squeezed.



## Review of shortage occupation list

The Government has confirmed that an independent review of the shortage occupation list will be carried out. The final report and recommendations will be published in spring 2023.

Read more about the review at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/mac-commissioned-to-review-shortage-occupation-list>

## Increase in solvencies

Figures published by the Insolvency Service have revealed that in August 2022, almost 2,000 registered businesses became insolvent in England and Wales. This is a year-on-year increase of 43%. It takes the total number of companies going out of business to 20,000 so far in 2022, a year-on-year increase of 72%.

Read more about the figures at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/monthly-insolvency-statistics-august-2022>

## Skills strategy to support industry growth

The Engineering Construction Industry Training Board (ECITB) has launched a new skills strategy to support growth in the engineering construction industry. More than £87 million will

be made available to support workforce training and tackle labour shortages and skills gaps over the next three years.

Read more about the strategy at:

<https://www.ecitb.org.uk/blog/2022/09/20/ecitb-launches-new-87m-skills-strategy-to-support-industry-growth/>

## Fund to help charities win public contracts

The Government has launched a fund worth almost £1 million to help the voluntary sector win more public procurement contracts. The Contract Readiness Fund will close to applications at the end of September 2022.

Read more about the fund at:

<https://www.thirdsector.co.uk/government-opens-1m-fund-help-charities-win-public-contracts/management/article/1799387>

## UK long-term sickness rate rises

The proportion of the workforce that is too sick to work has jumped to its highest since 2005. A record 2.464 million people aged 16-64 gave long-term sickness as the reason why they were neither working nor seeking work.

Read more about the figures at:

<https://www.euronews.com/2022/09/14/britain-economy-unemployment-sickness>



# HIGHER SKILLS BOOTCAMPS: WAVE 3 LAUNCH

In collaboration with the Government's Lifetime Skills Guarantee and Plan for Jobs, we are launching our third wave of Skills Bootcamps. Skills Bootcamps have been designed for employers and individuals who have a desire to develop their higher technical skills and knowledge to support progression within their career or to upskill.

**Starting in October and November, we are delivering Skills Bootcamps in:**

- *Digital Marketing*
- *CAD*
- *Digital Skills*
- *Agile Frameworks for Software Projects*
- *Factory 4.0*
- *Electrical Vehicle – including the IMI L3 Award in Electric/Hybrid System Repair and Replacement.*

Skills Bootcamps are completely free for an individual over 19 years old, who self-refer, and are substantially discounted for employers keen to upskill members of their team.

Discover how a Skills Bootcamp could support you and your organisation by contacting our Employer Engagement team on 01935 845392 or at [apprenticeships@yeovil.ac.uk](mailto:apprenticeships@yeovil.ac.uk)

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