

Somerset Voice

The Official Magazine of
Somerset Chamber of Commerce

February
/ March
2023



Great South West

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PROSPECTUS
LAUNCHED

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National and local results from Q4

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Find out who has been shortlisted



Somerset
Chamber of
Commerce

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COGNIQUE

"They took the time to really understand our project and our goals and kept that in mind from beginning to end. I cannot fault them at all."

Olivia Girling, Marketing Officer,
Skills and Learning

Kim | Marketing Manager

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Front page: Karl Tucker, Interim Chair of the Great South West, at the official Westminster launch. More details on page 18.

Disclaimer

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FIRST WORD



Welcome to the first magazine of 2023! So much has already happened this year that it is hard to believe we are still only in February!

At the beginning of January we invited employers from across Somerset to join us for the official launch of the Local Skills Improvement Plan which aims to bridge the skills gap by putting business at the heart of the skills agenda.

January also saw the official launch of an ambitious prospectus for the Great South West – a new powerhouse to promote the Cornwall, Isles of Scilly, Devon, Somerset and Dorset region with a focus on the area's unique marine, energy, environmental, technological and agricultural strengths.

The Chamber network has also been busy lobbying Government for more business support and made it clear that Ministers must stop viewing support as handouts to failing firms but rather a package of investment in British business.

The economy cannot recover and grow while businesses continue to be hit by rising costs. The already bad situation has now been made even worse with the Government's decision to cut its energy bill support for struggling firms by 85%.

Rather than costs being capped as they are currently, from April, under the new scheme, firms will get a discount on wholesale prices – but only when energy costs are high.

We need an energy support strategy to get businesses on the right track to longer term efficiency, from increasing OFGEM's powers to ensure effective competition in the business energy to bringing forward ambitious plans to enable more renewable and sustainable energy production across the UK.

The Government needs to realise that by supporting businesses, they can help the UK return to prosperity. The Chamber network will continue to lobby for better support for all its Members.

This is a critical year for the UK economy and with the right focused support, businesses can help turn the economy around and get the UK back to growth and prosperity.

Emma Rawlings

CHIEF EXECUTIVE

OUR BUSINESS PARTNERS

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

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Health

Helping you build a stronger, healthier business

As a Chambers of Commerce member, if you take out small business healthcare cover with us, you'll get:

- ✓ 50% off your Chamber of Commerce membership for three years.¹
- ✓ Discounted gym memberships.²

To find out more about our offer for Chambers of Commerce members, visit axahealth.co.uk/chambers or call us on 0800 389 7413[†] and mention that you're a Chamber member

[†]Lines are open 8:30am – 5:30pm Monday to Friday. We may record and/or monitor calls for quality assurance, training and as a record of our conversation. ¹Direct new customers only. 50% off up to a value of £125 per employee covered, per year, for up to three years. See website for more: axahealth.co.uk/chambers-home.

²Terms and conditions apply. For more information visit axahealth.co.uk/terms/gym-discount.



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BRITISH CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE

QUARTERLY ECONOMIC SURVEY Q4 2022

Business conditions show no signs of recovering following a big drop last quarter.

The BCC's Quarterly Economic Survey (QES) for Q4 2022 – the UK's largest independent survey of business sentiment and a leading indicator of UK GDP growth – shows key economic indicators have stabilised at concerning low levels, following significant declines in Q3.

Only 34% of firms expect their profitability to increase, while 36% expect a decline

33% of firms report increased domestic sales, unchanged from Q3

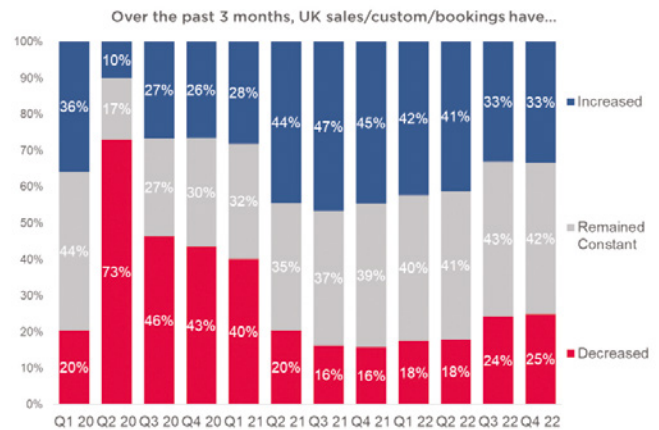
80% of firms say inflation is more of a concern than three months ago

AT A GLANCE

Domestic Sales

Overall, 33% of respondents reported an increase to domestic sales, largely unchanged from Q3, which itself was a significant drop on previous quarters.

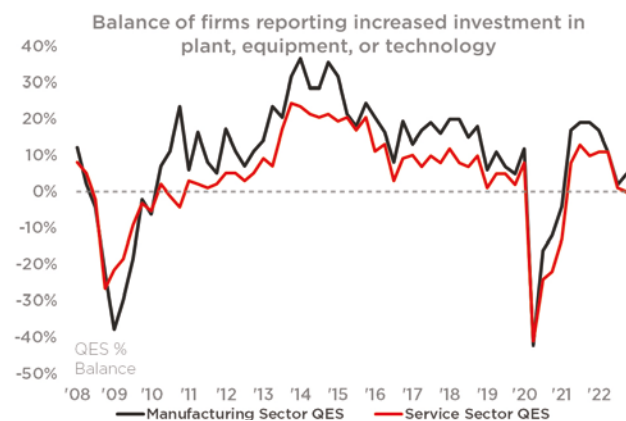
Hospitality firms were the least likely to report an increase in domestic sales (26%) and among the most likely to report a decrease (36%).



Investment

Overall, 21% reported an increase to plant/equipment investment in the past three months, while 57% reported no change, and 22% reported a decrease. This is unchanged from Q3.

As measured as a percentage balance, the manufacturing sector stands at +5% while the service sector stands at 0%, among the lowest levels since Q1 2021.





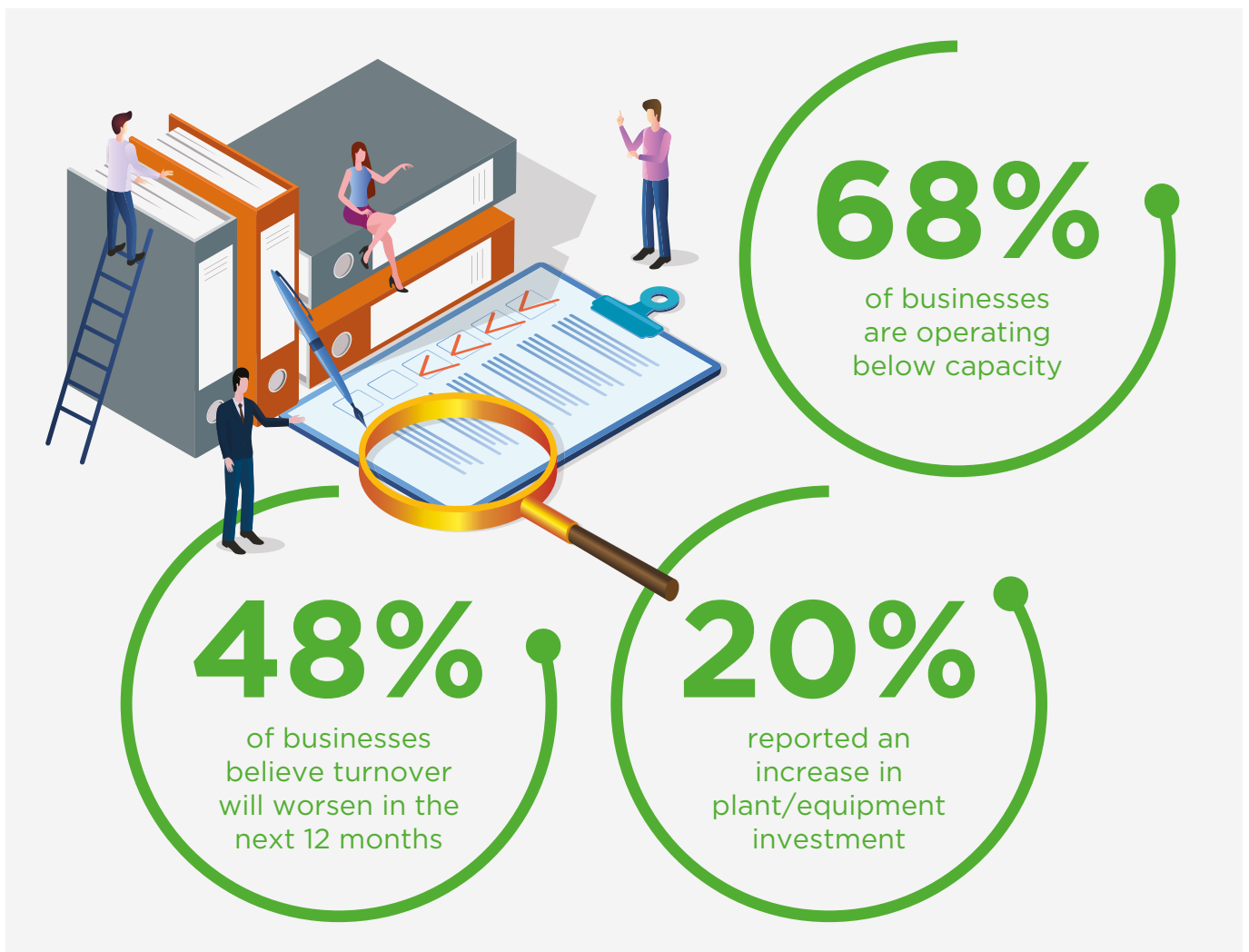
SOMERSET CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

QUARTERLY ECONOMIC SURVEY Q4 2022

Somerset firms are reporting similar results to the national statistics, with around 44% seeing their domestic sales remain the same and just under 30% seeing an increase and 30% a decrease. It was a similar story for investment, with 20% locally reporting an increase in plant/equipment investment compared to a figure of 21% nationally, although 28% reported a decrease, slightly higher than the 22% nationally.

Business confidence worsened in Q4 from an already low base, with 48% believing turnover would get worse in the next 12 months, compared to 38% in Q3. However, 49% of respondents now expect to increase prices, down on 77% in the previous quarter.

Worryingly, 68% of businesses are still operating below capacity, a slight increase on Q3, although the number of businesses having difficulty recruiting, while still high, dropped from 71% in Q3 to 48% in Q4. Professional and managerial and skilled manual and technical roles remained the most difficult to fill.



Kirill Bingham appointed head of office at Clarke Willmott in Taunton

Kirill Bingham has been appointed the new head of office at law firm Clarke Willmott LLP, in Taunton.

Kirill grew up in Exeter and joined Clarke Willmott in January 2016, becoming a partner later that year. As head of the firm's corporate team in Taunton, he acts for clients throughout the UK and overseas, advising on company incorporations and reorganisations, shareholders' agreements, acquisitions and disposals, MBOs, EOTs and fundraisings.

Being one of the founding offices of the firm and second largest with more than 190 staff and 22 partners, Clarke Willmott's Taunton office covers a diverse range of disciplines with lawyers advising clients across the South West and nationally.

Kirill said: "I am proud to be appointed to this role at an exciting time for the

office and the firm generally, with our Taunton office having undergone a transformative and sustainable refurbishment and a new CEO elect in place, Peter Swinburn, who will take over next spring.

"As a team we will continue to strive to build on the core values, to continue to support the local community and to provide exceptional legal service. It is also important for us to be able



to provide the very best working environment and career prospects. I look forward to working with my talented colleagues."

Clarke Willmott CEO, Stephen Rosser, said: "I would like to congratulate Kirill on his appointment. It is a crucial role within the firm and we look forward to Kirill and the team continuing to build on the foundations made."

Clarke Willmott is a national law firm with offices in Birmingham, Bristol, Cardiff, London, Manchester, Southampton, and Taunton.

For more information visit www.clarkewillmott.com.

Richard Huish College students EnRICH their curriculum – and represent England

The first of Richard Huish College's semi-annual EnRICH days took place at the end of last term and saw students helping their community and charities, including fellow Chamber Member Arc.



The usual academic timetable was suspended and students picked from a wide range of activities designed to improve their life skills, health and wellbeing, or progression and employability.

While enrichment activities are available all year round the EnRICH day gives students an additional opportunity to



▲ Arc staff at Huish to collect the shoeboxes.

experiment with new interests that they may not otherwise explore.

Activities ranged from sporting pursuits to trips off campus and crafting to scientific experiments, performance rehearsals and charity collections, to name just a few.

For Arc, a Taunton-based charity which supports the homeless, students gathered donations and wrapped 94 boxes of gifts for the charity's shoebox appeal.

Meanwhile, five students at Richard Huish College, in Taunton, have been selected to represent England – four in hockey and one in cricket.

Upper sixth student Niamh Holland flew out to South Africa in January



to represent England Cricket in the Women's Under 19 T20 World Cup. Niamh, who is studying the BTEC Sport, Exercise and Coaching course, also plays domestic cricket for Western Storm and is aiming to turn professional on completion of her studies.



Second-year students Millie Aspden and Alec Evans return to the AoC England Colleges hockey squad after playing last season. Joining them will be first-year students Nel Woodgate-Jones and Natalie Carillo. Additionally, first-year student Vincent Yates is on the non-travelling reserves list.

The students will compete in the British Colleges fixtures against Wales and Scotland and will also attend training camps with games against university sides.



WPA announces partnership with five-time Olympian, Jo Pavey

WPA has teamed up with five-time Olympian, former European 10,000m champion, World Championship and Commonwealth Games medallist, Jo Pavey, to help the team beat the winter blues and get a bit healthier in the process.



To launch the partnership, Jo has designed some basic training plans and 'one minute' video guides on warming-up, stretching, nutrition and running programmes to help staff take the first step into a healthier 2023.

The physical benefits of running are well documented, from improving heart health and quality of sleep, to strengthening muscles and lowering your chances of having a stroke and many other conditions.

Jo said: "I love to run and what better opportunity to share my passion with

everyone at WPA and beyond.

"Running complements my hectic family life and keeps me going, pushing my body while embracing everything that the great outdoors throws at me. WPA share my values and running is accessible, inclusive and fun."

Mark Southern, WPA's Director of Sales and Marketing, added: "Jo is an inspiration and lives just down the road from WPA in Devon. Like so many of us, her life is a balance between work, family, health and happiness. Jo is already helping us with our latest initiative, Jog on January encouraging us all to run and work off our festive excess."

Jo, 49, is a mother of two and author of This Mum Runs, having won European gold ten months after the birth of a second child, Emily. Jo is the only British runner and track event athlete to have competed in five Olympic games and the only



female in modern times to compete at over 1500m, 5000m and 10,000m at Olympic games and World Championships.

College's nursing apprenticeship provision reaches national award final

Bridgwater & Taunton College (BTC) is a national finalist at the annual FE Week and AELP AAC Apprenticeship Awards 2023 in recognition of its health and nursing apprenticeship offerings.

The Registered Nurse Degree Apprenticeships delivered by the college's higher education offer, University Centre Somerset, have been particularly recognised for their innovative approach to developing a one-system, locally owned approach to Somerset's future nursing workforce.

With this provision allowing students to train locally while earning, nursing career ambitions for aspiring nurses in Somerset have become more attainable. Learners can complete their qualifications without having to uproot or travel long distances, therefore building a 'home grown' nursing workforce and reducing the need for costly external and international recruitment.

Among those who have enrolled onto the apprenticeship programme are students progressing from BTC, parents returning to education, and NHS employees looking to upskill. As of July 2022, 70 Registered Nurse Degree Apprentices had been recruited - 30 from existing NHS staff and 40 new to healthcare.

Helen Stapleton, Somerset Integrated Care System Workforce Programme Manager, said: "At every stage, the college has prioritised their relationship with our local employers and striven to be responsive to our needs.

"The strength and persistence of this working relationship has led to a true partnership approach at all levels, from the support for individual learners through to senior leadership. The opportunities it presents are life changing for many and critically important to secure the skills that we desperately need in our future workforce."



Meanwhile, having become the first further education institution approved by the Nursing and Midwifery Council to deliver degrees in adult and mental health nursing, the college has now achieved another first for the sector - becoming the first FE Associate Member of the Council of Deans of Health.

The Council represents the UK's higher education faculties engaged in education and/or research for nursing, midwifery and the allied health professions, influencing policy and advancing healthcare education.

Andy Berry, Principal and Chief Executive of Bridgwater & Taunton College, said: "We hope that our pioneering work will raise the profile and the potential within Further Education colleges to address the significant workforce challenges within the health and care sector."

To date, the College has enrolled over 200 students onto a programme of study leading to a career in nursing, with further enrolments planned for spring 2023.



Health and wellbeing

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

Lendology CIC

Local social enterprise lender, Lendology CIC, is proud to be trialing a four-day working week to support all team members with maintaining a healthy work/life balance.

The six-month trial, commencing in February this year, will see the formation of two teams to ensure that service provision continues to be delivered across five days, but that all team members are able to work over four days.

Emma Lower, CEO at Lendology CIC, said: "I am always looking at ways to support team member health and wellbeing. We introduced a WPA Health Plan in 2022 which has been well received internally, and we currently all finish work at 3pm on a Friday.

"I have been watching the results of four day working week trials across a range of organisations nationally, and have been encouraged by the resulting improvements in employee wellbeing without a reduction in productivity.

"We will be working closer than ever over the trial, to ensure everyone feels supported to achieve their shared and individual objectives over their allocated four days."

Lendology is keen to share the results of the trial locally to support fellow members implement changes successfully and anyone wishing to find out more can contact Emma Lower directly emma.lower@lendology.org.uk.



WellBe Training and Counselling

A growing movement of organisations is collaborating to develop a wellbeing business model that delivers top-quality wellbeing services whilst investing a proportion of profits on programs that promote social progress.

This approach recognises that the wellbeing of individuals and communities is closely tied to a business's overall success and sustainability.

One such business model is the triple bottom line (TBL) model, which balances economic, social, and environmental considerations in business decision-making and reporting.

The TBL model assesses a company's performance not just in terms of its financial profits but also in terms of its social and environmental impact. To measure and report on its TBL performance, a company may use a range of metrics, including the social progress index.

By considering the social progress of the communities in which it operates, a company can ensure that it contributes to the wellbeing of those communities and promotes sustainable development.

The benefits of business models that use the social progress index are numerous. They contribute to the wellbeing of employees, customers and other stakeholders while driving economic growth and supporting the environment and local community.

WellBe, a training and counselling organisation, Business Coach, Kate Adey and Well Wessex, a consortium of services that deliver social impact in Somerset, have already joined the conversation.

If your organisation is interested in getting involved, we invite you to join us. Together, we can create a brighter and more sustainable future for all. Email info@thewellbehub.co.uk.



Nuffield Health

How do you speak to yourself on a day-to-day basis? Is your internal monologue filled with thoughts of kindness and encouragement, or those of fear and worry?

In difficult times it's easy to forget this. But the fact remains, we can approach any situation with either unhelpful or more helpful thinking, and this determines our experience of stress.



Our self-talk is important in terms of stress due to one simple fact. It's often the way in which we think about those things.

Uncertainty and change can make it difficult for many of us to think positively. In order to sustain helpful, compassionate thinking, try to follow the 'DREAM' acronym:

- Direction: Have goals to look forward to
- Resilience: Find ways to bounce back
- Emotions: Look for what's good
- Acceptance: Be comfortable with who you are
- Meaning: Be part of something bigger

How will you be kind to your mind?

This week you could pledge to:

- Keep a thought journal each day: This will help you to become aware of your thought process, as well as notice and replace unhelpful thoughts
- Take time out for self-care: Like with the oxygen mask on a plane, you should put yours on first to be in a better position to help others
- Set yourself daily positive affirmations: Start your day with an intention like 'I am enough' or 'My mental health is a priority'
- Write down your strengths: What are some of the things people have said about you that have made you feel motivated, proud or 10 feet taller

Teapot Creative

At Teapot Creative, we pride ourselves in being a company that 'Creates Change' and we don't limit this to our clients' work. We strive to have a positive impact on our employees' health and wellbeing which we put at the forefront of our values.

Providing mental health support for work or personal life is more important than ever. We provide a 24/7, 365 days a year counselling hotline. It's 100% anonymous and free to our staff to access any time for work, financial or personal issues.

Additionally, we use an engagement platform to conduct regular anonymous questionnaires and conversations to help us make informed decisions and improvements for our team. We also hold regular face-to-face one-to-ones with all of our team ensuring ideas and concerns

are listened to regularly and that they feel supported in their work.

Traditional bonuses are a thing of the past with the 'Teapot Perks Scheme' providing us with the opportunity to choose our own benefits to suit our varying lifestyles. Be it extra time off, a pension boost, foodie treats or a pamper session; Teapot employees can create their own pick 'n mix of the goodies they would like to receive.

We also facilitate a personal coaching program. Through this we hope to gain a better understanding of our team's needs along with giving them free access to an engaging program dedicated to helping employees improve both their working and personal lives and their health.

Alongside a flexible, hybrid working policy we seek to ensure everyone is taken care of at Teapot.

The logo for Teapot Creative, featuring the word 'teapot' in a bold, lowercase, sans-serif font, with 'creative' in a smaller, lowercase, sans-serif font directly below it. The logo is set against a white background with rounded corners.

Finger on the Pulse Research

As a research agency specialising in understanding the relationships between organisations and their key stakeholders, Finger on the Pulse Research (FOTP) has spent a lot of time helping clients improve their employee engagement, colleague retention and making themselves more attractive to new talent.

One thing that has stood out for us is the more prominent position of mental health and general wellbeing on the agenda of many businesses. Mental health and wellbeing is now considered alongside physical health and safety as a priority – and it's easy to understand why.

According to the Office for National Statistics, there were 18 million days lost to mental health issues in the UK in 2021 – more than 12% of all sick days, including COVID! Making sure you're thinking about wellbeing at work will, therefore, have a significant impact on the bottom line.

But just writing the policy isn't enough. People managers need to make sure that processes are being followed and team members feel like they're being supported.

We all know the phrase "what gets measured gets managed" and it's never more relevant than at times of change. This is why, at FOTP, we recommend that your employee engagement programme gives specific focus to wellbeing, asking – and acting on – the right measures can have significant impact on overall employee engagement, which in turn leads to happier employees and a healthier bottom line.

To see how an employee engagement programme could benefit your organisation – however big or small, get in touch at projects@fotpresearch.com.

FOTP
FINGER ON
THE PULSE
RESEARCH

The Community Council for Somerset

The Community Council for Somerset (CCS) employees' health and wellbeing is extremely important, a healthy team is a happy team.

Since 2012 the CCS group headcount of employees has grown from a team of 12 to over 100 employees. Nurturing the wellbeing of a rapidly expanding workforce has become vital to the way we work providing a variety of ways to reach, support, and ensure all employees could access information and guidance.

CCS promotes a culture focused on employee wellbeing.

CCS employee Nicola Greenslade, Communications

Officer, said: "I find the online access to our HR portal, online videos and counselling session during COVID-19 a lifeline, it really has made a huge difference to my wellbeing and mental health at home and at CCS."

CCS actively engages and encourages employees to use, share and take control of their health and wellbeing. As an organisation that supports individuals' communities' and enterprises', we know that life, family and work are a fine balance that needs to be maintained; this was recently recognised in our employee engagement survey where 'Work Life Balance' has seen some of the biggest satisfaction scores from our employees.

Small but important changes in your daily working life can help employees to remain well:

- Incorporating flexible working practices
- Stopping to stretch at our desks
- Taking walking meetings
- Take online yoga classes
- Short online videos to relieve tension, breathing exercises and relaxation

Health and wellbeing are part of our culture and all employees are important.

CCS
people · place · enterprise



Setsuko Beauty Clinic

Our confidence matters. Why? Because a lack of confidence affects our daily life and limits our potential happiness. Setsuko Beauty Clinic understands how important mental and physical well-being is to you. Our goal is to help you get the confidence that you truly deserve.

Imagine you are a woman who secretly suffers from excessive hair growth on your chin or neck. Imagine you are a man who is suffering from painful ingrown hair. Imagine you are transgender and want to feel beautiful, but your make-up doesn't cover your beard.

Laser hair removal is increasingly popular for people looking for long-term hair removal methods. Laser hair removal, hair reduction treatment uses laser light energy to damage hair follicles in such a way as to inhibit hair growth.

When you look for a service provider like us, it is important for you to check that they are well qualified, such as a Level 4 qualification in laser hair removal or equivalent. It is also essential to find out that a good quality machine is used for the treatment and that the

device has been adequately maintained and serviced.

We also offer radiofrequency microneedling, which can help to reduce the appearance of scars such as acne scars and stretch marks. Some people limit their social activities and spend hours trying to hide them.

Setsuko Beauty Clinic is here to listen and help you. Book a free virtual consultation at www.setsukobeaauty.com.



SETSUKO BEAUTY
CLINIC LTD



Somerset Activity and Sports Partnership

As we get older, muscle strength is reduced and some movements, such as leaning sideways or turning quickly, can cause a loss of balance. This can begin earlier than expected, from our late forties to early fifties.

To prevent a loss of balance and strength over time, strength-building exercise is recommended. The good news is, you don't have to start weight-lifting to build strength – activities like hill-walking, yoga, team sports

like tennis and cricket, or even just climbing the stairs can all help to build muscle strength and prevent falls and injuries later in life.

Stronger 4 Longer is a new campaign from Somerset Activity and Sports Partnership (SASP) encouraging adults to build muscle strength to protect their future health.

As part of the campaign, we're asking workplaces across Somerset to get their workforce moving to stay strong and healthy. Maintaining an active and healthy workforce can help to reduce time off due to sickness and boost overall wellbeing and work performance.

So, what can you do to get your workforce moving? From everyday changes like challenging people to take the stairs more often, to offering lunchtime yoga classes, or team-building away days involving activities like sports or gardening, there's plenty of ways to introduce strength exercise to your workplace.

To find out more about the campaign and how to get started, visit www.sasp.co.uk/stronger4longer.

sasp
Somerset Activity & Sports Partnership

S4L
Stronger 4 Longer



Initiis

Over the past three years, we have witnessed a clearer understanding and subsequent improvement in mental health awareness in the workplace, albeit more from the employees than employers. Anything that can impact our team's health and wellbeing, has to be a number one priority for any business which prides itself on its commitment to its people. On reading that the estimated total annual costs of absenteeism, presenteeism and labour turnover has increased by 25% since 2019, reaching an estimated annual cost of £53-56 billion, we knew we had to act.

On reflection, being honest, we didn't fully understand, it was kind of a foreign language, the question arose, how could we pride ourselves on being about our people but not really understand mental health?

We contacted an expert to fully train our teams. The results were instant. At every level within the organisation, open conversations about previously invisible challenges were now taking place daily. We were able to support and resolve potential future concerns, making the invisible visible through giving our teams the environment and language to talk about issues previously



unheard. An understanding of the symptoms and different stages gave clarity; education on the support approach and tools gave confidence and direction. Simply the what, how and why.

We further invested in internal mental health first aiders – dedicated specialist support where required across all channels. The secondary results have been incredible, with the team confident to share their thoughts across other areas, giving both feedback and their solutions, and bringing a whole new response to the question – “How are you?”

WPA

One of WPA's strategic objectives is to make WPA a great place to work. Our most important asset is our people and their health and wellbeing is integral to our success. Not only is it the right thing to do, but the return on the cost of any wellbeing initiative can be multiplied several times.

WPA's staff benefits include access to our corporate healthcare schemes, an employee assistance programme, remote GP services, mental health first aiders, occupational health support and flu vaccinations to name a few.

The office environment is contemporary, light and spacious and is supplemented by a well subsidised conservatory restaurant with healthy options. Our wildflower meadow and walking track help staff to get outside with all the added benefits of natural daylight, exercise and fresh air.

#Jog On January is our latest initiative, where we have partnered with 'inspiration to us all' and five-time Olympian, World Championship and Commonwealth Games medallist, Jo Pavey, to help us 'beat the winter blues' and get a bit healthier in the process. For 2023, there are plans to create a new on-site gym.

Health and wellbeing stretches beyond our offices in Taunton. The success of our web-based hub, packed with informative blogs and videos promoting cost neutral ways to improve health, has proved popular with our customers, employees and their families.

Recent subjects have included sleep, nutrition, financial and mental health - all free yet contributing towards everyone's future wellbeing and helping reduce absenteeism.



Aardvark Occupational Health

Recent figures showed that the average UK employee is losing 38 productive days a year due to poor health and wellbeing in the workplace. At Aardvark we are helping to get those days back by helping you keep your employees happy and healthy.

Aardvark is run by former GP with eighteen years' experience and winner of the Women in Health category at the West Country Women Awards 2022, Dr Catherine Lewis, with the aim of helping as many companies care for their employees as possible across the South West.

Offering services such as health surveillance, which allows you to regularly monitor your employees working in an environment which could adversely affect their health, and our health and wellbeing initiative to provide employees with advice, professional guidance and

support with their physical and mental health.

Our team work with you to manage your employees' health and wellbeing, from before they start working for you until the day they leave, providing both them and you with peace of mind that their health is being looked after.

We have a fleet of mobile medical centres which are fully equipped with everything needed to monitor an individual's health - we come to you and take the stress away.

Your employees are your biggest asset, and by helping to keep them healthy and happy you can take your business from strength to strength.

If you would like to discuss your requirements, please call us on 01278 228 988 or email us at office@aardvark. health.



Kloeckner Metals UK

At Kloeckner Metals UK we are extremely passionate about the health and wellbeing of our employees and their families. We believe that employees who are healthy, happy and satisfied are more likely to be productive and engaged in their work.

Over the years we have implemented various initiatives which helped us create a thriving and positive work environment which supports health and wellbeing of our employees. These include:

- Providing comprehensive and robust training for a safety first work environment



- Flexible and remote working policy
- Employee assistance programme (available to all employees and their families, this programme is designed to help deal with personal, financial and professional problems)
- Fostering a positive work culture (creating a positive and supportive work environment that promotes employee well-being and encourages open communication about mental health issues)
- Health screening for employees and their partners
- Free flu jabs on sites
- Employer-funded health cash plan (covering routine medical and dental expenses)
- Two paid days per year for volunteering
- Kloeckner Cares - for employees looking to give back to the community through fundraising initiatives, Kloeckner will match their efforts by contributing up to £500 for individual initiatives and up to £1,000 for group initiatives
- Providing access to wellness programmes, such as gyms and health clubs
- Providing ergonomic equipment
- Holiday trading opportunities (employees can buy more holidays and time off work in order to improve their work life balance)

kloeckner metals

Can a business owner or a member of the senior management team be held liable for health and safety breaches?



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, employment, health and safety, tax and VAT at no additional cost to their annual membership fee. Here, the Quest experts look at the implications for business owners and senior managers in the event of a health and safety breach in the workplace.



A substantial majority of health and safety prosecutions are brought against corporate entities rather than individuals. However, there is a noticeable shift (due to the HSE Enforcement Policy Guidelines) towards personal liability under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, enforced by HSE and local authorities.

The HSE Enforcement Policy requires inspectors to “identify and prosecute individuals... where there have been personal acts, failings, or connivance by an individual...” The emphasis is on focusing on those who are responsible for the risk and are best placed to control it.

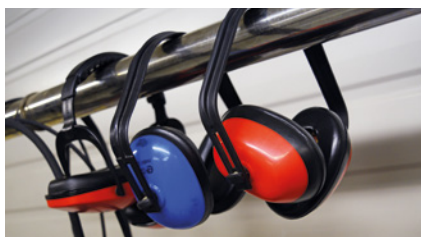
Where breaches are proved, the potential outcomes for individuals include disqualifications, fines, and custodial sentences. The introduction of the Sentencing Guidelines for Health and Safety and Corporate Manslaughter Offences (2016) has directly led to a substantial increase in personal prosecutions as well as increased fines (depending on the severity of the breach and the seriousness of the consequences).

Even when an early guilty plea is submitted, usually leading to a discount of up to a third, prosecution costs can be prohibitive. Furthermore, the HSE Fees for Intervention are charged by authorities for investigating and enforcing breaches, and these are £163/hr, which must be settled within 30 days.

Under Sec. 7 of HSAW 1974, it is the employer’s duty to take all reasonable and necessary steps to safeguard the safety of their staff. Where there is evidence that the employer is liable, they are likely to be prosecuted as a corporate body.

However, where the employer has taken all reasonably practicable steps, the investigation can extend to the employee. Consideration will be given to whether the employee followed the employer’s health and safety policies and practices, whether any previous warnings had been issued to the employee, and whether the breach gave rise to a serious risk.

Sec. 37, HSAW 1974, is important to note. Where the offence was committed by an individual and arose due to the act or omission of that individual, that person is liable. This section will require proof that a breach has occurred and that it was committed with the “consent or connivance of, or has been attributable to any neglect on the part of the accused...” Business owners,



directors, and senior management are responsible and are expected to know their safety practises and to take steps to safeguard safety, and it is this section that catches them out.

So what should owners and senior management do to protect themselves?

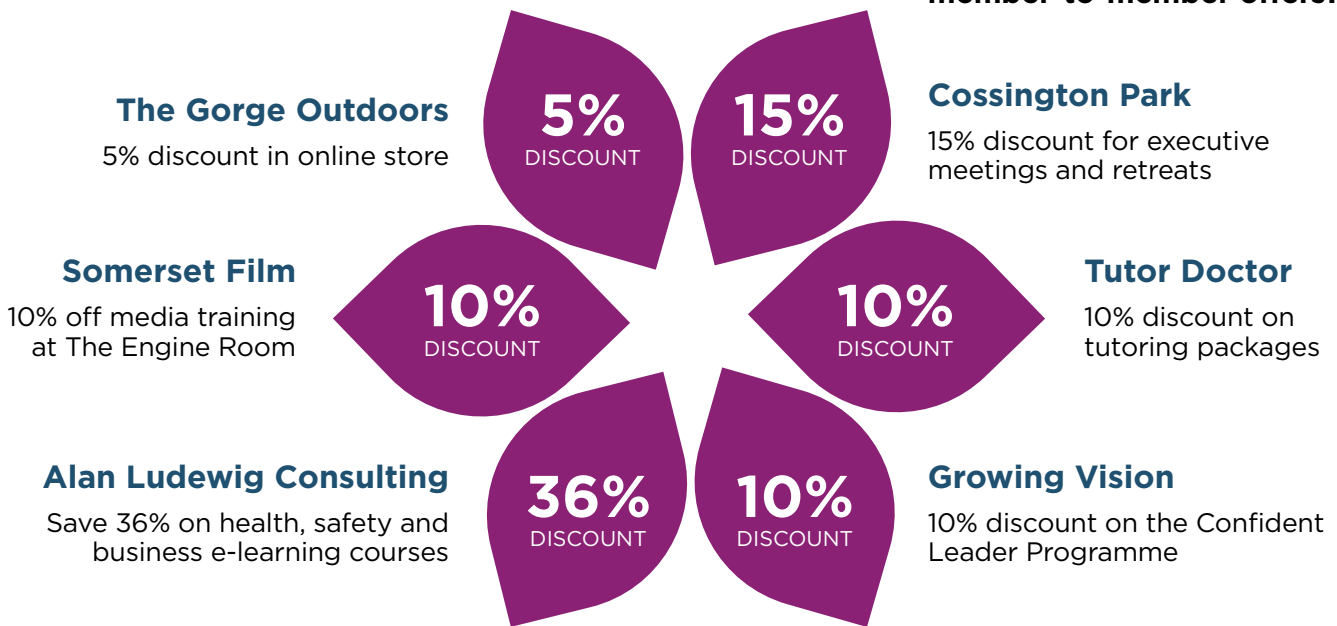
- Ensure they have adequate and reasonable health and safety policies/procedures
- Review and update these regularly
- Implement these policies and practices
- Devise a safe system of work, including duties towards contractors and visitors
- Promote a positive and healthy health and safety culture within the workplace
- Provide and promote health and safety training and instruction
- Provide appropriate equipment for work, with scheduled maintenance
- Provide appropriate protective equipment and training on its proper use

Please note - this article is for informational and educational purposes only and should not be relied upon as legal advice. Should you need further assistance, please call the Quest advice-line team on 0116 2749193.



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

Day or night – Chamber membership has you covered with AXA Health!

Somerset Chamber of Commerce is pleased to introduce AXA Health for our Members' business healthcare cover needs – including access to a free helpline.

AXA Health knows a business' people is its greatest asset.

So regardless of whether you have healthcare cover with AXA Health or not, Chambers of Commerce Members now have free access to AXA's 24/7 health information telephone helpline, Health at Hand.

The Health at Hand team is on hand to support you and your team. Whether it is a question to do with your own health or your child's health, their team of nurses, counsellors, midwives and pharmacists are there to help put your mind at ease.

Some of the ways they can help include:

- If you have a question about medication that you've been prescribed, our team of pharmacists is on hand to help
- If someone in your team is struggling to cope with the pressures of work or home life, they can speak to a counsellor about how they are feeling
- If you have a question or a worry about your health, you can discuss the symptoms with a nurse

But it is worth bearing in mind that offering healthcare cover shows employees that you really value what they do for you.

That you are ready to invest in their health and wellbeing – and in getting them back on their feet again if they become unwell.



Healthcare cover can also help to provide business owners with the peace of mind that their team's health and wellbeing is being looked after, so they can focus on their business.

To find out more and to activate your free access to Health at Hand, visit axahealth.co.uk/Chambers or call us on 0800 389741.



Employers invited to have their say on the skills agenda at series of LSIP forums

A series of forums are being held across Somerset in the coming weeks to give employers the chance to let education providers and the Government know the skills they need for the future success of their businesses.

As part of the Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP), which is being spearheaded in the county by Somerset Chamber of Commerce, the consultation events will enable employers to have their say on the future of the skills provision in Somerset.

The next forums are:

- Wednesday, February 8: 10am – 12pm
at the Ammerdown Conference and Retreat Centre, Radstock, BA3 5SW
- Thursday, February 16: 10am – 12pm
at Cricket St Thomas Golf Club, near Chard, TA20 4DG
- Thursday, February 23: 10am – 12pm
at The Market House, Castle Cary, BA7 7AH
- Tuesday, February 28: 2pm – 4pm
at the Alfred Gillet Trust, Street, BA16 0BQ
- Tuesday, March 14: 2pm – 4pm
at Dunster Tithe Barn, TA24 6RY
- Wednesday, March 15: 2pm – 4pm
at Taunton Rugby Football Club, Taunton, TA2 8BU

Somerset Chamber of Commerce is working with Devon & Plymouth Chamber of Commerce to run a joint Devon and Somerset LSIP which is seen as a “once-in-a-generation

Funded by



Department
for Education



▲ From left, at the LSIP launch, are: Suzi Drew, of Strode College, Dayna Bee, LSIP Project Officer, Scott Jenkins, Somerset Chamber Project Manager and Kelly Criddle, of L&F Training.

opportunity” for the region to produce a skilled workforce better matched to the needs of business.

The Somerset LSIP was officially launched at Taunton and Pickering Golf Club last month. Funded by the Department for Education, one of the first steps is understanding why businesses struggle to recruit and which skills are in short supply.

Emma Rawlings, Chief Executive of the Somerset Chamber, said: “Our Local Skills Improvement Plan is all about placing employers at the heart of defining local skills needs, and it is a once-in-a-generation opportunity for Somerset and Devon businesses to have their say.

“The in-depth findings of this work will help us to ensure skills delivered by our universities, colleges and training providers match what businesses require for the future.

“We have been hearing the region’s businesses say they are being held back by a lack of skilled staff and the right courses to train existing employees – this plan offers the opportunity for employers to have their say and shape the skills provision of the future.”

The Devon and Somerset LSIP team will work with universities, colleges and training providers to ensure the voice of employers is at the forefront of a skills agenda that meets the needs of our economies.

More information is available on the website <https://devonandsomersetlsip.co.uk/>



▲ Pictured at the LSIP launch, from left: Somerset Chamber Chief Executive, Emma Rawlings, Katie Parrington, of Singer Instruments and Tracey Ashford, of Young Enterprise.



▼ Karl Tucker, Interim Chair of Great South West, at the official launch.



The Great South West launches vision for regional economic powerhouse

The ambitions for the Great South West, the new economic powerhouse promoting the Cornwall, Isles of Scilly, Devon, Somerset and Dorset region, were announced at a Parliamentary Reception at the House of Lords.

Somerset Chamber of Commerce is proud to be supporting the Great South West Partnership, which aims to promote the region's 'blue and green' assets to become the UK's 'Natural Powerhouse'.

The Great South West's unique marine, energy, environmental, technological and agricultural strengths present an opportunity to be a major contributor to the UK economy, alongside other powerhouses including the Northern Powerhouse and Midlands Engine.

Speakers at the launch of the partnership's ambitious prospectus



▲ Dehenna Davison, Levetting Up Minister.

included Simon Jupp, MP for East Devon and Co-chair of the Great South West All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG), Karl Tucker, interim Chair of the Great South West Partnership and Chair of the Heart of the South West LEP, and Dehenna Davison MP, Levetting Up Minister.

Simon Jupp, Chair of the Great South West APPG and MP for East Devon, said: "The greatest region in Britain now has a united vision and voice to help us reach our potential. The launch of the Great South West Partnership in the corridors of power in Westminster brought the region together to demonstrate the passion, drive, and determination we need to deliver for where we live.

"We have so much untapped potential to unlock new opportunities and jobs using our natural resources and world-class research to create a cleaner, greener future. Now we're backed by Government, we must grasp the exciting opportunities ahead to deliver a bright future for Devon, Cornwall, Dorset, Somerset, and the Isles of Scilly."

Karl Tucker, interim Chair of the Great South West Partnership, said: "Together, we have the potential to become a world leader in the blue and green aspects of our economy, strengthening our region's clean growth and contributing to the



▲ From left: Simon Jupp MP, Levetting Up Minister Dehenna Davison and Karl Tucker, Interim Chair of the Great South West.

country's journey to net zero. This is a key moment in the journey of the South West, which is why we are delighted to set out the breadth and scale of our region's blue and green opportunity in Parliament, as part of our work to gain further Government support."

The launch highlighted the Great South West's initial successes, including securing £1.5 million from the Government to begin its work, and its vision to build on the region's 'blue and green' strengths and develop a prosperous and clean economy.

More than a hundred business leaders, politicians, academics and community leaders were at the launch. Regional launch events will be held in March, with businesses, universities, colleges, and authorities invited to discuss the next steps for the region's journey.

Shortlist announced for Somerset Business Awards 2023

The shortlist has been announced for the Somerset Business Awards 2023, with companies, charities and individuals from across the county vying for the honours.

Judges faced a tough time whittling down the huge number of entries for the 2023 awards, which are run annually by Somerset Chamber of Commerce.

The 2023 shortlisted nominees come from all corners of the county, including Wellington, Weston-super-Mare, Washford, Shepton Mallet, Yeovil, Langport, Axbridge, Ilminster, Wedmore, Bridgwater, Taunton, Somerton, Winscombe, Sparkford, Winscombe, Highbridge, Baltonsborough, Westbury sub Mendip, Wells, Mark, Martock, Wookey, Minehead, Bruton, Wrington, Burrowbridge, Frome and Street.

This year is the 18th anniversary of the awards, which are again supported by main sponsor Albert Goodman.

The grand final will be hosted by BBC Somerset presenter and journalist Claire Carter at the Winter Gardens Pavilion, in Weston-super-Mare, on March 24, 2023.

The finalists will be announced at the beginning of February, following visits by the judges.

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

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

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

The 2023 shortlisted nominees are:

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

- Air-Seal Products Ltd, Wellington
- Brendon Service Station, Washford
- Container Team Ltd, Weston-super-Mare
- JH Haskins, Shepton Mallet
- Mark One Consultants Ltd, Yeovil

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

- ADPR, Langport
- Hullabaloo Drinks, Axbridge
- The Bridge Bakery and Canteen, Langport
- Transformations Hair, Beauty, Aesthetics & Day Spa, Ilminster
- You Are My Sunshine, Wedmore

Medium Business of the Year (sponsored by Higos Insurance Services):

- Apple Technical Solutions Ltd, Bridgwater
- Brendon Service Station, Washford
- Cardstream, Taunton
- Elliott Environmental Services Ltd, Yeovil
- Puxton Park, Weston-super-Mare
- Train4All Ltd, Somerton

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

- Civils Store Ltd, Shepton Mallet
- Cullen & McLean Sourcing Ltd, Taunton
- Regency Purchasing Group, Weston-super-Mare
- Rotec Hydraulics Ltd, Taunton
- Sycamore Process Engineering, Sparkford

Best Use of Technology (sponsored by Porter Dodson):

- Adapt Biogas Ltd, Shepton Mallet
- Cardstream, Taunton
- MeasureMinds Group Ltd, Winscombe
- Presona UK Ltd, Bridgwater
- TECNI Ltd, Highbridge



Charity of the Year (sponsored by Clarke Willmott):

- bibic, Langport
- In Charleys Memory, Highbridge
- PROMISEworks, Baltonsborough
- Reminiscence Learning, Wellington
- St Margaret's Hospice care, Taunton
- Young Somerset, Bridgwater

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

- ADPR, Langport
- Poolbridge Accountancy Limited, Highbridge
- Singer Instruments, Roadwater
- Sycamore Process Engineering, Sparkford
- The Priory Learning Trust, Weston-super-Mare
- WPA, Taunton

Investing in Somerset (sponsored by Hinkley Point C):

- Cake Box Bakery, Yeovil
- MMES 2012 Ltd, Bridgwater
- Somerset Jobs Ltd, Taunton
- Turnbull Infrastructure & Utilities Ltd, Bridgwater
- Young Somerset, Bridgwater

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

- Blossom HR, Westbury sub Mendip
- Bronwyn's Baby Limited, Wells
- Dough Bros, Taunton
- Laurel Farm Glamping, Mark
- Scarlett Rose Events, Martock

Apprentice of the Year (sponsored by Weston College):

- Will Olbrechts (Evosite Ltd, Taunton)
- Tommy Adlam (MMES 2012 Ltd, Bridgwater)
- Jess Cullen (Somerset County Council, Taunton)
- Jo Harris (Somerset County Council, Taunton)
- Sammy Chilcott (Sycamore Process Engineering, Sparkford)
- Toby Jones (Visit Somerset, Wookey)

Environmental Achievement (sponsored by Gravity):

- Bradfords, Yeovil
- Brendon Service Station, Washford
- Channel UK Events CIC, Minehead
- Concept Products Ltd, Somerton
- Habitat Aid Ltd, Bruton
- PVA Hygiene Ltd, Wrington

Service Excellence (sponsored by Stephens Scown):

- Busy Bees Cleaning & Maintenance 2000 Ltd, Frome
- Container Team Ltd, Weston-super-Mare
- Jays Logistics (South West) Ltd, Highbridge
- Milsted Langdon, Taunton
- Regency Purchasing Group, Weston-super-Mare
- The Castle at Taunton Ltd, Taunton
- West Country Drainage Services Ltd, Burrowbridge

Somerset Manufacturer and Producer Award (sponsored by SRD Technology UK):

- Hullabaloo Drinks, Axbridge
- Rotec Hydraulics Ltd, Taunton
- Taunton Fabrication, Taunton

Rebuild and Thrive (sponsored by Barclays):

- Hippychick, Bridgwater
- Millfield Enterprises, Street
- Safety in Design Ltd, Bridgwater
- Somerset County Cricket Club, Taunton
- St Margaret's Hospice Care, Taunton
- The White Feather Coffee Co, Bridgwater





Breakfast with Somerset County Council, at Taunton Rugby Football Club



▲ Somerset Chamber Chief Executive, Emma Rawlings, Paul Hickson, Strategic Commissioning Manager Economy and Planning for Somerset County Council and Kelly Burge, of Barclays UK.



▲ Ritchie Cridge, of Connectable and Robin Clempson, of Albert Goodman.



▲ Setsuko Takeuchi and James Gooda, of Setsuko Beauty Clinic.



▲ Jon Beake of Wessex Reserve Forces' and Cadets' Association and Jo Reynolds, of Yeovil Chamber of Commerce.

Christmas drinks and nibbles, at BLOCK Workspace Taunton

BLOCK
WORK-
SPACE



▲ Somerset Chamber's Tara Borzoni (left), Ollie Morgan and Dayna Bee.



▲ Andrew Kingdon (left), of Stride Treglown and Andrew Hanson, of Somerset Education Business Partnership.



▲ From left - Natalie Hodgson, of Somerset Chamber, Tula Knight, of PROMISEworks and Ruth Bethel, of eCapital Commercial Finance.

▼ From left - Leah Rosewell, Beki Sharman and Jenny Walford of ADPR Ltd.





**Construction Connections,
at Bristol Airport**



▲ Chris Brown and David Holmes, of South West Aerial Surveys Ltd.



▲ Greg Van Laun (left), of Astron Fire and Security and Michael Morgan, of MMES 2012 Ltd.



▲ From left - Chris Pyne, of TCI (GB) Ltd, Andy Peake, of SRK Scaffolding and Paul Carlisle, of Bradfords Building Supplies.



▲ Andrew Goodenough, Project Manager at Bristol Airport and Emma Rawlings, Chief Executive of Somerset Chamber.



Huge progress continues to be made at Hinkley Point C

There has been substantial progress and success at Hinkley Point C over the last 12 months. Among a wealth of milestones there has been the completion of the power station's water-cooling tunnels, delivery of a hugely complex marine engineering operation to successfully place the seawater intake structures into the Bristol Channel and the opening of the reactor simulator and training centre.

Most recently, the world's biggest crane, Big Carl, lifted the final 11-metre prefabricated steel ring into place. Hinkley Point C's first reactor building now stands at over 40m and is ready for the installation of its iconic domed roof next year.

The first nuclear reactor built for a British power station in more than 30 years is also now complete and ready for delivery to Somerset. The "reactor pressure vessel" is the high-strength cylinder that contains the nuclear fuel and the chain reaction needed to make heat. The heat is used to create high-pressure steam for the world's largest turbines.

The project also continues to provide substantial, long-lasting benefits to our local communities, region and to Britain as a whole. HPC has exceeded original targets for local investment and training -





having now spent over £4 billion with regionally-based businesses and trained 1,100 apprentices in a huge breadth of different skills.

Using newly-opened centres of excellence and HPC's own on-site simulator and training centre, the focus will remain on supporting everyone, no-matter their age, background or skill level in benefitting from the training and the

exciting employment opportunities available from the nationally important project.

Thousands of workers across Britain are working hard to get Hinkley Point C built – they know its reliable low-carbon nuclear electricity is essential for our energy security.

Big Carl, the world's largest crane, lifted the 304-tonne steel liner ring onto the first reactor building, the third and final ring to be installed on the building, which will eventually contain one of Hinkley Point C's two nuclear reactors. The unit has now grown in height by 11.6-metres and stands at 44-metres.

The liner ring, which was prefabricated in a factory on site, also features supporting brackets for the Polar Crane Beam. This internal crane will rotate 360° above the reactor and be used for refuelling.

The reactor building now only has the 'lid' to be placed on top, with the iconic dome lift scheduled later this year.

Big Carl's latest lift highlights the progress being made at Hinkley Point C, where teams are working 24/7 to make the plant operational as soon as possible. The power station will supply six million homes with clean, homegrown energy and is crucial in helping the UK avoid another energy crisis.

New website launched to boost economic benefits from Hinkley Point C Supply Chain

A new website has been launched to make it even easier for local businesses to benefit from the opportunities being delivered by Hinkley Point C.

Designed and operated by the Hinkley Supply Chain team, which is run by the Somerset Chamber of Commerce, the new site provides a link for local firms looking for routes into the project. It also steers existing Hinkley Point C contractors looking for high-quality local and regional suppliers directly to the information they need.

The Hinkley Supply Chain team has been working in partnership with the project since the beginning of construction. It works to maximise the opportunities for businesses in Somerset, the South West and South Wales.

Scott Jenkins, Hinkley Supply Chain Lead and Somerset Chamber of Commerce Project Manager, said "We have delivered a modern, easy to navigate website, which highlights the opportunities available on Britain's biggest net zero project.

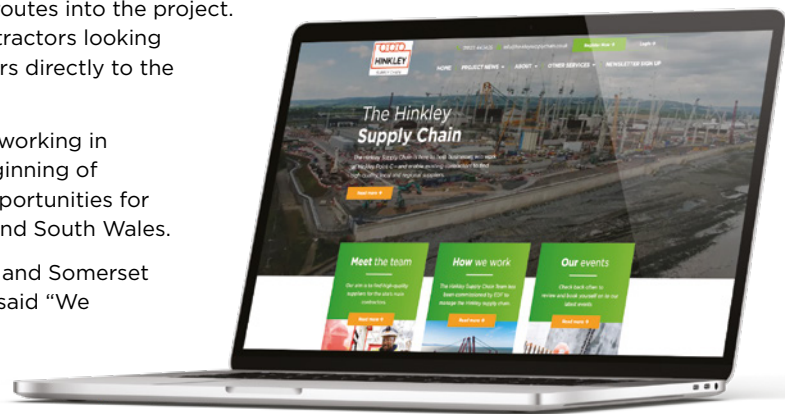
"The Hinkley Supply Chain team can help anyone who is interested in getting involved with the project. To find out more, please visit our website and register online or contact me scott.jenkins@hinkleysupplychain.co.uk"

The Hinkley Point C project has invested more than £4 billion into companies in the South West, with millions of pounds worth of contracts still available. The project has prioritised local and regional suppliers, to leave a legacy of economic growth, jobs, and skills.

Andrew Cockcroft, Senior Stakeholder Relations Manager, Hinkley Point C, said: "We have already seen huge socio-economic benefits delivered to the region through Hinkley Point C and remain committed to continuing our focus on maximising local opportunity. The upgraded website will be an incredibly useful aid for those looking to take advantage of the opportunities throughout the supply chain."

The Hinkley Supply Chain works to help local and regional companies win contracts by highlighting their capabilities to the main HPC contractors. However, the team can only act on behalf of firms which are registered on the Hinkley Supply Chain portal.

It is free to register on the supply chain portal and for more information companies should visit the new website at www.hinkleysupplychain.co.uk or contact the team by emailing scott.jenkins@hinkleysupplychain.co.uk or telephoning 01823 443425.



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Business that help others go green

Finger on the Pulse Research

To stop and reverse the pace of climate change, a number of businesses have set up their own net zero and decarbonisation objectives. However, a large proportion of greenhouse gas emissions lies outside a business's direct control but within their supply chain partners.

Therefore, a business won't be able to effectively commit to and meet their net zero objectives, unless they're working more closely with their suppliers to:

- Understand what their suppliers are doing in terms of setting up and meeting their own net zero objectives
- Understand what challenges/barriers/pressures their suppliers are facing which could lead to finding joint solutions
- Reach an agreement about accountability for the agreed emission reductions or offsets
- Develop better ways of working to achieve common goals regarding net zero objectives

As a research agency, we've witnessed first-hand that one of the ways of getting closer to your suppliers and demonstrating engagement is by getting regular feedback from them. Supplier feedback generates valuable insights and also indicates to your suppliers that you are genuinely interested in their views.

The critical step after that is to act upon the key insights from the supplier feedback. This will generate both goodwill and lead to increased collaboration between the partners, that will ultimately underpin achieving your net zero goals.

It doesn't matter where your business is on the net zero journey, if you haven't already done so, engaging your supplier base is an important first step to ensure success. If you'd like to understand your suppliers better, contact projects@fotpresearch.com.



The Community Council for Somerset

The Community Council for Somerset (CCS) group is working in several ways to support Somerset social enterprises to make environmental changes for the future.

The Ecohalls Project supports community buildings (small social businesses) to make environmental improvements funded by the Princes Countryside Fund. Today, the project has already supported 80 groups that collectively have reduced their carbon footprint.

Smart Communities Ltd (part of the CCS group) is mitigating the impact of the climate emergency by working with businesses serving local communities while minimising carbon impact by creating a decarbonisation plan to future-proof

businesses, working in three areas.

These include:

- Tackling emissions: travel, mileage, energy emissions, waste, online storage, tech, water, food and drink, office supplies, finance, community, and employee/stakeholder travel
- Helping our clients (including members of the Social Enterprise Network; Community Buildings Network) make sustainable choices
- Working with partners and stakeholders to increase awareness of sustainable initiatives and raise standards

The decarbonisation plans assess what level of carbon your business produces and then targets steps to reduce levels towards a net zero outcome.

An immediate solution to reducing their carbon footprint was found by



Somerset Social Enterprise Network member and fellow Chamber Member, Lendology, who donated all their old IT equipment and laptops to another SSEN member DonateIT, saving the equipment from going to landfill.

DonateIT repurposes IT equipment, supplying it to vulnerable people, refugees arriving in the UK and people most in need.

The first steps to going green can mean recycling, reusing, and repurposing. Before replacing, upgrading, and making larger changes to a greener future.



Path Financial

Path Financial was founded in 2019 and we are UK's first financial advisory firm to focus solely on helping our clients do more with their money through green impact investment.

Our highly trained advisers work with thoughtful individuals to invest sustainably, consolidate their pension, or transfer their pension or ISA into a responsible investment portfolio that aligns with the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

Our aim is to reduce people's carbon footprint by only investing in ways which help the planet. Research from Make My Money Matter has shown that the single biggest impact most people have on climate change, for better or worse, is via their finances. For example, the average UK pension has 21 times more impact on your carbon footprint than other behavioural changes.

Switching your employees' workplace pensions is a way to show them that you're taking climate change seriously.

According to Make My Money Matter, 72% of 18-24-year-olds want their pension to actively fight against climate change, so it makes sense for you to consider your green credentials.

Consider this about pensions, too. For every £100,000 invested sustainably in one year, 32 tonnes of CO₂ emissions could be avoided, 7.5 million tonnes of waste could be recycled, 25 MWh of renewable energy could be generated, and 2.9 million litres of clean water could be provided.

Our new Green Pensions Pledge service is for businesses that want to take action and have these sorts of results. By signing up, you'll be encouraging your employees to engage with their future financial independence and the impact they have on the world.



Somerset Film

In 2019, Somerset Film declared a climate emergency and has been committed to reducing its carbon footprint by 10% each year. The team use their programme of digital media activities across Somerset to inform and facilitate action to mitigate the climate emergency, and their core staff and freelancers are all trained by Albert (BAFTA) in sustainable production.

Alongside this, the café at their media centre, The Engine Room, features a wonderful vegan and vegetarian menu. They are powered by a green electricity supplier and have purchased a pedal generator which can charge mobile phones and power projections.

2022 marked the release of 'Down by the River' a new documentary commissioned by the Somerset Rivers Authority and produced by Somerset Film. The film explores flood risk in Somerset and celebrates the extraordinary resilience and work of local volunteers. The film was screened at multiple community centres throughout 2022 and is now available on the Somerset Film YouTube Channel.



On the last Saturday of every month, Somerset Film hosts a repair café where anyone can bring along a broken household item to be fixed by volunteers. This scheme is helping to cut the use of raw materials, energy and CO₂ emissions by reusing instead of manufacturing new products.

Coming up, they will also be hosting a seed and plant swap event, as part of Seed the Day, a local environmental community event taking place in February.

Find out more about Somerset Film at The Engine Room by visiting the website: www.somersetfilm.com

Up next in the April/May edition of Somerset Voice:

Sector focus - not-for-profit, charity, business/charity partnerships

Feature - office solutions - from virtual and physical storage to office design and equipment



Welcome to our newest members of Somerset Chamber.

Bennetts Kombucha Ltd

Food and drink

We are a GUT health soft drink family business by Ilminster. 'Bennetts Kombucha 365' has four boochilicious flavours teeming with billions of beneficial bacteria: lemon and ginger, garden mint, organic white (all with GOLD awards) and berry burst (our most popular).

Neil 'Wigster' Bennett, 07568 331923
neil@bennettskombucha.com
www.bennettskombucha.com

Berensens Solicitors

Legal / solicitors

Berensens offers the best of traditional service and respect, while being an efficient, modern law firm. We deal with conveyancing for properties, administering estates through probate, handling disputes and divorce, and providing advice on wills, tax and powers of attorney.

Rachael Kennett, 01823 456060
law@berensens.co.uk
www.berensens.co.uk

Mercedes-Benz of Taunton

Transport / motor dealer

Mercedes-Benz of Taunton, main dealer to supply new and used passenger cars and LCV, servicing and parts for both at two sites in Taunton. With the complete package of funding options available, BCH, operating lease, PCP, HP, 'with service' plans.

Rick Metcalfe, 01823 447555
rick.metcalfe@mercedes-benzsouthwest.co.uk
www.mercedes-benzsouthwest.co.uk

Somerset Armed Forces Day

Charity

SAFD is the biggest and most exciting event in Taunton. Throughout the day there will be lots to see, do and enjoy! The park is being split into zones including military, re-enactment, stalls, children's play area and bars. There are also going to be bands and choirs performing on the band stand and in the arena.

Trish Caller, 07912 057943
info@somersetafd.co.uk
somersetarmedforcesday.com

The Gorge Outdoors

Retail / online, sports and leisure

A family-owned outdoor clothing, footwear and equipment retailer, we only stock clothing and equipment at the top of its field. Our main suppliers being Paramo, Mountain Equipment, Montane, and Rab along with Meindl, Scarpa and Grisport footwear. We supply Petzl work at height and rescue equipment.

David Hodgson, 01934 742688
sales@thegorgeoutdoors.co.uk
www.thegorgeoutdoors.co.uk

WellBe. Training and Counselling

Wellbeing Training

At WellBe, we strive to provide top-quality counselling and training services while positively impacting our community. With innovative business models and partnerships, we promote wellness in Somerset and work towards a healthier and better world for everyone. Join our mission!

Joanna Buckland, 07527155422
info@thewellbehub.co.uk
www.thewellbehub.co.uk

ZenYoga and Fitness

Health and wellbeing

ZenYoga and Fitness is passionate about making your business succeed. Knowing that a healthy and happy workforce is key. Our live online corporate membership program is designed specifically to help your employees become fit and healthy emotionally, physically, and mentally.

Paula Brooks, 07859 936250
paula@zenyogafit.co.uk
www.zenyogafit.co.uk

Contact the Chamber membership team

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Membership Development Officer

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Construction Connections

Thursday
9 FEB

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 sectors.

Sponsored by



Time: 12 noon – 2pm at the ibis Bridgwater
Cost: £17.95 plus VAT

Ladies' afternoon tea and networking

Tuesday
7 MAR

Our Somerset Chamber ladies' events are an ideal way to raise the profile of your business and regularly attract ladies' from all across the county. There will be an opportunity to network before hearing from guest speakers Lucy Kitchener and Ruth Knagg from bereavement charity We Hear You.

Sponsored by



Time: 12.30pm – 2.30pm at Dillington House, Ilminster
Cost: £24.75 plus VAT

Let's network over lunch

Tuesday
21 FEB

If you are looking to raise the profile of your business then this exciting face-to-face event is for you! Enjoy some informal networking, a two-course lunch and the chance to introduce yourself, hear from others and make meaningful connections.

We will be joined by Gayle Pogson, Head of Careers, Work Placements and Employability and Amy Hayes, Apprenticeship Team Leader, of Yeovil College, who will be talking all things apprenticeships and how businesses can get involved.

Sponsored by



Time: 12.30pm – 2.30pm at Yeovil Town Football Club
Cost: £27.50 plus VAT

Hinkley Point C site tour

Thursday
16 MAR

Huge progress continues to be made on this exciting project but early booking is strongly advised for this tour if you want to see for yourself how the build is progressing. As space is strictly limited, bookings are restricted to just one place per company.

In association with



Time: 9am – 1pm
Cost: Free for Chamber members

Exmoor Distillery exclusive tour

Thursday
2 MAR

Join us for an exclusive behind-the-scenes tour of Exmoor Distillery, a family run, small batch, artisan gin and spirits producer in Dulverton. Delegates will enjoy a tasting session and see how the premium spirits are distilled. The tour will take approximately 60 minutes including tasting, followed by networking and refreshments. There is ample parking on-site. Spaces are limited to one per company.

In association with



Time: 2pm – 4pm
Cost: £12.50 plus VAT

Business-to-business dinner

Thursday
30 MAR

Join us for a relaxed evening of networking with like-minded professionals from across the county. Our B2Bs are a great way to increase the profile of your business, learn about others and start valuable business relationships, all while enjoying a three-course dinner.

Time: 6.30pm – 9.30pm at the Quantock Restaurant, Bridgwater and Taunton College, Taunton Campus
Cost: £28.75 plus VAT

*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.



Entries for the Somerset Education Business Partnership Awards 2023 opening soon!

Does your organisation work hard to inspire young people about the career opportunities in your industry?

Maybe you know a young person who is committed to progressing their future career prospects or your business is passionate about developing future talent.

The Somerset EBP Awards 2023 present an excellent opportunity to celebrate this work and the opportunities that it provides to young people in Somerset across 10 categories:

- Inspiring the next generation award (1 - 249 employees)
- Inspiring the next generation award (250+ employees)
- Careers leader of the year award
- Young person of the year award (Key stage 4)

- Young person of the year award (Key stage 5)
- Supported intern of the year award
- Supported internship employer of the year award
- Best placement employer award
- Best placement participant award
- Outstanding personal contribution

Entries open on March 13, 2023 and are welcome from the many businesses and individuals who inspire the next generation.

Full details of award categories are also available on the Somerset Education Business Partnership website at someset-ebp.co.uk/awards.

New campaign launched to promote tourism and hospitality sectors in winter

Somerset County Council, Somerset West and Taunton Council and Mendip District Council have been working alongside Sedgemoor and South Somerset district councils, Visit Somerset and Visit Exmoor to deliver a new tourism campaign.

The 'Here All Year' initiative is designed to highlight Somerset as a year-round visitor destination, with the launch showcasing all the county has to offer during the traditionally quieter winter months.

The project has been funded from a proportion of the Business Rates Retention Pilot programme and will also feature a series of new films.

Councillor Val Keitch, Executive Lead Member for Prosperity at Somerset County Council, said: "This new campaign is essential to supporting local businesses in what is a challenging time for so many, especially the hospitality and tourism sectors.

"These sectors are the backbone of the regional community, and supporting this community is essential to growth. Somerset is synonymous with stunning beaches, green spaces, woodlands and lakes and we want to remind people that, whatever the time of year, our beautiful landscape remains ready to escape to."

The campaign runs until March this year.



MEMBER NEWS

Busy anniversary year ahead for Amarin Rubber and Plastics

This year marks the 20th anniversary of Amarin Rubber and Plastics, founded and still based in Weston-super-Mare.

Initially forged in the back office of a now supplier, Amarin has grown over its two decades to be a market leader in the South West area for the supply of rubber gaskets, conveyor belts and related products.

Employing all Somerset locals, the family business has always prided itself on a customer service first approach to business and is very proud of everything that has been achieved over the last 20 years.

The year ahead promises to be a busy one for everyone with Amarin as plans are afoot for a new website, in-house made commemorative gifts for our customers as well as staff events to give back to the people that have helped us reach this impressive milestone.

You can find out more at www.amarinrubber.co.uk or on Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn.



South West law firm celebrates B Corp Certification

Following a rigorous independent assessment process, South West law firm, Stephens Scown LLP, is the latest UK business to become a Certified B Corporation (B Corp), joining a growing group of businesses across the world who are committed to balancing people, planet and profit.

Employee-owned law firm, Stephens Scown LLP, has received B Corp Certification from the non-profit B Lab, becoming the first law firm in the South West to do so and one of only a handful of B Corp law firms in the UK.

B Corp Certification requires a holistic review of a business' social and environmental performance, accountability and transparency, and is based on a vision of creating a community of for-profit companies committed to redefining success in business.

Richard Baker, Managing Partner at Stephens Scown, said: "We have always cared about doing things the right way for our people, our clients, our planet and our community. As the first large law firm in the UK to become employee-owned, we have built a dynamic and innovative business dedicated to delivering for its clients and providing a rewarding and supportive workplace.

"Gaining our B Corp™ certification underlines our long-term commitment to also being a force for good in wider society.

"With the backdrop of global challenges to tackle and the ongoing threat to our environment, it is vital that we showcase just how we are making a difference and that we are part of a much bigger movement, proving there is a better way to do business."

Empowering employees to do good through four key pillars of fundraising, volunteering, pro bono work and reducing the business' environmental impact, the firm's Giving Back programme was first set up in 2018.

Verity Slater, Giving Back partner and a driving force in the Firm's B



Corp verification process, said: "I am really pleased to report a strong engagement with our Giving Back Programme this year. The whole Firm's enthusiasm and awareness of our drive to be a force for good has been noticeable.

"Undertaking the B Corp verification process has embedded this yet further and I am looking forward to the additional positive changes and initiatives that will come this year."

B Corp Certification doesn't just prove where a company excels now – it commits a business to consider impact for the long-term by building it into the very fabric of the firm. B Corps are reassessed every three years.

At each assessment, the criteria becomes more ambitious as B Corps are encouraged to continuously develop their business and increase their positive impact.

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

Taunton School's new library officially opened by inspirational teacher

A retired Taunton School teacher officially opened a new library named in his honour.

John Carrington, an English teacher and former Deputy Head of Taunton School, cut the ribbon at the opening ceremony of The Carrington Library, which was attended by scores of his former colleagues, alumni and current students and staff.

Mr Carrington said: "The new library is the most special place. It has a soul, it has beauty, it has a welcoming feel and it has an inspiring lift to it.

"I've had the pleasure of opening this absolutely wonderful library in memory of the happy times I had here and I'm sure everyone will appreciate it just as much as I have enjoyed the humble pleasure of opening it."

James Johnson, Taunton School CEO and Headmaster, said: "In John's time as Head of English and as Deputy Head he was an inspirational figure and to have that recognised in the naming of the library is very important."

The Carrington Library forms part of an ongoing campus development plan to enhance Taunton School's facilities.



▲ From left, Current Head James Johnson, donor Nick Prettejohn and former deputy head John Carrington.

It includes a recently opened new sixth form centre, a new 'green heart' due to open in January 2023 and a state-of-the-art international school in the pipeline for 2026.

South West property management company scoops another national award

Alpha Housing, the specialist block and estate management company in Taunton, is now a multi-award-winning property management service!

Alpha Housing took home the highest award for customer care for property management in the UK as the Winner of the prestigious Customer Services category at the Property Management Awards 2022.

The event was held in London and attended by nearly a thousand property professionals representing companies from across the UK's property management industry, all hoping for a win or commendation.

The Masked Singer's Joel Dommett hosted the event for News on the Block Property Management. The Property Management Awards are now known as one of the most significant events in the industry calendar and are recognised nationally.

"We had a record-breaking amount of entries in some categories, which made the judging process extremely difficult this year," said a spokesperson for News on the Block Property Awards.

Alpha Housing, the South West specialist property management company, has invested significant time and effort into further improving and growing its already well-renowned business. And their hard work certainly paid off!

Regardless of the presence of nationally operated property management companies, Alpha Housing Service stood out from the crowd taking the coveted win and being commended in two further categories.



Hearing their name called out as winners, for the second time this year, for outstanding customer service was a significant moment for Managing Director Piers and his team: "We were honoured and moved to be recognised for this national accolade. The Alpha team have always highly valued the service they deliver to our customers and winning for a second time this year is fantastic."

Winning the Customer Service Award was just one of many highlights of the night, too. Despite tough competition, the team also received Highly Commended in two other categories: Regional Property Management Company of the Year and Scale Up Property Management Company of the year.

Wincanton volunteers dig deep to help children's charity Brainwave

Wincanton, the official warehousing and transport service partner for the construction of EDF's Hinkley Point C nuclear power station, has been enriching the local community by collaborating with Brainwave, a children's charity, based in Bridgwater that supports children with disabilities across the UK to 'unlock their potential.'



Before



After

Wincanton's Hinkley Point C team returned to Brainwave's sensory garden for a third year, working hard to weed, tidy, sweep and paint fences for children and their families to enjoy the fantastic outdoor space. The materials were kindly donated by Wincanton partner B&Q.

At the end of last year, Brainwave's President of almost 20 years, HRH the Countess of Wessex GCVO, visited the centre to celebrate their 40th anniversary. As part of the visit HRH viewed the sensory garden and met Wincanton team members, thanking them for their volunteered time, labour, materials, and equipment.

HRH also met with children and young people who have benefitted from Brainwave's unique therapy programmes.

A project of the scale of Hinkley Point C can have huge effects on the local community, and as a tier one supplier Wincanton takes its responsibility for creating maximum local benefit very seriously.

Wincanton

Becky Krajniewski, Account Manager (Infrastructure) at Wincanton, said: "It was an incredible honour to host HRH The Countess of Wessex GCVO at the Brainwave Sensory Garden.

"The Wincanton team for EDF is committed to being a good neighbour and has raised over £1,450 for local and national charities in the last two years alone. We are proud of the part we have played in the creation and maintenance of the sensory garden and the impact it has had on children in the local area."

Keith Sinclair, Chief Executive of Brainwave, said: "The Wincanton team has been awesome, and we can't thank them enough for their unwavering support. We really do appreciate all they do for us, and the children and families we support. Thank you!"



Bristol Airport invests in state-of-the-art fire vehicle and supports local communities

Bristol Airport has added a new fire engine to its fleet of fire vehicles; a state-of-the-art Oshkosh Striker 3.0. Bristol is the first UK airport to take delivery of the third generation Oshkosh Striker ARFF vehicle.

Bristol Airport's fire team are currently completing an intensive training course on the new vehicle. The Oshkosh Striker ARFF is a 39 tonnes fire vehicle and has the capabilities of carrying a four-person crew, has a 700BHP engine and a top speed of 72 mph. The vehicle carries 12,000 litres of water, 1,700 litres of foam and a 7,500 litre per minute water pump.

Graeme Gamble, Chief Operating Officer, Bristol Airport said:

"Our priority is the safety of passengers and colleagues in all Bristol Airport operations and we're delighted to be the first airport in the UK to take delivery of such an advanced fire vehicle.

"The fire and rescue service is a critical part of our operation, and the fire team are permanently on-call day and night and ready to respond to any eventuality. We wanted to



ensure that the new appliance is equipped with the very latest in firefighting technology.

"A complex environment such as Bristol Airport requires a specially trained fire team with its own specialist equipment and we are delighted to have added the Striker to the Airport's fire vehicle fleet."

Meanwhile, Bristol Airport's Local Community Fund has given over £140,000 to support local community projects in the last 12 months.

In total, 43 individual projects were awarded funding with grants ranging from £850 to £10,000 in 2022. This included grants for an outdoor play area for Winford Primary School, play

equipment for Backwell Baby and Toddler Group, a beehive project for The Woodland Warrior Programme CIC and nature conservation equipment for the Avon Wildlife Trust.

The fund's purpose is to help mitigate the impact of the airport's operations and to give something back to surrounding communities who are situated in close proximity to the airport.

Old Mill appoints David Gage as Partner and Head of VAT to drive growth into new markets



Old Mill is continuing its drive to become the fastest growing practice in the region with the appointment of highly experienced tax specialist David Gage as Partner and Head of VAT.

In November 2021, Old Mill announced plans to double the size of the business by 2026, and David - who joins from Evelyn Partners where he was Director of VAT - has been brought on board to support these growth ambitions by expanding Old Mill's services both to existing clients and the wider market.

The 38-year-old who was a management consultant before moving into tax in 2012, says he believes his commercial background combined with his tax expertise can help raise Old Mill's profile across a wider range of client firms.

David said: "VAT is a complicated area of tax, and the compliance requirements are becoming more and

more stringent. As a result, most small and medium sized accountancy firms don't have the relevant expertise, while the larger practices are putting all their resources into their bigger clients, leaving a huge number of underserved businesses in the area.

"I believe Old Mill can fill that gap by offering the client-centric, tailored and personal approach you'd expect from a small family firm combined with the expertise you generally only find in large practices. I want to build on the impressive growth that Old Mill has achieved over the past year to expand our client base and scale up our services to serve more clients, across existing and new markets."

As well as being CTA qualified (Chartered Tax Advisor), David has a degree in business and management and a Masters in European business. From a VAT perspective he specialises in high value land and property transactions and international goods and services.

David also has particular knowledge and experience in VAT compliance, including tax investigations, having been called upon to offer his expert opinion in VAT inspections and fraud investigations, along with VAT professional negligence claims, on numerous occasions.

David Maslen, Director of Tax at Old Mill, added: "2022 was a hugely successful year for the tax team, we doubled in size to 36, which includes the appointment of a number of senior hires, including Chris Watts as Associate Director in September. We now start 2023 as we mean to go on with the appointment of David Gage as Partner and Head of VAT.

"David's extensive experience across complex tax matters - including his expertise within high value property transactions, tax investigations and international trade - will further enhance our offering to clients."

First Glastonbury Town Deal project secures planning permission

The first Glastonbury Town Deal project has successfully progressed through the planning process, with initial works now likely to begin early this year.

The planning application for the refurbishment and development of the existing leisure centre at Tor Sports and Leisure was approved at Mendip District Council's Planning Board meeting.

Set to become the Glastonbury Community Sports and Leisure Hub, the project will comprise a 1.5-storey extension of the existing clubhouse building to create a new multi-use sports hall.

The new centre of excellence will offer opportunities for sports, training, education and health & wellbeing support, as well as being a place for people to meet and socialise.

The refurbishment will include a multi-use hall; a gym; changing rooms, showers and toilets, including a Changing Places toilet; three treatment rooms; a meeting space; a storage room; a social area with a bar and separate kitchenette; and a remodelled entrance/reception space complete with a café.

The transformed facilities will be available for use by a range of local sports and clubs, including cricket, football, bowls, rounders and acrobatics, and will provide opportunities for local people of all ages and interests to improve their physical and mental health.

Of the total £23.6million Glastonbury Town Deal investment, a grant of £2.09million has been allocated to the Glastonbury Community Sports and Leisure Hub, with another £0.2million



of match-funding being sought.

The site will benefit from further Glastonbury Town Deal investment through two related Town Deal projects.

Through the Robert Richards Initiative, a figure-of-eight path will be installed around the outer edge of the grassed pitches for the enjoyment of runners, walkers

and wheelchair users. In addition, through the Glastonbury Clean Energy project, a small array of rooftop solar panels and two EV charging points will be installed.

Glastonbury was one of 101 towns chosen to receive investment through the Government's Towns Fund scheme as part of its Levelling Up agenda. Following the submission earlier this year of comprehensive Business Cases for each project, formal confirmation of the funding was received in September 2022, securing this once-in-a-generation funding that is set to revitalise the town.

For further information, visit glastonburytowndeal.co.uk.

South West Investment Group Ltd appoints new board Chair

As part of a broader restructuring, South West Investment Group Limited (SWIG Ltd) has announced a number of changes to its Board, including the appointment of Christine Allison as the new Chair.

Christine takes over from Richard Coombs, who has been the Chair for almost 10 years. Also joining the refreshed Board are David Brown, hitherto a Director of SWIG Capital (and CEO of Folk2Folk), Rebecca Pritchard (formerly of Triodos Bank), Chris Butters (formerly of PwC) and Bill Baker (formerly of HSBC).

This move comes as SWIG Ltd makes significant changes to modernise and improve its governance, including streamlining the existing boards of SWIG Capital and SWIG Finance, with the SWIG Ltd board becoming the

main board overseeing an ambitious growth agenda.

Christine said: "Significant board changes have been necessary to ensure that the board reflects the forward-thinking company that the South West Investment Group is today. I am delighted to be leading the refreshed board, and together with the staff of SWIG will work to see SWIG grow its market share and support more SMEs with their finance needs.

"Over the years, we have relied on our experienced and knowledgeable board members to help lead SWIG through some challenging times. I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who has played a part in helping SWIG become the growing and ambitious business that it is today."



Christine Allison has been a Director of SWIG Ltd and Chair of SWIG Finance for the past two years, and a NED since 2017. Prior to SWIG, Christine spent more than twenty years with the World Bank in Washington DC, was a fellow of the London based Centre for the Study of Financial Innovation, and a Special Advisor to the Treasury Select Committee. Christine is currently a Director of the South West Business Council.



Businesses urged to prepare for Income Tax changes despite delay

Businesses and taxpayers across the South West and beyond are being encouraged by Milsted Langdon to prepare for Making Tax Digital (MTD) for Income Tax, despite the announcement of a two-year delay.

The delayed implementation of MTD for Income Tax Self-Assessment (ITSA) means it will now be phased in from April 2026 for a smaller number of businesses, self-employed individuals and landlords, rather than the original launch date of April 2024.

From the new start date, instead of MTD for ITSA applying to all self-employed workers and landlords with property and/or business income of more than £10,000, it will now only apply to those with income exceeding £50,000.

As per the original plan, they will have to keep digital records and provide quarterly updates on their income and expenditure to HMRC through MTD-compatible software. Those with an income of between £30,000 and £50,000 will also need to comply with this from April 2027.

The Government has also confirmed that it will not extend MTD for ITSA to general partnerships in 2025, but that it remains committed to introducing MTD for ITSA to partnerships at a later date.

Sarah Jenkins, Audit and General Practice Partner at Milsted Langdon, said: "There are likely to be many taxpayers out there who will welcome this delay to the implementation of MTD, and while it will help those struggling to carry out change, it shouldn't reduce the need to prepare.

MILSTED LANGDON



"While 2026 may seem like a long way away, we have learned from the first stage of MTD for VAT that it often takes several years for businesses to introduce the systems and procedures required to comply with MTD.

"I understand that there might be a temptation to take the foot off the gas, but those likely to be affected by these changes should be looking at integrating MTD-compliant software into their operations now."

Sarah added that many cloud-accounting platforms offered benefits beyond compliance with the new rules, thanks to the automation they provide, which can help sole traders and landlords save time and gain access to better business intelligence.

To find out more about Milsted Langdon's MTD services, visit www.milstedlangdon.co.uk/making-tax-digital-hub/

Stone King signs up to the Age-friendly Employer Pledge

Law firm Stone King has signed-up to the Age-friendly Employer Pledge, a new nationwide programme, to show its commitment to older workers.

The firm is among the first businesses and organisations in the country to sign the pledge, run by the Centre for Ageing Better, which supports organisations to improve the recruitment, retention and development of workers aged 50 and over to make workplaces age-friendly. Businesses must also appoint a senior

sponsor for age-inclusion, a role which Stone King Chair Alison Allen has taken on.

Alison, Stone King's Head of Private Client Sector, said: "I am delighted to support the Age-friendly Employer Pledge. As a woman in her fifties I am very aware of how age is both an advantage in terms of life and work experience, and also sometimes a challenge as we adjust to getting older. I know that our business benefits from diversity amongst our people including a wide range of ages and experience and I am very keen to support a multigenerational workforce."

Being a part of the pledge means businesses make various commitments, such as specifically naming age within Equality, Diversity and Inclusion policies, and the Centre for Ageing Better supports the network of signed up organisations by providing a framework of suggested actions and offering opportunities to learn effective age-friendly practices.

SK | STONE KING

We're an
**Age-friendly
Employer**



Dr Carole Easton, Chief Executive at the Centre for Ageing Better, said: "The current labour shortage has been called the most urgent problem facing the UK economy with its impact driving up prices, wages and inflation. Workers in their 50s and 60s are a key, but currently overlooked, solution to resolving the UK's employment crisis.

"The pledge has been designed to support businesses to go on a journey at a pace that works best for each organisation. By taking manageable and measurable steps, each employer will learn over time what steps are needed to make the biggest difference in their own organisation."

Teapotters do their bit for the environment with hybrid working

Teapot Creative, based in Hambridge, Somerset has announced just how much CO2 they have saved through hybrid working - a whopping 24 tonnes of CO2!

By having their team only work an average of two days in the office, the agency has dramatically reduced the amount of miles they would have been driving in their cars five out of the seven days in the week.

From the beginning of COVID to the end of 2022, Teapot adapted their working ways to better suit their team members needs and wellbeing and ended up integrating a conscious effort to save the environment through their hybrid approach to what used to be their daily office life.

As an integrated creative agency, Teapot Creative has a team full of website developers, SEO experts, graphic designers, social media managers and content writers to name a few.

This means that everyone does something a little different and that there has been enough trust in the team and their abilities to carry out their work on their own time, in their own home on their hybrid working days.

Plus, by reducing the amount of days spent driving in and out of work, they have also been saving their employees money on fuel which is a great added bonus.

Teapot's Directors Lizzie Ginbey and Barry Tottle, said: "Like thousands of other companies around the world, we started hybrid working because of Covid. When it came to considering getting everyone back into the office everyday again, we stopped and thought 'Do we really need to?'.

"We knew that the hybrid mix worked and that the team was just as effective working from home as they were in the office. Our team of passionate individuals agreed that they preferred hybrid working, so we made the decision to stick with it."

Now a year down the line of continuing hybrid working, both Barry and Lizzie have no plans to make Teapot go back to regular day-to-day office life and were amazed at both the productivity and environmental results they have seen and saved over 2022.

Teapot Creative is showcasing the benefits of hybrid working not only for the company and employees' wellbeing but for the greater environmental impacts it can have.

teapot
creative



Somerset Film celebrates 25th anniversary with party for supporters

Somerset Film celebrated 25 years of empowering people through film and digital technology. People who have been involved with the Bridgwater-based organisation both past and present were invited to join them to celebrate their achievements over the years.

The event kicked off with the Bridgwater Mayor Liz Leavy unveiling the film poster for Finch, starring Tom Hanks. The film was written by another VIP guest, screenwriter Craig Luck.

Craig, who started his film career at Somerset Film, had been invited to officially open a new first floor training space.

The Engine Room was full of activity with a variety of screen-based projects being shown from over the years, projections

on the building inside and out, photos and newspaper articles to reminisce at, live music from John Maybey, archive footage, sound performance by Matt Davis and music from DJ Rich Tomlinson.



Attendees also enjoyed a film screening at the new Scott Cinema celebrating 25 years of moving image work by Somerset Film, which included the premiere of two short films by young filmmakers Ralph Hutchins and James Gardner.

To finish off the film screening, a fly-through was screened for the development for the top floor of The Engine Room, with plans to start the building work in 2023. Somerset Film is also looking forward to what is coming next after achieving Arts Council NPO status plus investment from the Town Deal grant fund.



Bank of England summary – weak consumer demand continues to affect businesses although supply chain and recruitment issues start to ease



@BoESouthWest

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

Agency contacts reported a further modest weakening in economic activity towards the end of last year as squeezed real household incomes and uncertainty about the outlook weighed on demand. The decline in growth was mainly consumer-led but was also apparent in the manufacturing and construction sectors.

There were signs that the labour market has started to loosen, while pay settlements averaged between 5% and 7%.

Input cost inflation remain elevated, as falls in some commodity prices and freight costs have been offset by higher energy costs and the weak pound. And profit margins remained squeezed as firms' price increases have not kept pace with rising costs.

Businesses services firms reported moderate growth in revenues overall, mostly reflecting higher prices, while volume growth was muted.

Contacts in audit, IT, telecoms, consulting, insurance and recruitment reported robust growth in demand and revenues. Contacts in professional, financial and energy-related services reported strong demand from clients in the US and Middle East.

However, the weakness in consumer demand was increasingly affecting business services contacts that supply consumer-facing firms, such as those in wholesale or logistics and goods transportation.

And financial services contacts said tighter financial conditions, market volatility and weaker confidence, had weighed on corporate transaction activity, such as mergers and acquisitions, commercial property transactions and private equity deals.

Manufacturing output fell compared with a year ago, reflecting weak demand for retail and construction products.

The decline in output was largely consumer-led, with demand for household items such as soft furnishings, particularly weak. By contrast, sectors that were less reliant on consumer spending, such as IT, defence and aerospace continued to report strong growth.

Contacts said that supply-chain problems continued to ease, though delivery times had not returned to pre-pandemic



BANK OF ENGLAND

levels, and companies in the electronics and steel sectors continued to report significant shortages due to the war in Ukraine.

Demand for goods exports slowed, with growth flat compared with a year ago. Contacts said that while growth in exports to the US remained strong, exports to the EU had weakened.

Construction output fell as home renovations declined sharply and commercial development weakened.

Companies paused or reduced their investment plans due to weak demand, tighter financial conditions and uncertainty about the outlook. This was particularly the case for consumer services firms.

For companies that borrow to invest, higher funding costs had increased the uncertainty around investment plans by extending the payback period on projects. And rising costs continued to deter building-related investment.

A number of contacts said that they had less cash available for investment because they had been obliged to build up stocks in order to manage supply-chain disruption.

Many contacts reported that higher energy costs had incentivised investment in energy efficiency or power generation, though for some the increased cost had deterred investment.

Credit availability tightened as credit risk increased due to the weaker economic outlook. Demand for credit also fell.

Bank credit generally remained available for large firms, and lower-risk borrowers, such as profitable companies with lower debt levels. But the availability of market finance remained tight, especially for non-investment grade firms.

Contacts said the availability of credit had tightened for small and medium-sized enterprises, and that banks were requiring greater security against new lending or were amending conditions for existing loans.

Insolvencies continued to rise – albeit from a low base – and trade credit insurance tightened for companies in more vulnerable sectors, such as retail, leisure and construction.

Recruitment difficulties eased slightly – reflecting weaker demand for labour – but remained elevated, especially in professional services, IT, engineering, catering and care services. There were only a few reports of workers deciding to return from inactivity.



Plans to increase UK R&D investment

A new unit has been set up in the Department for Business to boost private investment and help commercialise UK research as an alternative to Horizon Europe. The Government hopes that new funding streams will stimulate collaboration and lead to foreign investment in UK R&D.

Read more about the plans at:

<https://sciencebusiness.net/news/uk-science-minister-seeks-wave-investment-rd-using-horizon-alternatives>

Net zero recommendations published

The Government has published the findings of the independent Net Zero Review. The review includes 129 recommendations to maximise economic investment, opportunities and jobs while achieving net zero carbon emissions by 2050. The recommendations include a Help to Grow Green campaign, which will provide advice to small businesses and reviewing tax incentives for investment in decarbonisation.

Read more about the review at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/net-zero-review-uk-could-do-more-to-reap-economic-benefits-of-green-growth>

Shortage of 330,000 workers due to Brexit

The UK economy is facing a shortfall of more than 300,000 workers as a result of ending the free movement of labour from the EU. The sectors which have been impacted the most include hospitality, construction and logistics.

Read more about the shortfall at:

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2023-01-17/britain-lost-330-000-workers-due-to-brexit-rules-economists-say>

Consultation on R&D tax reliefs

The Government has launched a consultation on ways to simplify the R&D tax relief system. The consultation sets out proposals to replace the two existing R&D tax relief schemes with a single scheme. The consultation closes on 13 March 2023.

Read more about the consultation at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/rd-tax-relief-reform-consultation-launched>

Source: BAD News (Business Advisers News)



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