

Somerset Voice

The Official Magazine of
Somerset Chamber of Commerce

April / May
2023



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Commerce

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Front page: Somerset Business Awards 2023 grand final celebrations. From left, ceremony host, BBC journalist and presenter Claire Carter, with Ian McVicar, Managing Partner of main sponsor Albert Goodman and Emma Rawlings, CEO of Somerset Chamber of Commerce.
Photo: Tessa Chapman Photography

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FIRST WORD



It was an honour to welcome everyone to the grand final of the Somerset Business Awards 2023 at the end of March, to celebrate and recognise the achievements of businesses and charities across the county.

Despite challenging economic conditions, Somerset's business community has shown resilience and excellence across all sectors.

There is much we can be proud of in Somerset and while times may be tough, it is clear our business community is fighting fit and meeting those challenges head-on.

You can find a round-up of all the winners and finalists from the awards on pages 11-15.

A big thank you to everyone who made the 18th Somerset Business Awards such a success - it was such a pleasure to congratulate everyone who had gone above and beyond to deliver exceptional service, results and products to secure their place at the final.

Elsewhere in the magazine, you can find out more about the work Somerset Chamber of Commerce has been doing to help ensure businesses have access to a future workforce with the skills they need to continue to thrive.

Despite record job vacancies businesses are still struggling to recruit apprentices or upskill their existing staff to fill skills gaps due to cost pressures and the problems posed by having time-off for training.

Somerset Chamber is currently working with Devon & Plymouth Chamber of Commerce to run a joint Devon and Somerset Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP), which is seen as a once-in-a-generation opportunity for the region to produce a skilled workforce better matched to the needs of business.

The plan puts employers at the heart of defining local skills needs. The in-depth findings of this work will help to ensure skills delivered by our universities, colleges and training providers match what businesses require for the future.

You can find out more in the Chamber news update on pages 6-7, including the British Chambers of Commerce reaction to the Budget and details of the Somerset Education Business Partnership Awards, too.

Emma Rawlings

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Survey finds costs and time barriers to training and upskilling

Costs and time out of the business are the main obstacles preventing Somerset firms from upskilling staff or taking on apprentices.

Early findings from a skills survey by Somerset Chamber of Commerce found the cost of training, lack of Government funding and a perceived poor return on the money invested in training, were all putting businesses off.

More than 60% said they could not afford the time for staff to be out of their business for training, while others did not know how or where to find the appropriate training.

Somerset Chamber is currently working with Devon & Plymouth Chamber of Commerce to run a joint Devon and Somerset Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP), which is seen as a once-in-a-generation opportunity for the region to produce a skilled workforce better matched to the needs of business.

A series of forums have been held across Somerset to give employers the chance to let education providers and the Government know the skills they need for the future success of their businesses.

According to the Chamber survey, businesses are reporting current skills gaps in sales and management and need both skilled staff and those with soft skills - good inter-personal skills such as communication, problem-solving and punctuality.

More than 60% believe a lack of soft skills will become an even greater problem in the future as will a shortage of those with digital skills.

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 is funded by the Department for Education and the Chamber team will work with universities, colleges and training providers to ensure the voice of employers is at the forefront of a skills agenda.

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

Measures unlikely to shift dial on business investment

The British Chambers of Commerce (BCC) has given a mixed reaction to the Chancellor's spring budget, welcoming childcare support but critical of the lack of support for businesses already struggling to meet rising costs.

Shevaun Haviland, Director General of the BCC, said: "The Chancellor has acted to address the unfilled jobs blighting our economy. It is especially good to see the help on childcare and for over 50s workers.

"The plans for full capital expensing are also a step in a right direction to offset the rise in corporation tax. But as the OBR highlights a high level of uncertainty, the jury is out on how much it will help compared to the Super Deduction scheme.

"The most recent BCC survey on investment found that only a fifth of firms were increasing investment and a similar number were reducing it. This

budget looks unlikely to change that dynamic.

"This is especially true for almost half of businesses who told us they will struggle to pay their energy bills from April.

"They cannot invest when they are fighting to survive. Beyond the £63m of additional support targeted for leisure centres, there is little that will provide comfort to these firms.

"The Government also failed to reform business rates which we have repeatedly called for. If the UK's innovative growth industries are to remain competitive on the world stage, then Government must shift the dial further on investment, both within the UK and from overseas."

On skills shortages, Alex Veitch, Director of Policy at the BCC, said: "It is encouraging to see the Migration Advisory Committee's recommendations on adding five new



construction jobs to the Shortage Occupation List have been accepted.

"More frequent reviews of the system are also good news, but the lack of skilled labour is having a corrosive effect on our economy. This shift to a new system cannot come fast enough and other sectors facing huge recruitment pressures, such as hospitality, must be given help."

He said he was disappointed no action have been taken to further reform business rates and the "significant burden" it placed on firms: "We need to see a move to annual revaluations, and a more ambitious approach that incentivises rather than disincentivises growth and green investment in the long term."



Somerset Education Business Partnership celebrates five years of growing local talent

On April 3, 2023, Somerset Education Business Partnership (EBP) marked its first five years of connecting Somerset's businesses with local young people.

Initially funded through Hinkley Point C community funds, the Somerset Education Business Partnership now operates with support from Somerset Council, the Magnox Socio-Economic Fund and commercial partners including Barclays, headline sponsors of the Somerset Education Business Partnership Awards 2023.

Somerset Chamber of Commerce has hosted the partnership since its creation in 2018, helping the team to reach a wide range of Somerset businesses.

Emma Rawlings, Somerset Chamber CEO said: "Somerset businesses need a strong supply of local talent to thrive and prosper. We are delighted to host Somerset Education Business Partnership who are helping our young people to prepare for the workplace."

Each year the partnership connects over 200 businesses with local schools and colleges and inspires over 2000 young people about the great careers available in Somerset.

While the numbers help us to understand our reach, we also track our impact so we can be sure our work is making a difference.

Some 90% of students attending the recent Somerset Careers Fairs left more aware of places to work in Somerset and 81% would consider applying to one of these. This is great news for Somerset companies who are concerned about future recruitment.

There are many other ways to connect with the next generation – from careers talks to mock interview days and site visits. If your business would like to reach its future workforce now then please contact andrew.hanson@somerset-ebp.co.uk 07912 264531 or Imelda.leetch@somerset-ebp.co.uk 07519 124546.

Entries open for the Somerset Education Business Partnership Awards 2023

Does your organisation work hard to inspire young people and develop future talent? Do you know a young person who is committed to progressing their future career?

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 - including Young Person of the Year, Best Placement Employer and Careers Leader of the Year.

Entries close on Friday, May 12.

The awards categories are:

Inspiring the Next Generation Award (one to 249 employees) sponsored by Strode College

For small to medium sized businesses that have invested sustainably in inspiring the next generation.

Inspiring the Next Generation Award (250+ employees) sponsored by Bridgwater and Taunton College

For an individual or a company that has effectively inspired young people about future career opportunities.

Careers Leader of The Year sponsored by Yeovil College

For the careers leader who has facilitated high quality inspiration, information and guidance for learners.

Young Person of The Year (Key Stage 4) sponsored by Evo Agency

For young people who have independently taken proactive steps to preparing for the workplace.

Young Person of The Year (Key Stage 5) sponsored by Somerset Council

For young people who have independently taken proactive steps to preparing for the workplace.

Supported Employee of The Year sponsored by Imagine the Possibilities

For a supported employee who has made a great contribution to their employer.

Supported Employment - Employer of The Year sponsored by Imagine the Possibilities

For the employer who has provided a high-quality supported employment opportunity.

Best Placement Employer sponsored by Somerset Chamber of Commerce

For employers who have offered high quality placement opportunities.

Best Placement Participant sponsored by Hinkley Point C

For young people who have excelled in a placement.



Outstanding Personal Contribution sponsored by Weston College

For an individual that has contributed significantly to developing the next generation in Somerset over a sustained period

More information, including tips on writing your entry, is available on the Somerset EBP website www.somerset-ebp.co.uk.



▲ Emma Rawlings, Chief Executive of Somerset Chamber presents the Continuing Through COVID Award to Tim Henderson and Caroline Keirle of Milestone Infrastructure at last year's SEBP Awards.

Somerset County Cricket Club signs biggest ever partnership deal with WPA . . .

Somerset County Cricket Club (SCCC) has extended its partnership with WPA Health Insurance, making it the biggest in the club's history.

The new three-year agreement will see WPA remain as the principal county championship partner until at least the end of the 2025 season, the club's 150th celebration year.

A local business through and through, WPA has been based in the South West for over 120 years and is a specialist UK not-for-profit health insurer offering award-winning health insurance solutions to individuals, families and companies of all sizes.

The WPA logo will once again feature prominently on the front of Somerset's County Championship match shirt and they will also continue to provide our members and supporters with a comprehensive viewing experience as our official live stream partner for the LV= Insurance County Championship and the One Day Cup.

Another important element of this multi-faceted agreement will see WPA continue their commitment to Western Storm.

WPA branding will again appear on the Western Storm playing shirts,



while their continued backing of the dedicated live stream of Storm fixtures at the Cooper Associates County Ground will help take coverage of the women's game to the next level.

SCCC Commercial Director, Caroline Herbert, said: "We are absolutely delighted to extend our partnership with WPA for another three years.

"We have developed an excellent relationship over the last two years and I know that we will cement this further over the next three years to support the key objectives of both of our organisations.

"As a local business, WPA is committed to the region and supporting their customers. Their

team is exceptional, and everyone associated with the club is thrilled that the relationship will continue into 2025 and our anniversary celebratory year."

Mark Southern, WPA's Director of Sales and Marketing, added "As a Somerset-based company, it's important for WPA to support our local community. We are really excited to continue our partnership with Somerset County Cricket Club as their principal county championship sponsor and live stream partner, helping them achieve their aims, and at the same time supporting the community in which we live and work."



. . . and signs a new and improved partnership with Higos

After an extremely successful initial year, Somerset County Cricket Club has agreed a new and improved partnership with chartered insurance broker Higos Insurance Services Ltd.

Higos became an official partner of the club in 2022 and 2023 will see them increase their involvement. In addition to being one of the club's highly valued principal partners, Higos will now have their branding highly visible on the front of Somerset's One-Day Cup shirts for the next two seasons.

Higos, a chartered insurance broker, will also continue to carry out activations and giveaways on matchdays at the Cooper Associates County Ground. It will also continue to maintain its position as SCCC's preferred insurance partner for business, commercial, travel, car, home and property insurance.

Award-winning commercial and personal insurance specialists, Higos has 14 branches based across the whole of the South West from Bath to Bude, Penzance to Southampton, including a head office in Somerton.

Originally founded in Somerset in 1990, Higos is part of the Global Risk Partners (GRP) family, one of the largest independent insurance intermediaries in the UK. As a chartered insurance broker, Higos is rated five stars on Feefo and Trust Pilot by offering insurance advice from their specialist friendly and expert advisors.

SCCC Commercial Director, Caroline Herbert, said: "We are delighted that Higos has chosen to increase its participation with us by coming on board as one of our principal partners. "The company has also committed to continue its support of



the Somerset Cricket Foundation by making a donation for every insurance policy taken out by our members and broader fanbase. This further demonstrates their commitment to helping to grow grass roots cricket and improving the lives of people across the region."

Higos Managing Director, Matthew Hartigan, said: "We are thrilled to continue with the Somerset County Cricket Club partnership again this season.

"Somerset is our heartland and the 230-plus Higos staff will continue to be rooted here. SCCC will continue to allow us to promote our brand in front of a much bigger audience and help Higos engage with the communities around us."



Albert Goodman announces double hire in tax team

Regional chartered accountancy firm Albert Goodman has appointed two new managers within their tax team, Lauren Chadwick and Julie Harding, just weeks after a new director in the growing team was announced, Ruth Powell.

Lauren started working in tax in 2012 and is now a Chartered Tax Advisor (CTA) and a member of the Association of Accounting Technicians (AAT). Lauren began her career following completion of her A-Levels and spent 10 years training and working at a larger firm before joining Albert Goodman.

Julie's career began in Jersey where she enjoyed a private banking role from 2012 before her interest grew in tax in 2017 and she



▲ Lauren Chadwick

gained the experience of being part of a large corporate company for just over five years. During this time, she became a member of the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA).

Both Lauren and Julie are a member of the Society of Trusts and Estates Practitioners (STEP) and share similar expertise in tax compliance, advice and accounts for family trusts, individuals and estates. The duo enjoy working with families to assist with their tax compliance obligations. Both



▲ Julie Harding

will be based at the firm's Bristol office.

Lauren Chadwick, Tax Manager at Albert Goodman, said: "I am excited to join a growing



company where I can bring my expertise in trusts and inheritance tax to both the tax team and the firm's clients.

"Having joined from a much larger firm I am looking forward to the opportunity a smaller firm provides especially around getting to know and assisting my colleagues from across all areas of the business."

Julie Harding, Tax Manager at Albert Goodman, added: "Joining Albert Goodman means that I get to be part of a company that prides itself on staff engagement and being a great employer to work for.

"Bringing my previous experience to the rapidly expanding tax team feels like the right step and time to further my career in an established accountancy practice, especially as we near the end of the financial tax year."

Strode College partners with software giant to boost IT courses

Strode College's T Level digital courses now have a learning partner to enhance the curriculum giving students a hands-on experience with cloud apps.

Strode students will be at the cutting edge of the cloud computing revolution thanks to a link-up with Red Hat Academy, which will offer a comprehensive curriculum, hands-on instruction, immersive labs and performance-based testing.

The students will be part of the next generation of IT talent with free access to a range of Red Hat's training courses and certification exams.

Paul Taylor, the college's Digital Sector Lead, said: "Strode College has been successful as one of the few FE colleges that are now a Red Hat Academy.

"This relationship will give our students access to industry-based qualifications that are greatly sought after and prepare

them well for whatever the next step takes them.

"Red Hat is also supporting Strode with technical support, guidance, workshops and mentoring."

This partnership will prepare students with real life-skills ready for the workforce. T Levels require students to undertake a minimum of 45 working days in the field. The aim is for students to learn the foundation skills necessary to embark on diverse technology topics and close the gap between the skills employers require and what students can supply.

The course focus on designing, implementing and testing software. It teaches students how to create solutions in a collaborative environment. It also covers applying ethical principles, managing risks in line with legal and regulatory requirements when developing software.

Once students are trained with the new technologies their possibilities expand to work in many more fields, including as software engineers, data analysts, data scientists or business intelligence developers in sought-after industries such as cloud-based technologies, gaming technologies or cyber security.

As the nation suffers from a shortage of IT professionals, training students with the right skills is essential. Strode College's partnership with Red Hat Academy will enrich their curriculum and help students reach their academic and career potential.





▲ From left - Rachel Ramsay, Sarah Brickell and Karen Higgins of Clarke Willmott

“As Clarke Willmott continues to grow it is paramount that our people are communicating with each other effectively, so Rachel’s internal role is crucial, particularly with hybrid working having become such a central part of our culture.

“Sarah’s appointment means we will have a more effective mechanism for sharing and highlighting the knowledge and expertise that we can provide for clients, their families and their businesses.”

Trio of senior appointments at Clarke Willmott

National law firm Clarke Willmott LLP has made three senior appointments as it looks to build on its most successful year ever.

The firm has appointed Karen Higgins as Head of ESG (Environment, Social and Governance), reflecting its long-term strategic importance to the firm. Karen spent 18 years at Grant Thornton UK LLP and for the past 12 of these was its Head of Sustainability. She is also a board member of Green Element, an environmental consultancy.

Rachel Ramsay is Clarke Willmott’s new internal communications manager. With over 25 years in publishing, journalism and internal communications, she is an expert in building employee experience and culture using innovative channels and is a member of the Institute of Internal Communications’ Professional Development Advisory Board.

Meanwhile Sarah Brickell has joined Clarke Willmott as Head of Communications. With over 20 years’ experience in marketing, predominantly in financial services, Sarah has a board remit on all external communications at the firm.

Stephen Rosser, CEO at Clarke Willmott, said: “As a firm we are enjoying strong and improving financial performance, as well as being acknowledged for our strong client and people-focused culture, leadership and commitment to a positive work-life balance for staff.

“ESG is of critical strategic importance in all of this and Karen’s appointment will support us in shaping an ESG strategy which is core to our business. Her role will include the development of plans to reach net zero together with looking at how we can maximise our social value within the communities we serve.

Richard Huish College welcomes Ofsted for a visit

Amanda Spielman, Chief Inspector at Ofsted, and her colleagues visited Richard Huish College, Taunton, as part of their tour visiting education providers around the country.



The college, which received an outstanding rating in 2022, was pleased to welcome Ofsted back, this time not for an inspection but to provide a chance for the Chief Inspector to hear from and engage directly with leaders, staff and students about their work.

Following a campus tour, Amanda had lunch with students and staff where she enthusiastically listened to what they had to say about their experiences of education.

The visit concluded by welcoming some education leaders from the local area to join Huish for the afternoon.

College students take over farm restaurant

Staff at Greenway Farm restaurant, in Wembdon, were able to put their feet up for a day when students on the Level 1 progression to culinary foundation learning course at Bridgwater & Taunton College prepared and served over 40 meals to paying customers.



Hands-on work experience is a vital part of the training, helping the students to increase confidence, work as a team and interact with the public, as well as embedding the taught cookery and hospitality skills that help them to become work-ready and employable.

Prior to the day, the students devised a three-course, fixed price menu with four choices for each course. They did the shopping, preparation and serving, plus – equally importantly – the clearing up!

Jason Gunningham, Assistant Principal for Land-based, Sport and Foundation Studies at the college praised both students and staff: “Our primary role as a college is to prepare young people of all ages and abilities for the modern world of work.

“We cannot stress highly enough the importance of real-life experience like this, where students are able to take their learning outside of the classroom, deal with genuine customers in a live hospitality setting and receive recognition and praise for their efforts.”

As well as boosting the students’ confidence, the event also raised £600 for Cancer Research UK.



▲ Winners and finalists of the Somerset Business Awards 2023.

CELEBRATIONS FOR THE WINNERS OF THE SOMERSET BUSINESS AWARDS 2023

The winners of the Somerset Business Awards 2023 have been announced at a black-tie dinner and presentation at the Winter Gardens Pavilion, in Weston-super-Mare.

Nearly 400 business people from across Somerset attended the gala evening, which was organised by Somerset Chamber of Commerce and hosted by BBC broadcaster and journalist Claire Carter.

This year was the 18th anniversary of the awards and Somerset Chamber Chief Executive, Emma Rawlings, thanked everyone who had entered and supported the awards as sponsors and judges.

She said: "It was fantastic to be able to honour winners and finalists from all corners of the county and from a wide range of sectors and industries.

"Despite some really challenging trading conditions, it was incredibly encouraging to see so many positive applications from business and charities from across the county – they are doing some great work and we are honoured to be able to highlight that through these awards.

"There is much we can be proud of in Somerset and while times may be tough, it is clear our business community is fighting fit and meeting those challenges head-on."

Michael Cahill, a Partner at Albert Goodman, added: "The awards are an opportunity to celebrate Somerset's vibrant business community and to recognise the achievements of those who go above and beyond to deliver exceptional service, results and products.

"We have a huge range of businesses and charities in Somerset and while the economic situation is challenging, I am constantly impressed by the resilience, innovation and adaptability I see from the businesses we work with."



**SOMERSET
BUSINESS
AWARDS**



▲ As well as providing the dessert course for the final, Marston Foods also donated a cheque for £500 to the Charity of the Year winner, In Charley's Memory. Pictured, are Sarah Green (left) and Leona McDonald (second from right), of Marston Foods with Pauline West and Dawn Carey (right), of In Charley's Memory.

▲ The Somerset Business Awards 2023 grand final in the Winter Gardens Pavilion, Weston-super-Mare.



▲ Ceremony host, BBC journalist and presenter Claire Carter.

“It was fantastic to be able to honour winners and finalists from all corners of the county and from a wide range of sectors and industries.”



▲ The team from the awards' main sponsor, Albert Goodman.

THE SOMERSET BUSINESS AWARD 2023 WINNERS ARE:



▲ Judge and sponsor Michael Cahill (left), of Albert Goodman, with Jade and George Farthing of JH Haskins.

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

Winner - JH Haskins, Shepton Mallet

The runners-up were: Container Team Ltd, Weston-super-Mare and Mark One Consultants Ltd, Yeovil



▲ Judge and sponsor Ges Green, of Enterprise South West with Kate Andreoletti and Tracy Taber of You Are My Sunshine.

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

Winner - You Are My Sunshine, Wedmore

Runners-up were: Hullabaloo's Drinks, Axbridge and Transformations Hair, Beauty, Aesthetics & Day Spa, Ilminster



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

Winner - Puxton Park, Weston-super-Mare

Runners-up were: Elliott Environmental Services Ltd, Yeovil and Train4All Ltd, Somerton

▲ Alistair Mead and Anne-Mette Jacobsen, of Puxton Park, with judge and sponsor Matt Hartigan, of Higos Insurance Services.



▲ Judge and sponsor Kevin Smith, of Brook Financial with Jerry Redman and Joe Routledge, of Sycamore Process Engineering.

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

Winner – Sycamore Process Engineering, Sparkford

Runners-up were: Civils Store Ltd, Shepton Mallet and Rotec Hydraulics Ltd, Taunton



▲ Judge and sponsor Evelyn Adfield, of Porter Dodson, with David Collacott and Alex Walker, of Cardstream.

**Best Use of Technology
(sponsored by Porter Dodson)**

Winner – Cardstream, Taunton

Runner-up was: Presona UK Ltd, Bridgwater



**Charity of the Year
(sponsored by Clarke Willmott)**

Winner – In Charley's Memory, Highbridge

Runners-up were: bibic, Langport and Reminiscence Learning, Wellington

◀ Dawn Carey and Pauline West from In Charley's Memory with judge and sponsor Kirill Bingham (right), of Clarke Willmott.



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

Winner – The Priory Learning Trust, Weston-super-Mare

Runners-up were: Singer Instruments, Roadwater and WPA, Taunton

◀ Tanya Dicks (left) and Emma Warren (right), judges and sponsors from Elite Staffing Solutions, with Paige Cobley and Danni Laing from The Priory Learning Trust.





**Investing in Somerset
(sponsored by Hinkley Point C)**

Winner - Young Somerset, Bridgwater

Runners-up: MMES 2012 Ltd, Bridgwater and
Turnbull Infrastructure & Utilities Ltd, Bridgwater

- ◀ Judge and sponsor Andrew Cockcroft (left), of Hinkley Point C with Nik Harwood and Libby Woodberry of Young Somerset.



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

Winner - Blossom HR, Westbury sub Mendip

Runners-up were: Laurel Farm Glamping,
Mark and Scarlett Rose Events, Martock

- ◀ Rosie Wicks (centre) of Blossom HR with judges and sponsors Lizzie Ginbey and Barry Tottle, of Teapot Creative.



**Environmental Achievement
(sponsored by Gravity)**

Winner - PVA Hygiene Ltd, Wrington

Runners-up were: Bradfords, Yeovil and
Concept Products Ltd, Somerton

- ◀ Paul Lowndes (left), judge and sponsor from This is Gravity, with Nick Western and Will O'Hagan from PVA Hygiene.



**Apprentice of the Year
(sponsored by Weston College)**

**Winner - Sammy Chilcott
(Sycamore Process Engineering, Sparkford)**

Runners-up were: Will Olbrechts (Evo Agency, Taunton)
and Jo Harris (Somerset County Council, Taunton)

- ◀ Judge and sponsor David Crew, of Weston College (left) with Sammy Chilcott, of Sycamore Process Engineering.



**Service Excellence
(sponsored by Stephens Scown)**

Winner - Busy Bees Cleaning & Maintenance 2000 Ltd, Frome

Runners-up: Milsted Langdon, Taunton and West Country Drainage Services Ltd, Burrowbridge

- ▲ Amy Welch and Caron Henwood of Busy Bees Cleaning & Maintenance 2000 with judge and sponsor Stephen Wray, of Stephens Scown.



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

Winner - Rotec Hydraulics Ltd, Taunton

Runners-up: Hullabaloo's Drinks, Axbridge and Taunton Fabrications, Taunton

- ▲ Judge and sponsor Simon Darch (left), of SRD Technology UK, with Andy Rimes and Rachel Worth, of Rotec Hydraulics.



**CONGRATULATIONS
to all of the Award Winners**

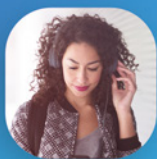
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David.Collins@global.com



- ▲ Judges and sponsors Nick Porter (right) and Kate Beaumont (left), of Barclays with Todd Lindley and Dan Cooper from Somerset County Cricket Club.

**Rebuild and Thrive
(sponsored by Barclays)**

Winner - Somerset County Cricket Club, Taunton

Runners-up: HippyChick, Bridgwater and The White Feather Coffee Co, Bridgwater





Charity and not-for-profit

Somerset Activity and Sports Partnership

Somerset Activity and Sports Partnership (SASP) is dedicated to increasing the health and happiness of residents in Somerset through physical activity and sport.

In September 2022, the new Somerset Physical Activity and Sports Strategy - Somerset Moves - 'Enabling Active Lives for All' 2022 - 2030 was launched. Somerset Moves is a system wide, multi-agency strategy for the development of physical activity and sport across Somerset.

Everyone has a role to play in Somerset Moves - people, communities, and organisations, from every sector and place across the county, pulling together with a shared goal to help move more and improve their lives in the process.

We are proud to have collectively set new values for SASP at the end of 2022, which gives a better idea of

who we are as a team and organisation. Our values: passionate, inclusive, dedicated, inspiring and connected.



Showcase Programme: SASP was awarded £296k of Together Fund funding from Sport England to distribute to community groups and organisations. The Together Fund prioritised four key audiences, lower socio-economic groups, culturally diverse communities, disabled people and people with long term health conditions.

Since its launch in April 2020, as part of Sport England's support package to help the sport and physical activity sector through the coronavirus (COVID-19) crisis, the funding has enabled over 90 community groups in Somerset to continue to exist and engage with their communities, supporting people to be active.

To find out more about SASP, please visit our website www.sasp.co.uk or follow us on social media.

The Community Council for Somerset

Established in 1926, The Community Council for Somerset (CCS) is a charity working in all corners of the County. We believe everyone in Somerset should be able to live a healthy, independent and safe life and be part of a strong and thriving community.

Our work starts on the ground where our teams act as advocates using their local expertise to ensure that each community and its people flourish. Somerset is diverse

and vibrant and we recognise that each town and village is unique. We can react to the changing needs of each community by working in collaboration to facilitate projects and enterprises that support positive change.

As a charity, our work relies on the funding we receive from our partners, who value our knowledge in making sure that the right level of investment is put into the right places, benefiting the people that need it the most.

Our consultancy wing, Smart Communities, was established to provide a paid-for service to support parish councils and community buildings.

As well as our long-standing village, community and carers agent teams, recent projects include a new refugee agent support team, who are helping Ukrainian and other refugees settle in Somerset.

Our new Inter-faith and Belief Coordinator is working with diverse faith/belief groups across the county and we have also set up our micro-enterprise support service, helping people access work within the much in-demand care and support sector.

For more information about CCS and collaboration opportunities, please email

marketing@somersetccs.org.uk, or telephone 01823 331222.



Taunton Brewhouse

Taunton Theatre Association (TTA) is the registered charity which operates Taunton Brewhouse, a theatre at the heart of our county town with the objective of providing high quality entertainment and creative engagement opportunities to the local community.

Taunton Brewhouse has established itself as a much-loved regional theatre that regularly attracts world class talent and celebrates a wide range of community groups in Somerset and beyond. It is a multi-purpose venue, catering for professional arts organisations, local groups, schools, businesses, and aspiring performers.

The venue has a range of rooms available for community events, conferences and parties including a studio theatre

with sprung floor, ideal for dance groups, and cinema projection for private screenings and parties. Hire rates are generally very competitive but a further discount is applicable to any charity, not-for-profit organisations and community groups.

As a charity, TTA understand the challenges of the current economic climate to individuals as well as fundraisers. At this time especially, we feel collaborative working and the sharing of resources, such as training and policy guidance, would best serve our community. To facilitate this, we are looking to set up a network of local charities and would invite anyone who is interested in hearing more to email development@tauntonbrewhouse.co.uk.

We are also thrilled to be working with some local business partners to optimise their marketing through our corporate partnership scheme. With a database of over 13,500 subscribers, over 50,000 visitors per year and wide brochure print and distribution we can get corporate messaging out at a very low cost.



Brainwave

Brainwave is delighted to announce that Bridgwater-based retailer and distributor HippyChick, that provide an innovative range of baby and toddler products, has chosen them as their charity partner for 2023.

Founder and Managing Director of HippyChick, Julia Minchin said: "Having had the privilege of undertaking a tour of Brainwave in January, we couldn't be happier to make them the target of our charity focus for 2023.

"We were overwhelmed to see how they support children, transforming their lives, as well as their families, through their amazing therapy programmes. Brainwave has a wonderful team of people.

"Throughout this year we will invite donations through our website from our generous customers, as well as collaborate on a variety of fundraising events."

Keith Sinclair, CEO of Brainwave, said: "We are so pleased that HippyChick have chosen to support us as their charity of the year and are looking forward to working together over the next 12 months.

"This partnership will help to increase awareness of our charity and enable us to achieve life changing outcomes for more children and families, both locally and across the UK. We feel fortunate to have them walking alongside us on our journey."

Charity partnerships are beneficial for both businesses and charities and can have a positive impact on team building, networking, employee engagement and brand awareness for both.

We see this as a win-win and if you would like to find out more about other charity partnership opportunities, please contact us for further details.



Channel Adventure CIC

Channel Adventure CIC is a social enterprise that operates out of the Centre for Outdoor Activities and Community Hub (COACH) in French Weir Park, Taunton.

Channel Adventure wants to get more people outside, having adventures, more often. We passionately believe that adventure is a mindset that goes far beyond the activity itself.

Adventure is about being open to new and sometimes



scary situations and finding the personal strength to attempt these challenges - while simultaneously supporting and receiving support from those around you also sharing in that experience.

We use the money we make from our commercial activities - equipment hire, birthday parties, business team building days etc - to provide adventurous activities at low or no cost to children in the community that otherwise may not be able to access these activities.

Adventure squad is a great example of this. For eight years now we have been running an after-school adventure club for children in our local communities. We now have people who attended this club as children coming back years later as instructors.

We wouldn't be able to do what we do without working together closely with several other local organisations. WPA Benevolent Fund and Friends of Longrun meadow have supported us with infrastructure developments and funding to further expand and strengthen our offer to the community.

The Somerset Active Sports Partnership (SASP) has worked closely with us to provide adventurous activities within our community, from children on free school meals to inclusive sessions for children and adults with additional learning and physical needs.



Diversity Voice

One year on from the start of the war in Ukraine, over 2,500 Ukrainian refugees have arrived to seek refuge in Somerset. Many of them are being supported by Somerset Chamber member Diversity Voice, a Bridgwater-based charity which works to prevent social exclusion and discrimination.

The CEO, Natalie Dyson, was one of the first people to welcome a Ukrainian family into her home under the Homes for Ukraine Scheme and recently appeared on ITV's "Lorraine" couch to talk about her experience of bringing hundreds of Ukrainian refugees to Somerset over the last 12 months.

Founded in 2015 Diversity Voice's roots stem from helping Polish migrant workers to settle into the community, offering English language classes, interpretation and translation services.

More recently they have been a lead organisation in

the delivery of a network of Welcome Hubs across Somerset for refugees and asylum seekers, offering advice on housing, schooling, employment, benefits, mental health and wellbeing support, as well as social events, art and craft activities.

They have plans to broaden their offering to hate crime, cultural awareness and equality, diversity and inclusion training over the coming months.

Diversity Voice is currently seeking up to three new trustees and are particularly interested in hearing from people who fall under any of the protected characteristics of the Equality Act 2010.

For more information about becoming a trustee, or if you are interested in English lessons or translation and interpretation services for your organisation, please contact communities@diversityvoice.org.uk, 03000 750 105, www.diversityvoice.org.uk.



Somerset Film

Somerset Film is a local not-for-profit organisation that is wholeheartedly committed to its core mission of empowering individuals and communities through film and digital technology.

Over the past 25 years, Somerset Film has provided training and opportunities to help individuals gain valuable experience in creative industries. Many of its Alumni have gone on to work in the media industry with great success.



The organisation regularly holds activities, events and workshops at The Engine Room, its media centre in Bridgwater and at other locations across the county. As a charity, Somerset Film tries to ensure most of what it offers is subsidised or free-of-charge to remove any boundaries for individuals wanting to access their training.

Somerset Film is also a fully-functioning production house, producing content for local organisations and exploring a wide range of subjects through both factual and scripted filmmaking.

Film commissions, along with other income streams, such as equipment hire and studio hire, help to support community work and outreach projects. Recently, the team has delivered free filmmaking courses with different groups in Wells. Participants have gone on to develop their skills and are currently producing two short films.

Somerset Film is a team of creatives that have a wide range of experience and expertise in film production and digital technology. They work with local communities to help voice stories, engage audiences, and develop talent.

If you are interested in learning more about Somerset Film and the activities, they have coming up at The Engine Room, please visit: www.somersetfilm.com.

Young Somerset

Young Somerset is a charity that has developed and thrived over its 25-year history. It exists to put young people first; providing support and opportunities to thousands of young people across the county every year.

By following core values of inspiring, collaborating and going further, Young Somerset has built an organisation that focuses on being an inclusive and compassionate environment for young people between the ages of 0 to 25 years old.

The charity delivers a range of services that are aligned to statutory provision and to support young peoples' personal, social, economic and educational development. The team is creative and innovative in dynamic ways and collaborates to strengthen their sector's offer to deliver positive, sustainable outcomes for children, young people, their families, and their communities.

Our vision is delivered through three strands of work:

- Targeted youth support which supports children and young people who have high levels of need, risk and vulnerability
- Alternative education provision and enterprise which focuses on learning by doing - building economic, education and employability skills alongside personal and social development
- Mental health and wellbeing which delivers low-intensity cognitive behavioural therapy, parenting workshops and peer support groups for those with mild-to-moderate mental health disorders

Through our variety of services, we can provide life changing opportunities to young people. As an organisation we continue to strive to help build a community of people who can become the best versions of themselves.

To find out more about Young Somerset, please visit our website www.youngsomerset.org.uk.



Arc

Arc is a local charitable organisation providing support and accommodation for those who have become homeless in Taunton and Sedgemoor. We strive to provide a safe and supportive environment for anyone who becomes homeless and to inspire and empower them to work with their strengths towards a better future.

Our support can often start with our Outreach Team, who work with anyone found to be rough sleeping locally to ensure their safety and wellbeing, but more importantly to get them access to suitable accommodation quickly.

Our core service is accommodation and we have 16 properties housing 168 people. That includes a 40-bed property which provides 24-hour staff support and three meals daily. Our other 15 properties are smaller houses of multiple occupancy, which are designed for more

independent living but with floating support personalised to the individual client.

Our services go much beyond offering shelter as we help our clients to recover from any difficulties they may be facing such as mental and physical health, unemployment, relationship breakdowns, substance misuse and financial hardship. We provide many learning and development opportunities and have our own in-house wellbeing hub, which includes a GP clinic for weekly appointments.

We rely heavily on the support of our generous community to continue growing our services to meet the unfortunate demand. We'd love to hear from anyone who would like to change the lives of those experiencing homelessness locally by supporting Arc. Please get in touch with Rosie: rhather@arcinspire.co.uk



Up next in the June/July edition of Somerset Voice:

Sector focus: recruitment

Feature: going green – members' environmental initiatives

Latest member-to-member offers

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

Cossington Park

15% discount for executive meetings and retreats

Compass Video

Free power hour and discounted rates

Growing Vision

10% discount on the Confident Leader Programme

The Gorge Outdoors

5% discount in online store

5%
DISCOUNT

15%
DISCOUNT

Somerset Film

10% off media training at The Engine Room

10%
DISCOUNT

FREE
POWER HOUR

Laurel Finance

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DISCOUNT

10%
DISCOUNT

If you have an offer you would like to add to our list, visit www.somersetchamber.co.uk/membership



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First reactor arrives at Hinkley Point C

The first new nuclear reactor for a British power station for more than 30 years has arrived in Somerset.

At just 13-metres long and weighing 500-tonnes, the “reactor pressure vessel” will create the heat needed to make steam for the world’s largest turbines.

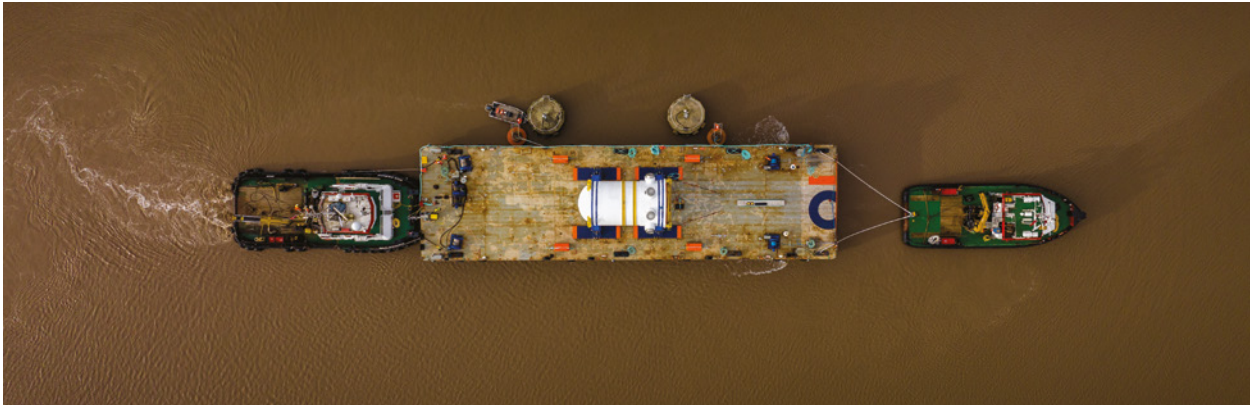
It is the first of two nuclear reactors which will be installed at Hinkley Point C. Each reactor will help provide enough low carbon electricity for 3m homes and will be vital in helping Britain achieve Net Zero and stronger energy security.

The reactor made by Framatome, in France, comes from the same factory which made the last nuclear reactor for a British power station at Sizewell B in Suffolk. It became operational in 1995.

The reactor first arrived in Britain at Avonmouth Docks, in Bristol, before being transported by barge to Combe Wharf on the River Parrett in Somerset. The final journey was a five-hour trip for four miles by a transporter to its permanent home on the construction site.

The arrival of the reactor marks a significant milestone for Hinkley Point C, where more than 8,000 workers are now on site every day. It will be installed in the reactor building after the dome is lifted into place.





Let's network over lunch, at Yeovil Town Football Club



▲ From left, Glenn Muggleton of Clarke Willmott, Carla Wells-Burr of Cooper Associates Mortgages, Alex Howells of Amarin Rubber & Plastics and Paul Gass of SDS.



▲ Kristof Downer (left) of WPA with Gillian Harvey and Philip Houldey of Barclays.



▲ Durgan Cooper of CETSAT (left) with Jon Beake of Wessex Reserve Forces' and Cadets' Association and Somerset Chamber CEO, Emma Rawlings.

▼ Attendees on the pitch at Yeovil Town Football Club.



Let's network over breakfast, at Haynes Motor Museum



▲ Networking at Haynes Motor Museum breakfast.



▲ Haynes Motor Museum CEO, Chris Scudds, Somerset Chamber CEO, Emma Rawlings and Sycamore Process Engineering MD, Jerry Redman.



▲ Guests had the chance to network before sitting down for breakfast.

Exclusive tour of Exmoor Distillery



▲ Founders John and Nicola Smith.



▲ John Smith takes members through the process of creating award-winning gin.





Ladies' afternoon tea and networking, at Dillington House, Ilminster



▲ From left, Sarah Cummins of Brainwave with Lucy Kitchener and Ruth Knugg of We Hear You.



▲ Kelly Burge (left) and Tasha Colliss of Barclays.



▲ Marie Vassalli-Collard (left) and Jeanette Turner of Bridgwater & Taunton College.



▲ Holly Cook (left) and Jo Tucker of Strode College with Somerset Chamber CEO, Emma Rawlings (right).



▲ Somerset Chamber's Natalie Hodgson (left) with Karen Morrall of Karen Morrall Consulting and Laura Day of Laurel Finance.

Workshop – introduction to the skilled worker route

Thursday
20 APR

This workshop is for companies which are new to employing overseas workers and those that already have an existing skilled worker licence. Led by David Faulkner-Bryant, Senior Business immigration Consultant for The Visa Office, it will help attendees feel more informed about the immigration route and the opportunities for their business.

Sponsored by



Time: 9.30am – 1.30pm at Equity House, Taunton
Cost: £49.50 plus VAT (includes lunch)

Construction Connections

Thursday
11 MAY

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. We will be joined by David Lohfink, Land and Planning Director, of CG Fry & Son.

Sponsored by



Time: 12 noon – 2pm at Yeovil Golf Club
Cost: £17.95 plus VAT (includes buffet lunch)

Workshop – engaging with education

Tuesday
25 APR

Develop your talent pipeline by gaining an insight into how schools and colleges operate. By understanding their key drivers and constraints you can plan how to engage with education and create a stronger future workforce. This workshop is being delivered by Andrew Hanson, of the Somerset Education Business Partnership and Clare Lewis, of Bridgwater and Taunton College.

In association with



Time: 9.30am – 1pm at Equity House, Taunton
Cost: £10 plus VAT

Chamber breakfast connections

Thursday
18 MAY

We have joined forces with Taunton Chamber and Bridgwater Chamber for this special breakfast event to bring all our members together and to showcase the links between the trio of Chambers. There will also be an opportunity for some informal networking before enjoying breakfast.

In association with



Time: 8am – 10am at the Canalside Conference Centre, Bridgwater
Cost: £12 plus VAT

Exclusive tour of Fussels Fine Foods

Thursday
4 MAY

Join us for this exclusive tour of Fussels Farm, near Frome. Delegates will enjoy light refreshments on arrival with a short introduction and the chance to see what goes on behind-the-scenes of this family-run fine food company – with a few laughs with Andy and Tim Fussel along the way!

Time: 10.30am – 2pm at Fussels Fine Foods, Rode
Cost: £19.75 plus VAT

Let's network over lunch

Tuesday
25 MAY

Get the very latest update on the new unitary Somerset Council from guest speakers Cllr David Woan, Associate Lead Member, Economic Development and Inward Investment and Paul Hickson Strategic Commissioning Manager – Economy and Planning. Plus, you can enjoy plenty of networking opportunities and a two-course lunch!

Time: 12.30pm – 2.30pm at Croydon Hall, Rodhuish
Cost: £27.50 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.



AB Heritage Ltd**Construction**

AB Heritage is an established, professional heritage consultancy, offering services nationwide, providing heritage reports, heritage statements, archaeological impact assessments, historic building recordings and archaeological works programmes. We work quickly and provide pragmatic solutions to reduce or avoid costly work. ClfA Registered.

Kim McDonald, 03333 440206
info@abheritage.co.uk
www.abheritage.co.uk

Digital Somerset**ICT**

Digital Somerset is an exciting movement made up of passionate individuals and businesses who want to ensure that Somerset evolves into a hub for digital innovation and collaboration. Bringing the community together through networking events, workshops and meet-ups.

Lizzie Ginbey, 01450281865
team@digitalsomerset.com
<https://digitalsomerset.com>

Impeccable Care Funeral Services**Funerals**

An independent funeral directors with many years of experience, helping and supporting families across Somerset. We can help create a unique funeral for your loved one from an unattended funeral through to a woodland burial and everything in between.

Nick Redrup, 01278 448973
info@impeccablefunerals.co.uk
www.impeccablefunerals.co.uk

Initiis, T/A Vodafone**Retail**

Initiis is the Vodafone franchisee for Somerset. We have established retail and B2B stores in Taunton, Bridgwater, Yeovil and Street. We offer personalised support, the latest telecoms tech, a dedicated account manager and business boosts, without the extra costs.

David Harris-Heffer, 07967 676076
David.harrisheffer@vodafone.com
www.initiis.co.uk

Jurassic Fibre Limited**Broadband**

Jurassic Fibre provides full-fibre ultra-fast broadband to homes and businesses across Devon, Dorset and Somerset. We're quickly becoming one of the fastest-growing companies in the region.

Stephen Harris, 01392 345600
info@jurassic-fibre.com
www.jurassic-fibre.com

Karen Morrall Consulting**Finance**

While most companies employ accountants or a bookkeeping service at some level, I can provide a Head of Finance role on a part-time freelance basis to suit your requirements helping you understand your financial results and giving you an insight into how to improve effectiveness.

Karen Morrall, 07980 260608
karen@karenmorrallconsulting.co.uk
www.karenmorrallconsulting.co.uk

Kintsugi Soul**Consulting and engagement**

Kintsugi Soul is proud to help forward thinking people and organisations define their purpose and bring it to life. I bring my diverse experience from many sectors to help you avoid pitfalls, make the most of each opportunity and thrive.

Di Howard, 07552 868399
di.howard@kintsugisoul.co.uk

P4i Recruitment**Recruitment**

P4i Recruitment provides staff for all types of support in the care sector. Our passion is working to the very highest standards. P4i originates from all types of care experience we have ourselves of running residential units, children's home, fostering and family assessment units.

Jack Dawkins, 03300564487
jdawkins@p4irecruitment.co.uk
www.p4irecruitment.co.uk

Safety in Design Ltd.**Construction**

Expert and engaging CDM training designed to give individuals and teams confidence to deliver solutions that work, for all involved. People want to work with businesses that care about their people: this is how you show them you do.

Liz Bennett, 07713 158282
info@safetyindesign.org.uk
www.safetyindesign.org.uk

Severn Trent Connect**Wastewater treatment**

ST Connect part of Severn Trent PLC are an Ofwat-regulated wastewater company, operating in England & Wales. We provide onsite wastewater treatment, meeting the developer's utility needs. We are working with many sites ranging from 210 to 10,000 dwellings, garden villages and commercial.

Lara Day, 07384 450701
lara.day@st-connect.co.uk
www.st-connect.co.uk

Somerset Cricket Foundation

Sports and leisure

A registered charity with the mission of positively impacting the lives of all people in Somerset through cricket. Based at The Coopers Associates County Ground, we support and work throughout the community, club and education settings throughout the county.

Jon Bendle, 01823 352266

Jon.bendle@somersetcricketfoundation.org

www.somersetcricketfoundation.org

Somerset NHS Foundation Trust

NHS Commercial Services Team

Somerset NHS Foundation Trust is the first NHS trust on the English mainland to provide community, mental health and two acute hospitals in Taunton and Yeovil. We also run a proportion of Somerset's primary care services.

commercial@somersetft.nhs.uk

www.somersetft.nhs.uk

Taylor Made Solutions Devon Ltd

Fire, security, electrical contractors

Taylor Made Solutions Limited, are specialists in all things fire alarms, security systems and electrical contractors. We make security, affordable, believing that stronger communities are the key to safer neighbourhoods. We install products that help you protect what matters most at work or home.

Kyle Grigg, 01392 300877

info@tmsdevon.co.uk

www.tmsdevon.co.uk

The Community Council for Somerset

Charity

The Community Council for Somerset (CCS) is a charity working in all corners of the county. We believe everyone in Somerset should be able to live a healthy, independent and safe life and be part of a thriving community.

Matthew Byrne, 01823 331222

matthewb@somsetrcc.org.uk

www.ccslovesomerset.org

Training for Safety

Training, health and safety

Training for Safety provides a variety of courses that can be delivered at the workplace or at a suitable external venue, all in a friendly and approachable way. Courses available: first aid, manual handling, fire warden, safeguarding and company driver.

Andrew Herbert, 07974 977829

andy@trainingforsafety.co.uk

www.trainingforsafety.co.uk

Turnbull Infrastructure & Utilities Ltd

Utilities, infrastructure, construction

Turnbull are leaders in lifecycle construction and operations. From design and build to facility management and maintenance, we provide sustainable, end-to-end services for civil, mechanical and electrical engineering projects.

Stefan Cecchini

hello@turnbulluk.co.uk

www.turnbulluk.co.uk

Watt to Wear Ltd

Manufacturing

Watt to Wear manufactures high-quality personalised clothing, with bespoke embroidered jackets being our specialist area. Our range of corporate, promotional and equestrian merchandise provides companies and teams worldwide with a unique and easily identifiable image.

Edwina Carter, 01984 622010

sales@wattowear.co.uk

www.wattowear.co.uk

White Financial Services

Financial services

White Financial Services creates property finance solutions and personal financial resilience through relationships built on strength, integrity and trust. We are a company of action - proactive, professional and committed to creating long-term success and financial progression.

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Office solutions

Gone are the days when renting an office space and filling it with a couple of desks and some tech passed for a good working environment. Today, both employers and employees rightly expect more - from virtual office solutions and reliable equipment, to bright, clean office spaces and the ability to work from home. Here are how some of our members can help you and your business.

Helliar & Son

Office-based businesses have a lot to think about besides the usual challenges of staffing, heating and faulty equipment. The building itself needs care and attention and that's where Helliar & Son Ltd can help. They have supported office-based businesses across Somerset and



Dorset for over 90 years and have expanded their services to meet customers' needs.

The office building itself must make a good first impression - building surfaces can become unsightly, gutters need clearing and paving/ parking areas may require pressure washing to improve appearance and remove algae and mud.

Helliar can assist with all these things, while their specialist reach and wash window cleaning system enables easy cleaning of high windows with no risk of ladder damage to external landscaping. It is also environmentally-friendly, using 100% de-ionised pure water without the need for chemicals or detergents.

Unfortunately, not all office guests

are welcome, and if you have an issue with rodents, insects, or other pests, Helliar Pest Control can help. Their trained, experienced and DBS checked technicians can work discreetly outside office hours to eradicate the problem and also offer a programme of regular visits to prevent a recurrence.

Finally, what is an office without an office party or function? If you are planning a celebration for your staff, Helliar's Event Linen Hire service can provide just what you need and, with a variety of colours to choose from, there's sure to be one which matches your logo!



MyPA

A lack of time is often the reason given for not completing that task you needed to do. What if it's not so much not having the time, but the fact you've been spending that time on those things that need doing but aren't benefitting you or your business.

Research found that SME owners and executives spend an average of 16 hours per week performing administrative tasks and duties. That's almost half of your working week gone before you can focus on what you do best and grow your business.

A virtual assistant can help reduce that time loss by taking on those tasks which aren't allowing you to fulfil your potential. By outsourcing tasks such as call answering, diary and inbox management, or even

document production and project management, you can not only get back to focusing on what you do best, but also know everything else is being looked after to the high standards you'd expect from yourself.

We tailor our services to the individual needs of your business, integrating seamlessly and acting as one of your team. What's more, because you will only pay for the time needed per task, the cost of hiring a Virtual Assistant works out much cheaper than hiring a full-time member of staff. Removing the costs of a salary, recruitment and training will result in extra budget to put back into your business.

To find out more please visit mypa.co.uk, call us on 01823 77 44 77, or email us at help@mypa.co.uk.





SDS Ltd

The rise in hybrid and home working and has created several challenges to organisations that need fresh ideas to overcome. The current situation requires home working alongside traditional office set-ups.

Clients need the ability to scan hard copy documents to individuals email addresses to ensure the morning



post can still be distributed, whether in the office or at home. Also, invoice approval workflows can be created and make sure documents are not lingering in staff In-Tray's awaiting sign off, these can be electronically actioned with a few easy steps.

Printing has become more important as certain clients need one time use documents such as menus and checklists, this increases volumes and if printed on high running cost desktop devices could also be dramatically increasing your spend levels.

With the circular economy becoming more important, the offer of fully upcycled machines allow products to live-again with remanufactured units extending their normal life cycle and offering cost effective alternatives to new.

Print release is another area of concern, businesses do not want prints getting mixed up and security becomes an issue. We can configure secure and safe collection with no touchscreen interaction at all via a stylus, swipe card or mobile app. We can even manage home print usage with our PaperCut software, allowing remote workers to send print jobs to an office-based machine.

We also have seen a large uptake in our desktop units that give all the functionality of the larger devices and can be ran at a fraction of the conventional desktop cost.

For a free review please call us on 01278 723784 or email sales@sdsLtd.uk.com

COGNIQUE

"I needed an agency that I could trust to support my business, as well as align with my growth ambitions. That's where Cognique came in. Since we've been working together I've seen substantial growth in website enquiries from exactly the right type of customers."

Maxine Easingwood, Director,
Heritage Heating & Cooling

Amy | Digital Marketing Exec

PKF Francis Clark officially one of UK's Best Workplaces for Wellbeing

PKF Francis Clark has officially been named one of the UK's Best Workplaces for Wellbeing (2023) by Great Place to Work, the global authority on workplace culture.

The accountancy firm, which has more than 850 employees and 55 partners in Bristol, Exeter, Plymouth, Poole, Salisbury, Southampton, Taunton, Torquay and Truro, is ranked 40th among large organisations in the newly published list of Best Workplaces for Wellbeing.

Initiatives to promote colleague wellbeing at PKF Francis Clark include Wellbeing Wednesdays, an ongoing programme of events and resources focusing on physical, mental and financial wellbeing, such as webinars with sports psychologists, dieticians and other experts. The firm also has a menopause support group, as well as health and wellbeing champions and mental health first aiders in each office.



▲ Amy Taylor, chief people officer at PKF Francis Clark

Great Place to Work's culture experts analysed thousands of employee surveys, assessing people's holistic experiences of wellbeing at work to determine the UK's Best Workplaces for Wellbeing list.



The surveys asked employees to comment on how their company supports their work-life balance, sense of fulfilment, job satisfaction, psychological safety and financial security. Evaluations also included an assessment of how well the organisation was able to deliver consistency of their employee experience across all departments and seniority levels.

The accolade comes after PKF Francis Clark achieved Great Place to Work certification in September last year.

Amy Taylor, chief people officer, said: "Health and wellbeing is hugely important to us, so we're very proud to be recognised as one of the UK's Best Workplaces for Wellbeing. We've invested in lots of initiatives to support the wellbeing of our people - like our Wellbeing Wednesdays and a comprehensive package of benefits, including free access to confidential counselling and an online GP service - and we're actively looking at what more we can do.

"I'd also like to thank our network of health and wellbeing champions, mental health first aiders and local office charity, social and wellbeing committees, who play an important role in providing peer-to-peer support for colleague wellbeing."

More information can be found at careers.pkf-francisclark.co.uk.

Cornish Mutual Young Farmer Bursary awarded to Somerset student

Bridgwater & Taunton College student Grace Harding has been awarded a £500 Cornish Mutual Young Farmer Bursary, with the judges recognising Grace's passion and drive for dairy farming through her award application.

Conscious that the route into agriculture is not always easy for young women, Grace was inspired to pursue a career in dairying by the herdswomen at her part-time job on a large local dairy unit. She is studying for an extended Level 3 Diploma in Agriculture at the college's Cannington Campus, and is the fifth generation of her family to farm.

After graduating, Grace would like to work full-time on the home farm near Shepton Mallet and plans to continue expanding her industry knowledge and connections.

"I'm working hard to gain as much knowledge as possible from my

college lectures and through my own external research, so I can help our family farm remain profitable and sustainable into the future," said Grace. "I plan on using the bursary to buy a new laptop so I can complete my college assignments and continue with my own research."

Four Cornish Mutual Young Farmer Bursaries have been awarded to students studying at agricultural colleges in the South West. Applicants were asked to explain why they want to be part of British agriculture, with entries judged by a panel including Cornish Mutual Managing Director Peter Beaumont.

"Grace was chosen for this award for her determination to continue her family's business and build a sustainable future for their farm," said Peter. "It is exciting to see she is already building ideas for the years ahead developed through her time at college and own initiative."



▲ Grace Harding receives her Cornish Mutual Young Farmer Bursary from Cornish Mutual Business Development Leader, Sam Collins.

The Cornish Mutual Young Farmer Bursaries are part of the Future Farming Programme, which supports the future of agriculture in the region. To find out more, visit: <https://bit.ly/CMBursaries>.

JP Rata to provide 10 free building financial resilience coaching sessions

As part of the Somerset Business Resilience Series run by Somerset Council, Taunton-based accountancy firm, JP Rata, will be providing free, in-person coaching sessions to 10 Somerset businesses.

The coaching sessions follow on from a successful building financial resilience webinar run by the team at the start of March and will offer businesses the opportunity to get one-to-one expert advice without spending any money.

Director of the accountancy firm, Jon Rata, said "We have absolutely loved working on this project, and seeing such a positive response to the webinar has made us very excited to begin the private coaching sessions."

Anyone interested in a free coaching session will need to be quick, as sessions must be used during March and April 2023.

JP Rata prides itself on its customer service and Jon's aim is to redefine what businesses expect from their accountants.

"Too many business owners see their accountancy spend as a valueless overhead rather than a powerful tool to help them grow. We want that to change.

"We're not a traditional accountancy firm. We're not happy with 'do the same as last year'. We're building a service that gives modern businesses owners the help they need. We want you to get the most value possible



from your accountant and we are constantly looking for new ways to do it."

You can find more information about JP Rata and the resilience sessions on the website www.jprata.co.uk.

Somerset Passenger Solutions scoops two Golds at the HPC Excellence Awards

Somerset Passenger Solutions was proud to be named as the winner of the Gold award in the Outstanding Supplier Partnership category at the HPC Excellence Awards.

The annual Hinkley Point C Excellence Awards celebrate work on the project across two themes of project delivery and people and behaviours.

Finalists, their nominators and senior leaders gathered for the event at the Winter Gardens Pavilion in Weston-super-Mare and got an insight into individuals, teams and supplier's achievements.

EDF in the UK's CEO, Simone Rossi, praised the winners and reinforced the project's role in helping Britain achieve net zero.



▲ Simon Mohammad, SPS Operations Director, Josh Virgin, SPS Lead Supervisor, Courtney Cook, SPS Recruitment Assistant and Chris Quinn, HPC's Supply Chain Director.

Following two rounds of judging, SPS was chosen as the Gold winner of the Outstanding Supplier Partnership Award based on consistently excellent performance over the last 12 months.

It is the third time in four years that SPS have won this prestigious award and a spokesman said it was testament to the hard work and dedication of each one of the team at SPS.

The success went even further with Josh Virgin, SPS Lead Supervisor, being awarded Gold in the Going Above and Beyond category.

The HPC Excellence Awards are open to all businesses working on, or for the HPC Project.

SPS provides a bespoke transport solution for the HPC Project, carrying

almost all people who go to the construction site either for work or to visit. SPS transports thousands of clients to and from the construction site every day, working 24/7 to ensure that construction remains on schedule.

Simon Cursio, Managing Director, said: "We beat tough competition from many great companies and I am supremely proud of the team. Landing the very prestigious accolade at the HPC Excellence Awards is just reward for their efforts.

"This recognition rounds off a challenging but very positive year for SPS as the business continues to grow and we hope to exceed the expectations of our client and passengers once again in 2023."



▲ Josh Virgin, SPS Lead Supervisor and Saleem Mohammad, HPC's MEH Director.



New sixth form centre opens at King's College

King's College Sixth Formers are enjoying lessons in a distinctively modern new Sixth Form Centre.

The centre serves to emphasise the importance of the final two years at King's and aims to change the way the Sixth Formers study by providing opportunities for collaborative working, formal and semi-formal academic experiences and discussions.

The new building is situated on the north side of the chapel and is flexible, technologically advanced and anchored in sustainable energy principles. Flooded with natural light, the new learning and social spaces echo the environments of higher education institutions, preparing the



King's Sixth Formers for a seamless transition between school and university study.

The innovative building was designed by pupils, for pupils and boasts state-of-the-art learning and social spaces, a silent study area, creative learning space and café.

Head of Sixth Form Oliver Ridley, said: "As our Sixth Form expanded we needed more room, so to have a purpose-built, creatively designed academic and social space is a huge boon.

"The building provides an environment for productive, mind-expanding conversation. Even though the building was planned before the pandemic, it is exactly what we need to boost the collaborative and social aspects of the best possible Sixth Form learning experiences after all that independent study."

Headmaster Michael Sloan, said: "This project has taken many years in the development, planning and construction stages, and the results



are superb. I would like to express my sincere gratitude to everyone who played their part in the project and worked so hard to oversee and deliver the building to such a high-quality specification.

"Our state-of-the-art classrooms, creative learning space, futures room and breakout areas are superb new additions to the academic experience of our senior pupils. The innovative and creative teaching and learning being delivered in our outstanding new building is helping to ensure that King's remains the school of choice in the South West for intellectually curious and academically minded Sixth Form pupils."

To find out more, visit the website at www.kings-taunton.co.uk.

Second Glastonbury Town Deal project gets the go-ahead

Plans for Glastonbury Abbey Piazza have been approved by what was Mendip District Council, making it the second Glastonbury Town Deal project to be granted planning permission.

The development will see the construction of an open piazza space at the abbey entrance in the centre of town, providing a public meeting space for residents and visitors to enjoy. The main entrance approaches and visitor reception facilities will be significantly enhanced, including the construction of a new ticket office, toilets and shop/café.

The Glastonbury Abbey Piazza project was allocated a grant of £940,000 through the Glastonbury Town Deal for capital expenditure, with an additional £500,000 of match-funding being sought.

As a well-known international tourism attraction, the project will improve the abbey's visibility, accessibility and physical connection to the town. It will

encourage more people to visit the abbey, improving its financial resilience – as well as generating footfall for other businesses in the town centre.

Janet Bell MBE, Director of Glastonbury Abbey, said: "We are now looking forward to working with our project team and stakeholders on the more detailed aspects of the designs for the buildings and landscaping of the piazza area. We expect work to start on site in September this year and are working towards completion in May or June 2024."

Cllr Jon Cousins, Mayor of Glastonbury and a Glastonbury Town Deal board member, added: "The abbey itself is the reason why modern-day Glastonbury is here. Many thousands of people come to the abbey every year and this project will greatly enhance the visitor experience.

"The Piazza will provide an opportunity for people to come and enjoy the abbey environment without



▲ The current Glastonbury Abbey entrance (photo courtesy of Thread)

necessarily paying to go in. They will be able to rest, relax and get a real flavour of what the abbey is all about."

Glastonbury was one of 101 towns chosen to receive funding through the Government's Towns Fund scheme as part of its Levelling Up agenda.

For further information, visit glastonburytowndeal.co.uk.



SASP relaunches men's mental health and wellbeing project

Somerset Activity and Sports Partnership (SASP) has partnered with Open Mental Health to increase mental health awareness and access to wellbeing support for men in Somerset through the Unbreakable Men project.

Unbreakable Men aims to raise awareness around Men's Mental Health in Somerset and actively encourage men to take ownership over their wellbeing, while positively impacting their mental and physical wellbeing through physical activity. This is done in a simple and practical way with both online and through face-to-face physical activities.

Unbreakable Men will be accessible via the SASP website, hosting an array of support, resources and networks for men of all ages 18+. There will be three main access points to the project via the website, which consist of an MOT quiz, Facebook community group, and sign-up form to join the project through in-person sessions.

The Unbreakable Men MOT quiz aims to encourage men to be proactive

about checking-in with their current mental wellbeing, by answering a series of point-based questions which result in a score indicator of where they may benefit from some mental health support. Suggested support based on the final score will re-direct those to either joining the Facebook group, signing-up to the project or accessing a support directory of urgent clinical support.

The Unbreakable Men Facebook group has been set up alongside the project, to provide a safe support network of men up and down the county that may be looking to join Unbreakable Men, are currently attending sessions, or simply want to find out more.

The Unbreakable Men team has also hosted some weekly face-to-face sessions in Bridgwater.

A spokesman for SASP said: "These in-person sessions are an important element of the project and have already provided men with a safe space to talk about their mental health, take proactive steps and



engage in physical activity that enables connection with others.

"Unbreakable Men aims to make a positive change and encourage men to be proactive with their mental health in the future, using the tools they will have gained from being part of the project."

Unbreakable Men can be accessed online via www.sasp.co.uk/unbreakable-men.

Taunton Prep School named in highly-regarded 'best-of-the-best' schools list

An acclaimed guide to the UK's leading prep and junior schools has selected Taunton Prep as its top choice for sport out of hundreds of prep schools in the country.

Sport is one of just 16 categories examined by The Week magazine in its annual survey of the best prep schools in the country. Taunton Prep is described as 'excelling across the board' with 'a string of sporting accolades to its name'.

The guide's authors highlight that last year the under-13 boys won the IAPS national prep school's championships in hockey and cricket and that they also won the English Schools Swimming Association freestyle relay.

The under-13 girls also won the independent schools' West of England hockey championship and two boys were declared world champions in the biathle and triathle.



The magazine also mentions other successes in rugby, cross-country, athletics, shooting, golf and riding as well as the students, some as young as 12, who swam the English Channel last summer to help save a local community pool from closure.

Chris Coleman, Deputy Head of Taunton Prep School, said: "The combination of the staff, pupils and parents all working together allows for great things to be achieved. Ultimately, the success of winning events on the pitches and in the pool lies with the students themselves. Congratulations to each and every one of them."

IT solutions company launches tech networking events in aid of charity

IT solutions company Nexus Open Systems is launching a series of tech networking events in aid of charity.

Nexus Presents will be a knowledge-sharing networking series, with the first event from 9.30am until 11.30am on Thursday, April 20, at Exeter Golf and Country Club.

Guest speakers will include Josh Butler from Triangle Networks, Amy Erith from One Step Charity, Jo Caine from Cathedral Appointments, and Glenn Weeks from Nexus.

Glenn said: "We've decided to launch Nexus Presents, a new quarterly event drawing on the knowledge, experience and ideas of industry experts, around a central theme, throughout the South West.

"We'll be hearing from speakers across HR and recruitment, IT, telecoms, and mental health. We'll ask what resiliency means for them and how it's put into practice in their industry."

The event is free to attend, but Nexus are asking for donations to Step One charity. Hot drinks and pastries will be provided. More information is available in the news section of the website www.nexusos.co.uk.

New fundraising event for Dorset and Somerset Air Ambulance

Dorset and Somerset Air Ambulance has launched a new fundraising event – Race from the Base.

Taking place at Henstridge Airfield on Saturday, June 10, 2023, the event is an ultra-cycling challenge with three different distances to choose from: 30km (The Circuit), 60km (The Cruise) and 100km (The Climb). All routes will start and finish at the airfield, which is the home of the Dorset and Somerset Air Ambulance team.



The event will begin at 9.30am for those undertaking the 100km route, followed by a 10.30am start for the 60km route and an 11.30am start for those completing the 30km route.

With a total of 500 places available, people can take part as a serious cyclist, or simply use it to have fun and exercise on what will hopefully be a beautiful day in June. Businesses or groups could use Race from the Base as an opportunity for team building, or in-house competitions with friends and colleagues.

The charity is asking anyone who gains a place, to raise a minimum of £50 in sponsorship for the air ambulance charity.

Emma Jones, Dorset and Somerset Air Ambulance Fundraising Manager, said: "We are so excited to be launching this brand-new event to raise funds for the charity. Everyone wants to see where our life-saving crew are based, so having a cycle challenge that starts and finishes at our airbase is simply fantastic!

"With three distances to choose from, cyclists of all abilities can take part in the challenge. We can't wait for 10th June and hope that you will join us for this special event."

Entrance fees are Adults: £25 (30km), £35 (60km), £40 (100km); Under 16's: £10 (30km), £15 (60km).

The 100km distance will not be open to Under 16s. All children under the age of 16 must be accompanied by an adult.

People can sign-up and register today by visiting the website www.dsairambulance.org.uk.

Lendology announces Fair Tax Mark accreditation

Lendology, a social enterprise lender, has achieved a Fair Tax Mark accreditation which aims to promote transparency and ethical practices in the financial services industry.

The accreditation, which is overseen by the Fair Tax Foundation, outlines Lendology's approach to taxation and corporate responsibility and reflects the company's dedication to operating in a responsible and sustainable manner.

At the core of Lendology's Fair Tax Mark accreditation is a pledge to pay their fair share of taxes in the countries where they operate. This means that the company will not engage in aggressive tax avoidance schemes or exploit loopholes in tax laws to minimize their tax bill.

Instead, Lendology will work within the legal framework of each country to ensure that they are contributing their fair share to public services and infrastructure.

"Lendology is committed to operating with the highest standards of transparency and ethical behaviour," said Emma Lower, CEO at Lendology CIC. "Our Fair Tax Accreditation reflects our dedication to paying our fair share of taxes and to contributing to the broader social and economic well-being of the communities in which we operate."

Anna Osborne, Commercial and Finance Director of Lendology CIC, added: "Our taxes as an organisation contribute to a better society beyond our day-to-day work. I am thrilled to say that we have always been committed to paying our fair share of tax, and the Fair Tax mark now proves this without doubt.

"I highly recommend the Fair Tax Mark team who are very knowledgeable about all tax matters and are working hard to help organisations demonstrate their commitment to payment of their fair share of tax. We hope that our addition to their members encourages others to join the movement."

Lendology's Fair Tax Mark accreditation also includes a commitment to maintaining an open and transparent dialogue with tax authorities. The company will provide timely and accurate tax returns, respond promptly to any queries or requests for information, and work collaboratively with tax authorities to resolve any issues that may arise.

In addition to its commitment to fair taxation, Lendology pledges to support its local communities and to operate in an environmentally responsible manner. The company aims to reduce its carbon footprint, support local charities and community organizations, and encourage its employees to volunteer their time and expertise to charitable causes.



Executive Chef of The Castle at Taunton wins top national award

Andrew Swann Executive Chef of The Castle at Taunton and Brazz has been crowned as the Trencherman's Guide Chef of The Year.



Trencherman's readers and food lovers across the South West came out in force to support their favourite restaurants, hotels, pubs, chefs and front of house teams in the Trencherman's Awards 2023. Over 30,000 individual votes were cast, with some of the closest final scores in the awards' 10-year history.

Andrew said: "I'm delighted to have picked up this year's award, there were lots of great chefs nominated and the other finalists are all very talented.

"I re-joined The Castle and Brazz a year ago, so to win The Trencherman's Award in my first 12 months is very special."

The winners were crowned at a spectacular Trencherman's Awards ceremony and dinner by the sea at Salcombe Harbour Hotel, hosted by



broadcaster and food critic William Sitwell, chef and restaurateur Mark Hix of The Oyster and Fish House and Trencherman's editor Jo Rees.

Ronan Hunter, Director and General Manager of The Castle at Taunton, added: "Andrew deserves all the credit coming his way, he's a very talented chef and has been producing great food since he came back to The Castle."

Field to Food Learning Day returns to the Bath & West Showground



The Royal Bath & West Society has welcomed the return of the Field to Food Learning Day, after a three-year hiatus due to COVID-19.

Over 1,200 Key Stage 2 pupils will descend on the Bath & West Showground later this month for the society's fifth annual Field to Food Learning Day. It will be a day packed full of interactive activities and demonstrations, educating children all about the process of field to fork, giving them the opportunity to look, hear, smell and get their hands dirty – one of the most effective (and fun) ways to learn!

Alongside the return of the Field to Food Learning Day, the Royal Bath & West Society will be launching a new education hub – an online resource for teachers, parents and home educators that can be used to learn all about British farming and the process of field to fork.

As well as providing engaging ways to learn about farming and food production, the resources available have also been created in line with the National Curriculum, with links to 'living things and their habitats'.

The hub can be found on the website www.bathandwestsociety.com. Local schools which would like to receive information about the Field to Food Learning Day, should email hello@bathandwest.co.uk.

Milsted Langdon celebrates new Partner promotions

One of the South West's leading independent accountancy firms, Milsted Langdon, has promoted two new Partners in recognition of their service and exceptional support of clients.

Jon Edge and Richard Warwick have joined the partnership team at the firm, which has offices in Bath, Bristol, Taunton, Yeovil and London. As Partners, they will play an important role in shaping the future of the practice.

Previously a General Practice Director, Jon has a wealth of experience and works with a wide range of businesses.

With a long-established passion for building long-standing relationships with clients, Jon will continue to advise his portfolio of clients, developing their businesses and planning for their financial future, in his new strategic role.

Meanwhile, Richard is a restructuring and insolvency specialist, with more than a decade of experience helping businesses and individuals in financial distress.

Richard possesses a distinctive set of skills, acquired through his full licensure as an Insolvency Practitioner and appointment taker, enabling him to proficiently handle various aspects of the insolvency process.

Congratulating them both Milsted Langdon's Chair, Tim Close, said: "Jon and Richard have contributed a lot to the growth and success of our practice and will play an important part in our future.

"On behalf of everyone at Milsted Langdon, I would like to commend them on their promotions."



MILSTED LANGDON

Bank of England summary – economic activity remained subdued but consumer demand more resilient than expected



@BoESouthWest

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

Economic activity remained subdued overall between mid-January and early March – output in the manufacturing and construction sectors contracted, while demand for business services held up. Contacts said consumer demand was more resilient than they had expected, in particular for services.

Employment intentions overall remained flat and most firms said that if demand weakened they would respond by reducing hours or via attrition, rather than by making staff redundant. Recruitment difficulties eased further, though remained above normal. Pay settlements continued to average 6%.

Inflationary pressure from raw materials and tradable goods prices as well as from UK manufactured goods abated further as energy and commodity price inflation eased and supply-chain issues faded. Consumer goods and services price inflation also slowed, though contacts said that risks remained to the upside.

The nominal value of consumer spending continued to grow even as inflation eased, supported by demand that was more resilient than expected, in particular, for consumer services.

Contacts reported solid demand for lower-priced goods, as consumers traded down from higher and mid-priced ranges. Demand for energy-efficient goods also remained robust.

Contacts in the hospitality sector said that demand had been better than expected and price increases had also continued to support revenue growth.

In the travel sector, firms said that accommodation bookings for the summer holiday season were broadly in line with last year's strong levels, though bookings were being made somewhat later than usual, and there were ongoing concerns about the strength of demand in off-peak periods.

Growth in business services turnover held up overall, but demand was mixed within the sector.

Companies in audit, IT and insurance reported robust volume and price growth. And firms specialising in corporate events, travel, office furniture and equipment, insolvency and debt restructuring reported modest growth. Exports of



BANK OF ENGLAND

services also grew, in particular for construction and financial services.

By contrast, contacts that specialise in mergers and acquisitions and other corporate transactions said activity continued to decline. Companies in logistics and wholesale that are exposed to consumer-facing firms also reported weaker demand, as did firms offering recruitment and advertising services.

Manufacturing output continued to fall, as the squeeze on households' real incomes weighed on demand for goods.

Contacts reported a modest contraction in output volumes compared with a year ago, in particular for durable goods, such as furniture household appliances and home improvement products.

Food and beverage producers said that while output volumes were stable, consumers' preference for cheaper products was weighing on revenues. Demand for construction products also fell and car production remained subdued.

However, some sectors, such as aviation and defence, continued to report strong growth, and machinery and equipment producers said output was supported by order backlogs.

Contacts reported that supply chains were returning to normal, though lead-times remained above pre-COVID levels.

Goods exports volumes were flat on the year, with increased demand from the US and China for machinery parts and consumer goods partially offset by weaker demand from the EU.

Construction output volumes contracted further, driven by softer demand for housing and as higher costs continued to weigh on activity.

Investment intentions improved as uncertainty about the economic outlook diminished slightly, and companies sought to improve efficiency.

Contacts said investment decisions were motivated by a desire to increase automation in light of high labour costs and to improve energy and production efficiency to counter high energy price inflation. This was particularly the case for manufacturing firms, some of which also reported investing in research and development.



HMRC clarifies off-payroll IR35 rules

HMRC has issued off-payroll IR35 guidance for intermediaries and contractors providing services to small clients in the private or voluntary sectors. The guidance confirms that if an agency worker provides services to a small client outside of the public sector, the worker's intermediary will be responsible for deciding their employment status. The rules differ from the relationship between intermediaries and medium and large-sized clients, who are responsible for determining employment status.

Read more about the guidance at:

<https://www.peninsulagrouplimited.com/topic/business-advice/hmrc-clarifies-guidance-on-ir35-off-payroll-working-rules>

Businesses will struggle to survive without savings

Research by Yell has revealed that nearly a million small and medium-sized businesses have £1,000 or less saved to help them survive any decline in their revenue. Experts suggest that businesses should have three to six months of operating costs saved, but the research found that one in ten businesses with up to 49 employees have no savings.

Read more about the research at:

<https://www.lawnews.co.uk/business/nearly-1-million-businesses-in-the-uk-have-1000-or-less-in-savings/>

US is top non-European market for small firms

The US is the most popular non-European export market for UK small businesses, according to new research by the FSB. Around 60% of small exporters sell goods to the US, followed by Australia (44%) and Canada (36%). The US is also the top origin market outside Europe for small importers, with 32% buying goods from the US, followed by China (30%) and India (9%).

Read more about the research at:

<https://www.fsb.org.uk/resources-page/fsb-lays-foundation-for-further-uk-us-trade-opportunities-as-new-study-shows-america-no-1-non-european-market-for-uk-small-firms.html>

Review of Financial Ombudsman Service thresholds

The Financial Conduct Authority has launched a review on whether the thresholds for small and medium-sized enterprises to be able to refer complaints to the Financial Ombudsman Service remain appropriate.

Read more about the review at:

<https://www.fca.org.uk/publications/calls-input/call-input-sme-access-financial-ombudsman-service>

Cyber check-up tools for SMEs

The National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) has launched two new security tools aimed at small and medium-sized businesses that lack the resources to address cyber issues - the Cyber Action Plan and Check Your Cyber Security tools.

Read more about the tools at:

<https://www.computerweekly.com/news/365532838/NCSC-launches-cyber-check-up-tools-for-SMEs>

Help to Grow website launched

The Department for Business and Trade has launched a new website, targeted at helping the UK's 5.4 million small businesses. The Help to Grow website will make it simpler for small businesses to find, access and use the information and support they need.

Read more about the site at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/dbt-unveils-new-help-to-grow-site-to-support-businesses-and-grow-the-economy>

UK version of GDPR

The Government has re-introduced a new UK version of the EU's GDPR and has claimed it will reduce costs and red tape for businesses and charities. It will also reduce the number of repetitive data collection pop-ups.

Read more about the UK version of GDPR at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/british-businesses-to-save-billions-under-new-uk-version-of-gdpr>

Charities and social enterprises to receive dormant assets

The Government has announced that hundreds of charities and social enterprises are set to receive a share of £31 million via the Dormant Assets Scheme.

Read more about the scheme at:

<https://www.civilsociety.co.uk/news/hundreds-of-charities-and-social-enterprises-to-receive-31m-of-dormant-assets.html>

Government backs expansion of auto-enrolment

The Department for Work and Pensions has confirmed that it will support proposals to expand automatic enrolment. Under the proposals, the lower earnings limit for contributions will be abolished and the automatic-enrolment age will fall to 18 years.

Read more about the proposals at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-backs-bill-to-expand-pension-saving-to-young-and-low-earners>



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