

# Somerset Voice

The Official Magazine of  
Somerset Chamber of Commerce

August  
/ September  
2023



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*Front page: Somerset Chamber CEO Emma Rawlings brings her voice to Yeovil's Home of British Helicopters campaign. Photo: Leonardo*

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## FIRST WORD

It is clear that three years of economic shocks in the form of COVID-19 lockdowns, inflation and new trade barriers with the EU have placed clear obstacles in the path of firms wanting to trade and grow.

But despite this, business confidence remains buoyant, following a big drop in 2022, as inflationary pressures ease. This optimism could be reinforced with greater clarity from Government on a plan for economic growth.

Research by the Chamber network has shown both the Government and Bank of England must now pause for thought on their next steps.

According to the Chamber network's Quarterly Economic Survey (QES) for Q2, nationally, less than half of firms now expect to raise prices in the next three months.

Locally, that figure increases to two thirds but the data also reveals that the main factor for increasing costs is now coming from wages rather than utility bills or raw materials.

There is a fine balancing act to be struck. Push too hard on interest rates and there is a real danger that the long-term outlook for economic growth and prosperity will be dented.

The Bank of England has itself identified the tight labour market as a key factor in the UK's stubbornly high inflation.

Fierce competition for skills, wage demands and candidates' expectations leave many businesses with job vacancies they cannot fill.

The Government must redouble its efforts to get people back into work and create the right conditions for employers to invest in staff training and development. Where firms cannot recruit and train from their local or national labour market, a flexible, efficient and affordable immigration system is crucial.

Further upcoming changes on trade with the EU, such as new customs requirements and charges for imports, will also add upward pressure on prices. We need to think carefully about adding in further costs for businesses when they are already under strain.

*Emma Rawlings*

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

## OUR BUSINESS PARTNERS

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

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BRITISH CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE

# QUARTERLY ECONOMIC SURVEY Q2 2023

**Signs that inflation pressure is easing but more firms concerned about interest rates.** The BCC's Quarterly Economic Survey (QES) for Q2 2023 – the UK's largest independent survey of business sentiment, made up of 92% SMEs and a leading indicator of UK GDP growth – shows that less than half of firms now plan to raise prices in the next three months as cost pressures ease.

Most respondents report no improvement to sales, cash flow, or investment

Despite this, confidence improves slightly as inflationary pressures ease

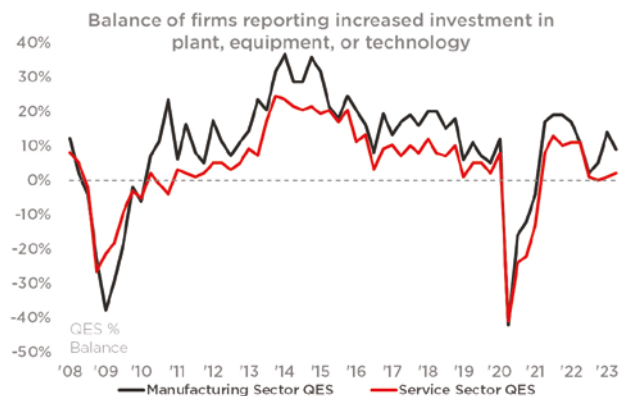
Sectoral disparities: hospitality firms more likely to report worsening conditions

## AT A GLANCE

### Investment

**The percentage of firms expecting their prices to rise (45%) has fallen to its lowest level since Q2 2021 although remains high by historical standards.**

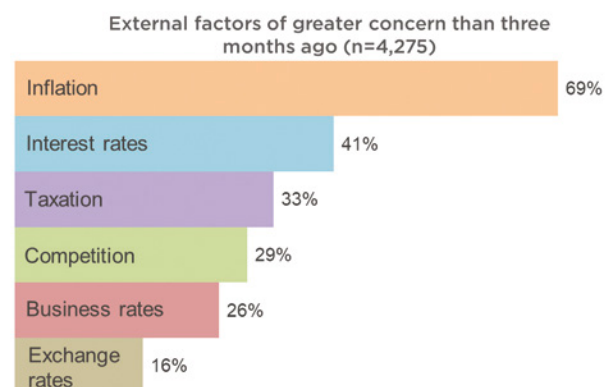
As measured as a percentage balance, the manufacturing sector stands at +41%, while the services sector stands at +44%, both down on the previous quarter.



### External factors

**Inflation remains the top external factor of concern for the majority of respondents (69%), though this has declined from the peak of 84% in Q3 2022.**

As measured as a percentage balance, the manufacturing sector stands at +41%, while the services sector stands at +44%, both down on the previous quarter.





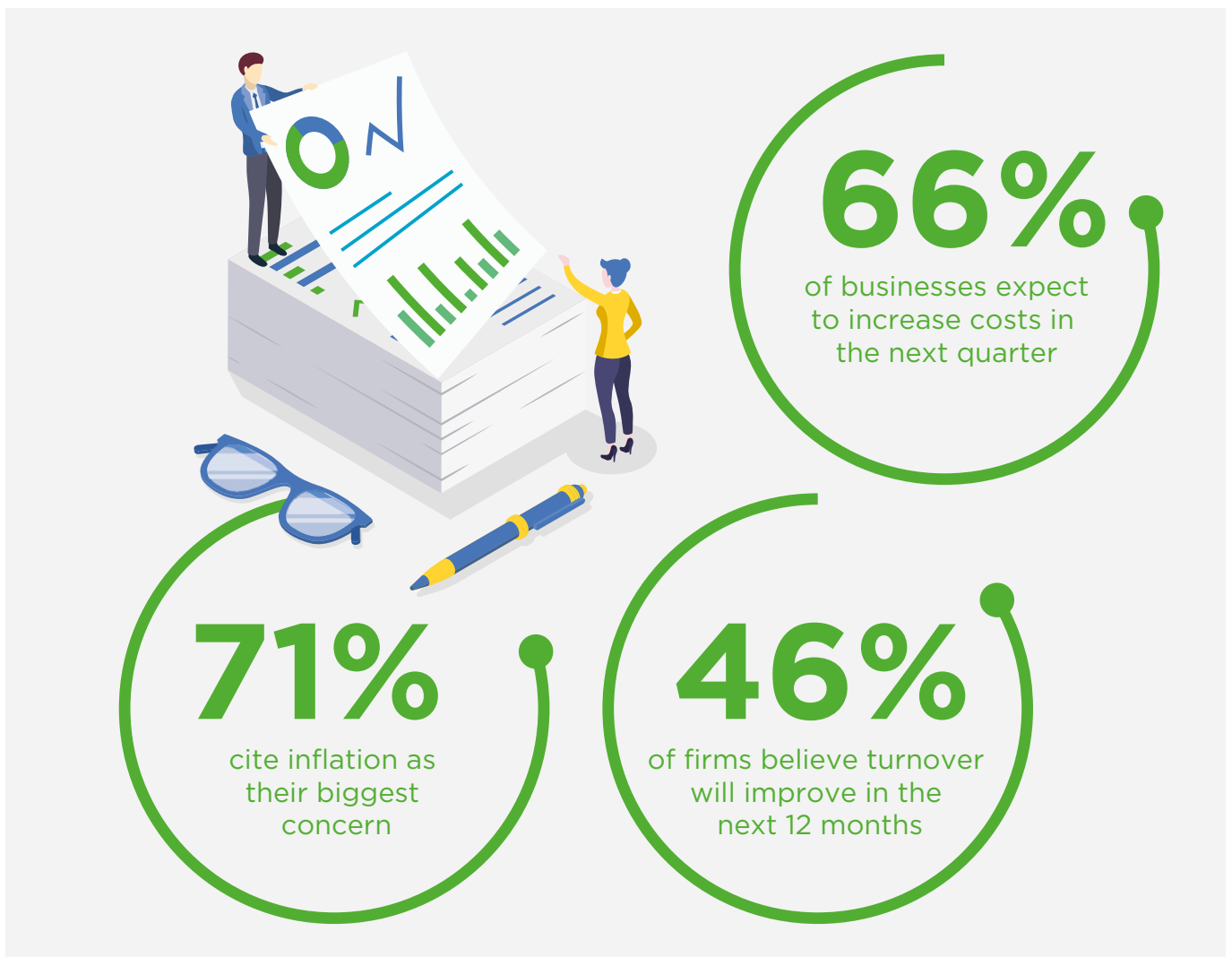
SOMERSET CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

# QUARTERLY ECONOMIC SURVEY Q2 2023

Once again, data from the Quarterly Economic Survey sees no major improvement to key business indicators across Somerset. Many SMEs are facing further pressure following interest rate rises, as borrowing costs increase. Predictably, investment suffers in such tough conditions.

Despite recruitment still being a major issue for Somerset businesses, investment in training has taken a knock since the last quarter. Almost 65% who had tried to recruit had problems, particularly in the skilled and management sectors. However, 79% were maintaining or increasing their spend on training, compared to 85% previously.

Two thirds of businesses expected to increase costs in the next three months with the vast majority citing inflation as their biggest concern, followed by interest rates and taxation. However, 46% expected turnover to improve over the next 12 months and 35% were hoping for better profitability.



## Strong growth leads to a round of promotions at Albert Goodman



A strong set of financial results for 2022/23 has led to the promotion of 16 senior staff members at regional accountancy firm Albert Goodman as revenue tops £18 million for the first time, paving the way for future leaders.

Albert Goodman has reported a growth in turnover of 12% and reported a record year for new business wins which has allowed for 10 director and six senior manager promotions from within the firm's audit, tax, farms and estates, financial planning and HR teams.

This record number of promotions is due to the sustained growth which

is creating new opportunities for its people based in Taunton, Weston-super-Mare, Weymouth, Yeovil and newly opened Bristol office.

This announcement comes at a time Albert Goodman has been voted by Best Companies as the best accountancy firm to work for in the UK, securing this title for a second year running.

Iain McVicar (pictured), Managing Partner at Albert Goodman, said: "I'd like to say a huge congratulations to those individuals who have been recognised for all their hard work and commitment."

"By promoting the next generation of leaders, this will help support our growth and fulfil our key strategic ambition of remaining an independent accountancy and financial planning firm in the South-West."



## The issues surrounding 'work from anywhere' policies

With flexible, remote and hybrid working now the norm within many UK companies, the concept of 'work from anywhere' has begun to take off, with employers fielding increasing requests from workers who want to pack up their laptop and log on from a tropical beach or a new bustling city.

The latest statistics from the Office of National Statistics, published in February, show that 44% of working adults reported working from home only or hybrid working and while both employers and employees are used to this model of working now, lawyers say companies should be wary of letting staff jet off while clocked on.

Paula Squire, Partner and employment specialist at national law firm Clarke Willmott LLP, says a clear policy for all models of working should be laid out to protect both the business and the individual.

"You would be forgiven for thinking it wouldn't matter if your employees, for a UK based employer, worked anywhere in the world," said Paula, "but actually there are many things to consider in order to ensure your business is protected together with ensuring transparency for all."

"The deciding factors are not just about your IT connection or if the employee can be trusted, there's a lot more to it than that and employers should be aware of the impact when allowing people



\*  
clarke  
willmott

to work for a company in one country whilst based in another."

Issues include those around employment rights, tax, financial consequences, health and safety, IT security and data protection concerns. So do seek advice around your specific situation.

Paula continued: "A recent story about an employee who jetted off to Marbella for a week without using any annual leave seems innocuous at first glance, however, in this case it appears the business in question already has a permanent office base in Spain, which makes things a lot easier but not all employers will.

"It is really important that employers have a clear policy on how to deal with requests so that everyone knows where they stand and the policy is the same across the board."

"Getting these rules and procedures in place can take a little time and management but it could be worth it in terms of employee satisfaction and getting the best out of your workforce, whilst offering flexibility, so it's definitely something to consider in the right circumstances."

"At Clarke Willmott we offer a free employee handbook and contract review service which includes checking remote working policies. Let us know if you wish to take us up on this offer."

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

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





## Applications invited for funding for rural businesses and organisations

Businesses and organisations in Somerset are being encouraged to find out if they are eligible for capital funding grants aimed at supporting businesses and community infrastructure in rural areas.

The funding is available following Somerset Council's successful £3.4 million submission into Government's Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF).

This first call for applications is seeking to allocate a total of £850,000 to eligible capital infrastructure projects.

These projects must be delivered – and grant funding spent – by the end of March 2024. Grants can be between £5,000 and £100,000 and match-funding contributions are required.

The REPF has very specific criteria set by Government. Therefore, Somerset Council's Economic Development team is urging businesses and organisations to carefully check eligibility on their website [somerset.gov.uk/business-economy-and-licences/funding-and-grants-for-business/](https://somerset.gov.uk/business-economy-and-licences/funding-and-grants-for-business/)

Paul Hickson, Service Director – Economy, Employment and Planning at Somerset Council, said: "This is a really positive announcement for rural businesses and communities. Rural areas often face specific challenges and this fund will enable important investment to support rural development and prosperity.

"Capital grants are available to support investment in business start-up, innovation and growth as well as community infrastructure.

"The allocation of funding is aligned to our Council Plan and will address our priorities of building towards an increasingly flourishing and resilient county whilst also making Somerset greener and more sustainable."

The fund provides capital funding to:

- Support new and existing rural businesses to develop new products and facilities that will be of wider benefit to the local economy. This includes farm businesses looking to



diversify income streams, but not into food and drink.

- Support new and improved community infrastructure, providing essential community services and assets for local people and businesses to benefit the local economy

Projects must be in a rural areas as strictly defined by the fund and investments must demonstrate value for money and additionality – also how they contribute to net zero and nature recovery objectives.

To discuss a potential project applicants should email [REPF@somerset.gov.uk](mailto:REPF@somerset.gov.uk) in the first instance. A further £2.5 million call for proposals for capital project activity and expenditure in the 24/25 financial year is expected later in the year.



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## Albert Goodman and WPA renew partnerships with Somerset Chamber

Somerset Chamber is delighted to announce it has renewed partnerships with two of its long-standing Business Partners – Albert Goodman and WPA.

Regional accountancy firm Albert Goodman has 300 staff across offices in Taunton, Bristol, Chard, Yeovil, Weston-super-Mare and Weymouth.

Founding partner Albert Goodman established the firm in Taunton in 1866 and built his practice on the principle of providing high quality, technically excellent advice to individuals and

businesses – still the main principle by which the firm operates today.

With a heritage dating back to 1901, the WPA team looks after over 320,000 corporate and individual customers, helping them fund their healthcare from their offices on Taunton's Black-brook Business Park.

WPA offers the full spectrum of health insurance products, ranging from cash plans to cover essential needs such as dental and optical costs through to bespoke fully comprehensive cover.

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AG GOODMAN**



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Emma Rawlings, Chief Executive of Somerset Chamber of Commerce, said she was looking forward to further building on existing relationships with the Business Partners: "It is always great to be able to continue building on our existing links and I am looking forward to working closely with both Albert Goodman and WPA in the coming year."

## Entries open soon for the Somerset Business Awards 2024

It may still be summer, but the clock is already ticking and entries will soon open for the Somerset Business Awards 2024!



The awards are the county's biggest annual business awards and are organised by Somerset Chamber of Commerce to celebrate the very best of the county's businesses. Once again we are grateful to our main sponsor Albert Goodman for continuing to support the awards.

The awards will open for entries on September 12, with a launch event planned on the same day at Hurds Hill, near Langport. The awards will close for entries on November 24, while the gala final will take place on March 22 at the Winter Gardens Pavilion, in Weston-super-Mare.

Now in their 19th year, the awards are free to enter and businesses do not need to be a member of Somerset Chamber to take part. There is also no limit on the number of categories businesses can enter.

We have some new sponsors for this year's event and you can find out more in the next edition!

Emma Rawlings, Chief Executive of Somerset Chamber of Commerce, said: "The Somerset Business Awards cover all business sectors across a wide range of categories and I would encourage all local businesses to enter the awards to share their own success stories and celebrate their achievements. The final is a great night and we have some exciting plans for that, too!"

More information about the awards is available on the website [somersetbusinessawards.org.uk](http://somersetbusinessawards.org.uk), while updates will also be posted on the official business awards social media accounts.

## Somerset Chamber welcomes £4 billion gigafactory

Somerset Chamber of Commerce has welcomed Tata Group's plans to build a new multibillion-pound electric car battery factory – most likely at the Gravity site near Bridgwater. The £4 billion factory is one of the largest ever investments in the UK automotive sector and will create up to 4,000 new direct jobs and thousands more in the wider supply chain.

It will supply JLR's future battery electric models including the Range Rover, Defender, Discovery and Jaguar brands, with the potential to also supply other car manufacturers. Production at the new gigafactory is due to start in 2026. Although the Government and Gravity have yet to confirm Bridgwater as the factory location, local MP Ian Liddell-Grainger confirmed to media it would be built in Somerset.

Emma Rawlings, Chief Executive of Somerset Chamber of Commerce, said: "This is fantastic news for Bridgwater, Somerset and the wider South West. It will bring a huge economic boost to the area, thousands of new jobs, investment in skills and scores of supply chain opportunities.

"It puts Somerset, its businesses and workforce at the heart of the green revolution to switch from fossil fuel vehicles to electric vehicles and secures a home-grown supply chain, without the need to rely on imports.

"Somerset businesses are already familiar with the Hinkley Point C supply chain so are well placed to provide expertise for the gigafactory.

"And as car makers are already switching their production vehicles to all-electric, having capacity in the UK to produce batteries will almost certainly attract additional investment from the automotive industry.

"This is a massive vote of confidence in Somerset, the South West and UK."

The Government said the new gigafactory would provide almost half of the battery production needed by 2030 and would be one of the largest in Europe.



## Somerset Chamber CEO supports Home of British Helicopters campaign

Somerset Chamber CEO Emma Rawlings has given her support to a campaign to have Yeovil officially recognised as the Home of British Helicopters.

She spent a day at Chamber business partner Leonardo's in the town, touring the helicopter manufacturer's site and recording a film to support the campaign, which is being launched this month.

Emma said: "If you live and work in Yeovil, you will be familiar with the unmistakable sound of a helicopter flying overhead. The sound is very much part of the hustle and bustle of the town's daily life.

"We have all heard of the legacy Westland name and we are getting used to that same company being called Leonardo today.

"However, many people, even those who have lived here all their lives, are still surprised when they find out that Yeovil is one of a handful of places in



the world, and the only place in Britain, where you can actually design and manufacture an entire helicopter. As far as locally produced products go, it is really quite a special one.

"As the Chief Executive of Somerset Chamber of Commerce, I recognise the social and economic value Leonardo brings as a leading employer, not only to Yeovil but also to the wider region.

"I am, therefore, proud to lend my support to this initiative to formally recognise Yeovil as the Home of British Helicopters. If Champagne can be recognised for its sparkling wine and

San Pellegrino can be world-famous for its sparkling water, Yeovil should be synonymous with our sparkling helicopters!

"When someone is rescued by a Norwegian search and rescue helicopter or airlifted from the battlefield by a Royal Navy Merlin, I want them to know that the town of Yeovil made that mission possible. Let us put Yeovil on the map once again as the Home of British Helicopters."



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## Media, marketing and PR

There is no point building the best business with a great offering and incredible staff if no one knows about it! And in a competitive marketplace you need to be the one who shouts the loudest with the clearest and most effective message possible to the right audience. This is where marketing, media and PR professionals come into their own – from helping with your brand identity, making the most of the digital marketplace or ensuring your message is heard far and wide. Here, our members pass on their own top tips for promoting your business and finding your new client base.

### Cognique

When targeted marketing comes to the forefront of a business's growth needs, it can be hard to know where to start.

Feeling they need to kick start some marketing ASAP, a business might fall into the trap of throwing everything at the wall and hoping it sticks: articles in publications, social media posts, email campaigns, the works – and then . . . nothing happens.

We know that a successful marketing strategy does not involve rushing headlong into the process without doing the research first. The best thing to do before sending anything outward is to look inward and work out precisely what your marketing needs to achieve.

No business ever embarked upon a successful marketing strategy without first nailing down their business goals

and who their ideal customers are.

Cognique builds 'customer personas' for our clients. Through careful research we will understand what their ideal customers look like, their needs, pain points, goals, and purchase decisions.

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Creating customer personas takes the guess work out of a marketing strategy, so our clients know exactly where they need to spend their time, energy, and budget to achieve the best results.

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That's our mantra and what we've become known for.

Over three decades we have built up a wealth of experience and expertise, it is what we call our Impact 'KnowHow' . . . a combination of great strategy and creativity deployed across many marketing and communications services.

We work across many business sectors for clients close to home and internationally and although we have a relatively small headcount, at Impact we are known for out-punching our weight against larger agencies as we are well-equipped to handle even the most complex marketing challenges.

Whilst creating industry-leading work, we pride ourselves on being affordable and delivering great business value and ROI to our clients. Whether it is entering a new market, driving brand awareness, increasing sales, or expanding market share, we have the all-important Impact KnowHow to deliver success, working closely with our clients to achieve their goals.

Our ability to create innovative and effective marketing campaigns has resulted in many long-term partnerships with our clients that have spanned decades. This is a true testimony to how we really make an impact in what we deliver.

If you seek a highly experienced, marketing led, creative consultancy for your business reach out to our Managing Director, Rich: [richard@impactdm.co.uk](mailto:richard@impactdm.co.uk)

impact

Design & Marketing

## Distinctive Communications

Volatile, uncertain, chaotic, ambiguous. Somerset businesses are not alone in navigating change and challenge over recent years.

Against this background, we recently ran a poll with chamber members about their communication priorities. 'Reaching new customers' and 'maintaining our reputation' came top of respondents' list. Finding time to think and do what is needed also featured highly.

If you have not reviewed your communications for a while, it may be a good time to take stock now and ask if it has helping you to succeed.

What do stakeholders think about your business? How does your story address their needs? How can you prove it?

These important questions go to the heart of any great PR campaign. Answering them helps you get to the human truth of your business' story.

These challenges present themselves as two trends

impact businesses everywhere - a shift in interest from bland brands to value and local distinctiveness.

Increased expectations from customers and employees for businesses and leaders to take a position on critical issues: on society, climate, representation, wellbeing.

This highlights the importance of genuine, human, authentic communications that speaks to people in ways they can relate to.

Having set Distinctive Communications up in 2022 and helped several businesses reset their brands and develop their stories, we see the positive impact this has.

By focusing on the human elements of your story, Somerset businesses can connect with their audiences and thrive in 2023.

We offer a one-hour session to chamber members who contact us to set up a discussion before the end of August 2023. Email [hello@distinctivecomms.co.uk](mailto:hello@distinctivecomms.co.uk).



## Morledge & Co

At Morledge & Co. we understand what makes a good PR story and we love nothing more than opening a newspaper, magazine or an online journal and seeing our clients' stories being featured.

Within a business environment, it's so easy to overlook what others might find interesting or to think that while something is newsworthy for your organisation it might not be to journalists and editors.

We have the pleasure of helping our Somerset and South West clients to identify and generate newsworthy material; working with them, and relevant media, to tell their stories to their target audiences.

Here are a few things that we think make a good PR story:

- It is new and it's happening now or very soon – time is of the essence as no-one wants to read old news.
- Some kind of competition, offer or incentive but be careful to not make it a sales pitch and be aware of competition laws.
- A really great photograph can tell most of the story sometimes, so a simple photo caption could be enough for a lovely article to be featured, particularly if it is of people.
- Express an opinion or make a prediction within your sector or industry – thought leadership articles can be very powerful.
- Undertake some research, perhaps with an online poll and share the results.

Our relationships with our 'little black book' of Somerset and South

West media contacts and access to an all-in-one media database with over 1,000,000 influencers and media contacts globally ensures your news will be well covered.

If you find it difficult to recognise PR opportunities for your business, or simply don't have the time and skills, there are a range of solutions available that can help. Our founder, Karen Morledge, offers a PR Mastery workshop with tickets from just £60, through to a fully outsourced and retained PR and marketing service.

If you have any questions about PR or are looking for some help and advice, please do get in touch.

[karen@morledgeandco.com](mailto:karen@morledgeandco.com)  
[morledgeandco.com](http://morledgeandco.com)

Morledge & Co.

Marketing • PR • Communications



## Connectable SW

You do not need to be a search engine optimisation specialist to nail the basics. While search engines like Google analyse over 200 factors when choosing which order to rank websites on a results page, they are looking for three fundamental components.

Connectable has compiled five SEO tips that you can action today with absolutely no prior SEO knowledge, that will help your website perform:

1. Ensure your website is easy to crawl and index - you can do this by submitting your sitemap to Google Search Console for indexing, by interlinking the
2. Provide high quality content - if your brand is recognised as a trustworthy and knowledgeable authority, search engines are more likely to rank your website. Valuable content means people will return to you which will improve your website's authority score.
3. Gain high authority backlinks - if websites that search engines view as high authority are linking to your website, those search engines will view your website as high authority also. A good way to do this is to ask for features.
4. Optimise your meta descriptions - make sure these are no longer than 155 characters, include your focus keyphrase, use a call to action, and match the content of the page.
5. Ensure pages provide good user experience - use tools like PageSpeed Insights to check the loading speed of your website, ensure URLs are easy to understand and make proper use of hierarchical heading tags (H1,H2, etc) to structure your content.



## Sunflower Social Media

Sunflower Social Media is a social media marketing business based in the beautiful Quantocks. We provide strategy, advice and management programmes, all tailor-made.

As well as working with businesses directly, we work in partnership with other Somerset PR and marketing businesses to provide an integral service to clients.

With daily changes and updates on many platforms, it is impossible for businesses to keep up with them all. Meta's launch of Threads is the latest to cause a stir. Of all the

recent launches, this is the one that might stick. Over 100 million users joined in the first few days. Are you on it yet?

The best advice for any business wondering where to focus on their socials, if resources are

limited, is to pick one or two platforms that work best for your business, and then be consistent.

Latest news from LinkedIn:

- It will no longer prioritise the latest 'Facebook like' posts that started to appear during the pandemic, when people's home and work lives began to blur
- It is also going to prioritise expert knowledge and advice, which is good for any business looking to share that content.

Some more useful tips are:

- Up to three posts/week: regularity is key
- Comment on your own post (as long as you are not first)
- Do not tag more than 15 accounts
- Answer comments in 12 hours
- Do not edit the post in the first 10 mins
- Max 10 emojis per post (think about accessibility and screen readers)

For more advice see:

[linkedin.com/in/siobhan-wilson-sunflowersocialmedia/](https://www.linkedin.com/in/siobhan-wilson-sunflowersocialmedia/)



Sunflower  
Social  
Media



Sunflower  
Social  
Media

## Thoroughbred Marketing

Operating in Somerset, there are many who truly understand the implications on our staff, communities and businesses of flooding. The debate – is it a result of changing weather patterns and global warming - continues.



We can, however, all do our bit to reduce our carbon footprint to benefit others.

With marketing changing behaviours, there are many areas where a “want/need/have culture” rule. Marketing now needs to encourage the wider public, in all roles, to consider their actions and purchase decisions. If everyone does a bit to reduce their drain on resources, carbon emissions will reduce and the rise in temperature has a chance to be capped.

Any reduction in consumer or organisation carbon emission (directly or indirectly) through better educated decision-making and product selection will help. Looking at your supply chain sustainability is a good place to start after you have done as much as your team can in-house to reuse / recycle / repurpose.

We work with clients to help them

bring their sustainable messaging to the fore, to help consumers make informed sustainable purchasing decisions.

Looking for an agency to help uncover and promote your sustainability credentials? Give the Thoroughbred team a call!

We recently worked with the Verty Team to create a brand, explanatory packaging, illustrations, stand graphics, press packs and literature using 40% recycled plastic and packaged in recycled cardboard boxes with labels etc produced on FSC papers.

As a result, Verty was shortlisted for an innovation award at the International Garden and Outdoor Living Trade Show in June!

[carly@tbdp.co.uk](mailto:carly@tbdp.co.uk)

THOROUGHbred 2004  
MARKETING

## Teapot Creative

It is truly mind-blowing how the digital world has completely transformed the game for businesses. Gone are the days when all you needed was a website and some online ads.

Now, with the rise of social media and Google's obsession with quality content, we are playing a whole new ballgame!

Social media has become an incredible tool for businesses, no matter how big or small. It is not just about posting wholesome pictures anymore. Social media marketing has become an essential part of building links and driving traffic to your website.

Now, let us talk about the secret sauce . . . cue the drumroll . . .backlinks! These gems are links from other websites that bring users right to your content. And do

search engines love them! When you have high-quality backlinks, it tells those search engines, “Hey, this content is legit, authoritative, and trustworthy!” And you know what? They reward you for it by pushing you up in the search rankings. It is like a tiny boost that can have a huge impact.

At Teapot Creative, we are all about taking a comprehensive approach to digital marketing. We believe that integrating various online channels and strategies is the key to helping businesses thrive in today's competitive online landscape.

We can help you create outstanding, shareable content that gets people talking and sharing, which in turn helps you build those all-important backlinks. Because hey, who does not want to make Google happy and increase their online visibility?

teapot  
creative



## Celebrating careers inspiration at the Somerset Education Business Partnership Awards 2023

The Somerset Education Business Partnership Awards 2023 were attended by over 100 guests from schools, businesses and education providers across Somerset and held at Taunton Rugby Club.

The mission of the Somerset EBP is to connect employers with education and training providers so that young people are aware of local career opportunities and develop the skills needed to thrive at work.

The awards evening was a chance to highlight the dedication of so many individuals with this shared passion of helping young people to excel and helping communities in Somerset to thrive.

The ceremony was opened by Nick Porter, Business Banking Regional Manager, from headline sponsor Barclays, with a speech that celebrated all the finalists and encouraged everyone to continue working towards the successful outcomes that are celebrated each year at the awards.

The night belonged to the winners of the 10 award categories which celebrated the contributions of individuals and organisations to developing Somerset's future talent.

### The winners

#### Inspiring the Next Generation Award (One to 249 employees)

##### EVO Agency

Sponsored by Strode College



From left are James Shakespeare, Sam Carden, Jamie Mattocks and Helen Hawkins.

#### Inspiring the Next Generation Award (250+ Employees)

##### Stantec

Sponsored by Bridgwater & Taunton College



From left are Gemma Nelmes, Jessica Williams, Sam Harper, Gavin Poole, Elliot Dommett, Alan Swan.

#### Careers Leader of the Year

##### Sally Smiles, Critchill School

Sponsored by Yeovil College



Sally Smiles is pictured with her award.

#### Young Person of the Year (Key Stage 4)

##### Louis Rollings

Sponsored by EVO Agency



Louis Rollings with his award.



### Young Person of the Year (Key Stage 5)

#### Jack Rolls

Sponsored by Somerset Council



Award-winner Jack Rolls.

### Supported Employee of The Year

#### Erin Barsby

Sponsored by Imagine the Possibilities



Award-winner Erin Barsby

### Supported Employment - Employer of the Year

#### EDF - Hinkley Point C

Sponsored by Imagine the Possibilities



Donna Brown of EDF Hinkley Point C (centre) with category sponsors and Imagine the Possibilities representatives, Julie Young (left) and Julie Walker.

### Best Placement Employer

#### Palette and Pasture

Sponsored by Somerset Chamber of Commerce



Paul Candy of Palette and Pasture with Emma Rawlings, category sponsor and CEO of the Somerset Chamber of Commerce.

### Best Placement Participant

#### William Rose

Sponsored by Hinkley Point C



William Rose with employer and mentor at Baylor, Travis Redfern.

### Outstanding Personal Contribution

#### Jackie Surrey, South Somerset 14-19 Partnership

Sponsored by Weston College



Recipient Jackie Surrey with category sponsor Kirsty Woods, of Weston College.



## Legal, insurance and finance

### Holloway Insurance Services

Holloway Insurance Services is a small insurance broker based near Ilminster. We focus on business, landlord and high net worth property insurance.

Using 30 years of experience, we can competently support a whole range of business including trades, hospitality, manufacturing and engineering.

Being small allows us to stay true to our passion for high level award winning, personable customer service. We have no call centres, and you speak to a broker directly.

Holloway Insurance understand

business and go beyond selling insurance. We offer risk management materials, suggest ways to reduce the possibility of a claim and work with our clients to maximise the pay-out should you need to claim.

We stay with our clients throughout the year, offering business support information and working with clients to maintain a full insurance coverage as their business grows.

We work in the community, sponsoring local events (see our sign at Yeovil Football Club) and leading the Hospitality Hub in Yeovil.

How does a small business achieve all this?

We partner with Momentum Broker Network which means we can be

confident that our premiums are among the best on the market. We are kept up-to-date with the latest technology, industry news and compliance so our clients can be secure that our work is accurate and competitive whilst they enjoy enhanced customer support and direct broker help with their claims.

For more information and to consider your next policy, (we recommend looking at your insurance about three months before the renewal date) please contact Dean 01460 206588 [dean@hollowayinsurance.co.uk](mailto:dean@hollowayinsurance.co.uk).



### Wessex Commercial Solutions Limited

Could your business be doing better? Are you finding that despite growth, profits are lower and cash flow tighter than before? Perhaps you are contemplating your exit strategy, but unsure of the best path to take?

If you are nodding along, it is time to discover the difference a dedicated and experienced Xero accountant from Wessex Commercial can make in your business.

These are some of the questions you may wish to explore with Graham, Linda or Elly.

We do more than number crunching and tax returns. We have first-hand experience in running businesses, using Xero and investing our own funds, whilst embracing the tough choices that most owners face.

We provide regular management information, offering

a clear snapshot of how your business is performing to give you choices. We can also provide you with your own in-house Finance Director support, to help give you peace of mind.

Our team at Wessex Commercial understands the importance of controlling costs, which is why we offer our clients fixed monthly fees. This gives our clients the peace of mind to focus on building their business, with support only a phone call away.

Located across the county, our virtual office not only allows us to provide efficient and flexible service, but also aligns with our commitment to reduce our carbon footprint, which we measure with Ecologi, an integrated tool that works seamlessly with Xero.

We welcome a free and no obligation conversation with you, so please call 01935 385929 or chat with us at [wessexcommercial.com](http://wessexcommercial.com)



## AmicusLaw

2023 has been an exciting year so far for AmicusLaw. Our new offices in Taunton and Ilminster are thriving and we have recently won not one but two prestigious awards at the DASLS Awards: Rising Star and Leader of the Year.

As part of our commitment to providing a full range of services to our clients, we are excited to launch our brand-new Personal Injury department to our offering.



With the ever-evolving legal landscape, we are thrilled to be expanding our legal services into the area of personal injury.

At the forefront of this expansion is our newly appointed Chartered Legal Executive, Erin Darling-Finan, who is here to guide and support clients through their personal injury concerns. Erin brings with her a wealth of knowledge and experience, and a compassionate approach to ensuring clients' interests are well represented throughout the legal process.

We know that making a claim after suffering an accident can feel daunting, especially against an employer or big company. If you have suffered a physical or mental injury as a result of someone else's negligence, we will support you throughout the entire process. Our goal is to ensure you have the best opportunity to receive the compensation you are owed.

If you would like more information, please do not hesitate to contact Erin today. With AmicusLaw by your side you can trust that your personal injury concerns will be handled with the utmost professionalism and care. We are on your side.

**Amicus Law**  
SOLICITORS

## Porter Dodson

Porter Dodson is a Top 200 UK Law Firm, providing commercial and private legal services to individuals and businesses across Somerset, Devon and Dorset.

Our straight-talking, pragmatic approach to legal advice is the result of over 25 years of experience and talent development. We do more than offer a range of options – we'll help you find the route that's right for you, providing a clear sense of direction on how to best protect your family and assets.

Porter Dodson is a centre of legal excellence built on trust, integrity, and the highest ethical standards. We know that our work is at the heart of our clients' long-term plans and the major events of their personal and business lives. From buying and selling property or making a Will, to handling very sensitive and private matters such as relationship breakdown, childcare issues, civil disputes or employment problems. Our expert business legal advice is tailored to each business, whether that's setting up a new business, buying commercial property, advising on employment matters or resolving commercial

disputes. We take the time to understand all the issues and give businesses confidence in the decisions they make.

Community involvement has, and always will be, integral to our story. We're proud of a regional presence that gives clients the local connections and friendly in-person service they love. Being embedded in our local communities and market sectors gives our clients a superb service grounded in the real world.

[porterdodson.co.uk](http://porterdodson.co.uk)

**PORTER  
DODSON**

## Gallagher

Gallagher is a local insurance broker that looks after the risk management and insurance needs of many businesses in Somerset. We provide insurance solutions to firms across the county, both large and small and our South West team has experience in many different industries.

Through helping businesses manage their risks we play an important role in supporting the local economy. Our friendly team works closely with clients to understand their business and the risks they face to ensure

that their insurance covers them for different exposures – be it damage to property, to cyber attacks, or the risk of claims from the public or employees.

Although we are based locally, we are part of a much larger global firm, with offices across the UK, meaning that clients can be assured that we can access the very best deals from insurers, whatever their needs.

As well as providing insurance cover, our team is highly experienced in helping businesses to take steps to minimise the need to make an insurance claim by providing risk management advice, which could

include employee training, better IT security or improved health and safety measures.

While we are a large firm, we are very much rooted in the communities where our clients are based and we are passionate about hiring local talent and offering young people a start in their careers through apprenticeships. Our team members support many local charities to raise money as a way of giving back to the communities where we live and work.



## Higos

Founded in Somerset, with their head office located in Somerton, Higos has been providing insurance solutions for over 30 years.

Higos provides a wide variety of covers/services for both personal and commercial customers of all sizes.

For commercial, Higos offer a wide range of tailored policies, from supporting smaller local businesses like tradesman, shops, restaurants, clubs, through to dealing with large UK and multinational business involved in industries such as manufacturing, wholesale, haulage, technology and leisure.

For private individuals, Higos offers

insurance solutions for home, motor, travel, let properties, holiday homes, unoccupied properties and more.

Higos has offices located across the South-West from Somerset, Wiltshire, Dorset, Devon to Cornwall. Being local is a key reason for their continued growth and success.

Alan Clarke, Branch Trading Director, said: "We engage with our clients to give them value, friendly advice whilst being seen as a local trusted service. As a chartered insurance broker, Higos ensures customers are properly protected if things go wrong. Higos prides itself on Standards. Professionalism and Trust.

"We have a team of Commercial Executives who are able to visit businesses, understand what

exposures they have and provide an all year round personalised broking service."

Why Higos?

- Chartered Insurance Broker
- 5 star rating "Excellent" on Trust Pilot and 5 Star on Feefo too
- Awarded Commercial Insurance Broker 2021 by Insurance Times
- Over 90% of customers renew with us each year
- Dedicated in-house UK claims team

For all your insurance needs, it has to be Higos. [higos.co.uk](http://higos.co.uk)



## Ponsford Insurance Services

In the fast-paced world of insurance, it is easy to feel like just another policy number. But here at Ponsford Insurance Services, we pride ourselves on building personal relationships with our clients. We are not just your average suit-wearing, paperwork-shuffling insurance folks. We are your trusted friends in the business.

We have a knack for finding those sneaky gaps in coverage that can cause you massive headaches when you need to claim. We'll dig deep, turn over every stone, even come visit you and your business and ensure your business is safeguarded from potential disasters.

And the best part? You won't be stuck talking to an automated phone menu when you need us the most. Nope, we are real humans who love a good chat. Our phones are always manned by friendly voices ready

to answer your questions, tackle your concerns, and offer a shoulder to lean on (figuratively speaking, of course).

Our advice? Do not settle for impersonal service or faceless interactions. Put your trust in a local insurance broker and experience the peace of mind that comes with knowing your business is well-protected.

We prioritize your needs, ensuring that you receive keen prices, tailored solutions, full claims handling support and exceptional service every step of the way.

Choose your local insurance broker as your reliable partner and let us be there for you whenever you need us.

Call 01275 840 400 or email [info@ponsfordinsurance.co.uk](mailto:info@ponsfordinsurance.co.uk) and ask for Charlie, Chris or Richard.



## Maxwells Chartered Accountants

Maxwells Chartered Accountants is a renowned accounting firm known for its exceptional services and strong ties to the community. With a wealth of experience and expertise, Maxwells provides a comprehensive range of accounting, tax, and advisory services to individuals and businesses alike.

At Maxwells, our primary goal is to help our clients achieve financial success and growth. We understand that every client has unique needs, so we tailor our services to meet their specific requirements. Whether

it is managing accounts, minimising tax liabilities, or providing strategic advice, our team of highly skilled accountants and business advisors are dedicated to delivering top-notch solutions.

We pride ourselves on our commitment to excellence and professionalism. Our clients can expect accurate financial reporting, compliance with regulations, and timely advice to help them make informed decisions. By staying up to date with the latest industry developments and utilising cutting-edge technology, we ensure that our clients receive the most effective and efficient service possible.

Beyond our expertise in accounting, Maxwells is deeply involved in the community. We actively engage

in various initiatives, supporting local charities

and organisations. Our commitment to giving back is a core value that guides our actions, and we believe in contributing to the welfare and development of the communities we serve.

Maxwells is a trusted partner for individuals and businesses, offering exceptional services, community involvement, and a commitment to excellence. With a focus on client success and a dedication to making a positive impact, Maxwells is the go-to choice for accounting and financial solutions. [maxwellsaccountants.co.uk](http://maxwellsaccountants.co.uk).



## SWIG Finance

As the South West's dedicated Community Development Finance Institution (CDFI), SWIG Finance supports smaller and earlier-stage businesses that cannot secure funding from mainstream lenders.

CDFIs operate a fundamentally different business model from traditional financial institutions, in that our profits are reinvested to support our mission to help underserved businesses realise their full potential.

Rather than compete with the banks, we lend to businesses that fall outside the radar of mainstream lenders due to finance criteria or automated credit scoring methods. As our decisions are made by people, not computers, we can lend by looking at the bigger picture, and our locally based business managers employ a relationship-focused approach, making us well-placed to understand our customers' finance and wider business needs.

Traditional lenders often judge businesses on historic performance which, for growing businesses, can be far from where the business is now or where it is heading.

Assessing a business on its current merit and future opportunities means that we can support projection-led businesses that demonstrate a stronger forecasted performance compared to previous years.

Non-financial factors also play a role in our assessment; an experienced and committed management team with a background in the industry gives greater confidence that they can lead the business through this transition.

If your business has growth aspirations but needs extra funding to take advantage of its opportunities, please do get in touch on [hello@swigfinance.co.uk](mailto:hello@swigfinance.co.uk) or 01872 227930.



## PKF Francis Clark

PKF Francis Clark has been helping businesses, entrepreneurs, families and individuals to achieve their goals for over 100 years.

Established in 1919, the firm of chartered accountants and business advisers has grown to over 900 staff and 60 partners across nine locations, including its Taunton office on Blackbrook Business Park.

We combine the expertise of a large accountancy firm with the personal service of a smaller practice, offering our clients the best of both worlds. Our vision is shared ambition – we take time to

understand a client's business and work with them to achieve their goals, making sure we provide the right specialist advice for their individual needs.

We are renowned for our range of expertise across multiple specialisms and sectors, including agriculture, food and drink, leisure and tourism, healthcare, legal, property and construction, and professional sports.

As a member of PKF Global, a network of 220 independent accountancy practices across 150 countries, we work closely with local experts around the world to support our clients with international and cross border interests.

We work hard to ensure that ours is a culture where our people can be themselves, develop and be part of a forward-thinking team that makes brilliant things happen.

PKF Francis Clark is certified as a Great Place to Work and ranked among the UK's Best Workplaces for Wellbeing 2023 (40th out of 79 large organisations). We were also recently ranked 28th among England's Top 100 Apprenticeship Employers 2023.

More information can be found at [pkf-francisclark.co.uk](http://pkf-francisclark.co.uk).



Up next in the October/November edition of Somerset Voice:  
Sector focus: Business consultancy – including training experts, to HR specialists and business mentors  
Feature: events and conferences, including Christmas parties!



## Pontins Brean Sands Holiday Park upgraded thanks to investment by Hinkley Point C



As it moves into peak construction, Hinkley Point C (HPC) will be using the Pontins Brean Sands Holiday Park to house around 900 workers. The move follows discussions with the local community, councillors and business groups which began in Autumn 2022.

A spokesman for EDF, which is building HPC, said the future of the Pontins site had been uncertain and the facilities in need of modernisation – but EDF’s investment will leave it in a better condition for future holidaymakers.

They said the project’s use of Pontins would bring year-around benefits to the local economy outside of the holiday season. Over 80 full-time year-round jobs have been created and workers will spend millions of pounds in the local area.

Community groups can also access Hinkley Point C’s £20 million community fund – with groups in Berrow and Burnham already receiving over two hundred thousand pounds in grants.

A massive refurbishment of the chalets has been carried out – including new kitchens, bathrooms, furniture, TVs, and all new Wi-Fi access. The restaurant, bar and laundry areas have also been upgraded and a brand-new gym installed.



The park’s swimming pool is also being maintained and it remains open for community use.

Workers are also bringing their families to stay at the chalets and are making use of the beach and local leisure attractions.

The cost-of-living crisis and poor weather in the early season is affecting tourism nationwide, but Brean continues to be a popular destination. Businesses which may be more affected by the project’s use of the holiday park are being given support. Grants are being made available for businesses to adapt and the project is also funding marketing campaigns to bring new visitors to the area.

Tommy Marshall, an Industrial Relations Manager for BYLOR, said: “I’ve been living here for six months and it suits me because I can really make my chalet my own. My partner and six children, who live in Ireland, also come to stay with me regularly.

“The kids absolutely love it because there’s loads for them to do – like the beach, the amusement arcades and getting an ice-cream. They wish they could live here all the time!”



## Sir Keir visits Hinkley and calls for more new nuclear in Britain

The Leader of the Labour Party, Sir Keir Starmer MP visited Hinkley Point C, declaring nuclear “part of the future”.

Addressing a crowd of workers, Sir Keir thanked them and said Sizewell C should move forward “at pace”. He met apprentices, union representatives and hosted a question-and-answer session with 50 members of the workforce.

He emphasised the need for more new nuclear in Britain and the crucial role of its reliable, low-carbon electricity, for fighting climate change and increasing energy security.



Let's network over lunch at Croydon Hall, near Minehead



▲ Attendees enjoyed a two-course lunch and networking before hearing from the guest speakers.



▲ Stuart Smallman and Andrea Scott from AmicusLaw Solicitors.



▲ Jakki McPhail (left) from Cosmic and Vicki Hooper from Enterprise South West.



◀ Margaret and David Hutchins from David Hutchins Innovation Ltd with Benjamin Strong (right) from Exmoor Distillery.

▼ Somerset Council's Paul Hickson (left) and Cllr David Woan with Somerset Chamber CEO Emma Rawlings.







Let's network over breakfast at Huntstile Organic Farm, near Bridgwater



▲ From left, Max Patch of Love Musgrove, with Conor Allbury and James Thompson, both from Mploy Staffing Solutions.



▲ Hope Cridge from Connectable SW and David Baum of Begbies Traynor.



▲ Somerset Chamber CEO Emma Rawlings and guest speaker and sponsor Phil Arnold from WPA.



▲ Tanya Dicks (left) of Elite Staffing Solutions and Georgia Beard of Devon and Somerset Air Ambulance.



▲ Simon Shuker (left) of Hafren Ousque Associates and Peter Quintana of hgkc.





Ladies' afternoon tea at Brean Country Club



▲ Attendees were able to enjoy an afternoon tea and networking and also heard from sponsor Caroline Mobley, of Poolbridge Accountancy.



▲ Guest speaker and sponsor Caroline Mobley of Poolbridge Accountancy (left) and Emma Rawlings, Somerset Chamber CEO.



▲ From left, Pip Buckley of bibic, with Sam Vining and Jade Townsend of Poolbridge Accountancy.



▲ Gemma Aldridge (left) and Pip Walker both of Vickery Holman.



▲ Laura Day (left) of Laurel Finance and Helen Pulman of Milsted Langdon.

## Let's network over breakfast

Thursday  
**24 AUG**

Our let's network events are a great way to get out and meet new people. It is also a great opportunity to meet contacts face-to-face while enjoying a delicious, cooked breakfast! Guests are able to enjoy some informal networking over a welcome drink and the chance to highlight their own business and learn about others.

**Time:** 8am - 10am at Canalside Conference Centre, Bridgwater  
**Cost:** £19.99 plus VAT

## How to supply Somerset Council

Tuesday  
**12 SEP**

This interactive event will enable you to meet and hear from members of the council's procurement team. You will find out how to know what contracts are coming up, how to apply for them and how to get on the radar for those smaller jobs and purchases which do not need to be tendered.

**Time:** 10am - 12 noon at The Deane House, Taunton  
**Cost:** £6 plus VAT

Sponsored by



## Online international trade workshop

Tuesday  
**5 SEP**

This introduction workshop will cover the role of HMRC and practicalities such as origin, classification and valuation of your goods, use of documentation including the UK/EUR1, free circulation, AEO, VAT responsibilities and the impact of Incoterms. The workshop also provides an introduction to customs entries.

**Time:** 9.30am - 1pm online  
**Cost:** £99 plus VAT

In association with



## Workshop - six numbers to grow your business

Tuesday  
**12 SEP**

This fun, interactive workshop will help you analyse your business to identify the key data you need to regularly monitor to both drive performance but also reduce your stress. Be Astute will help you create your very own early warning system - adding resilience at a time when we could all do with feeling more in control.

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

Sponsored by



## Annual Bank of England update

Thursday  
**7 SEP**

Jamie Barber, from the Bank of England, will present an update to the Bank's economic overview and forecasts, covering output and activity (GDP), the labour market, inflation and the monetary policy stance. He will present the main messages and then take questions about the pressures and opportunities facing businesses in the South West.

**Time:** 8am - 10am at Taunton Racecourse and Conference Centre  
**Cost:** £20.75 plus VAT

Sponsored by



## Construction Connections

Thursday  
**14 SEP**

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. This will also be an opportunity to find out more about supply chain opportunities with the Glastonbury Town Deal.

**Time:** 12 noon - 2pm at Glastonbury Town Hall  
**Cost:** £18.50 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, prospective members are permitted to have two tickets to our events before being asked to become a Chamber member.



**Cheddar Gorge & Caves****Attraction**

Cheddar Gorge & Caves is a visitor attraction in Somerset. It has six exciting attractions for visitors with day tickets, as well as escape rooms, Rockport adventure activities, facilities for corporate events, and group and education visits.

**Frances Cartwright, 01934 742343**  
[info@cheddargorge.co.uk](mailto:info@cheddargorge.co.uk)  
[cheddargorge.co.uk](http://cheddargorge.co.uk)

**Holloway Insurance Services Ltd****Insurance**

An independent business with 30 years' experience in business and landlord insurance. Partnering with Momentum Broker Solutions, we benefit from their professional broking team and exceptional market access, meaning our clients benefit from exceptional customer service, comprehensive insurance cover, and competitive premiums.

**Dean Holloway, 01460 206588**  
[info@hollowayinsurance.co.uk](mailto:info@hollowayinsurance.co.uk)  
[hollowayinsurance.co.uk](http://hollowayinsurance.co.uk)

**Civils Store Ltd****Construction Industry**

With their head office in Somerset and strategically located depots in Somerset, Gloucester, West Sussex, Kent, Cornwall and Cumbria, Civils Store is an independent, expert supplier of civil engineering materials. Large stocks, delivery service, and knowledgeable staff provide exceptional customer service.

**Kevin Hancock, 01749 823057**  
[accounts@civilsstore.co.uk](mailto:accounts@civilsstore.co.uk) [civilsstore.co.uk](http://civilsstore.co.uk)

**In Charley's Memory****Mental Health Charity**

We are a mental health charity that supports children, young people, and adults with affordable unlimited counselling. We work closely with schools and businesses, raising awareness and promoting early interventions for those needing support.

**Dawn Carey, 01278 557490**  
[ceo@incharleymemory.com](mailto:ceo@incharleymemory.com)  
[incharleymemory.com](http://incharleymemory.com)

**CL Drylining Ltd****Construction**

CL Drylining Ltd is an award-winning company, delivering excellence in dry lining and drywall installation since 1999. With a comprehensive approach to project management and highly-trained and professional staff, we deliver ultimate performance at the right price for residential, commercial and industrial clients.

**Christopher Loynes, 01278 439153**  
[enquiries@cldryliningltd.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@cldryliningltd.co.uk) [cldryliningltd.co.uk](http://cldryliningltd.co.uk)

**It's in the Bag Cancer Support****Charity**

We are the only Testicular Cancer (germ cell cancer) charity in the South West of England. We provide life-saving awareness materials, talks and videos. We give those diagnosed support and resources through diagnosis, treatment and continue to support beyond survival.

**Sue Brand, 075060 13762**  
[hello@itsinthebag.org.uk](mailto:hello@itsinthebag.org.uk) [itsinthebag.org.uk](http://itsinthebag.org.uk)

**Cox Martin Design Ltd****Architecture**

Cox Martin Design are a design-led architectural practice based in Dorset and Somerset. We work predominantly on housing, healthcare and community projects. With our creativity, experience, and expertise, we help clients to create well-designed, efficient, and beautiful buildings.

**Caroline Martin, 07889 564050**  
[office@coxmartindesign.co.uk](mailto:office@coxmartindesign.co.uk)  
[coxmartindesign.co.uk](http://coxmartindesign.co.uk)

**James Wilkins Plumbing and Heating Limited****Plumbing, Heating and Renewables**

High-quality, professional services within both commercial and domestic, plumbing, heating, gas, oil, air conditioning and renewables energy sectors. As well as breakdowns, servicing, and maintenance we specialise in all aspects of design, installation, and commissioning for all mechanical needs.

**James Wilkins, 01458 851267**  
[info@wilkinsplumbingandheating.co.uk](mailto:info@wilkinsplumbingandheating.co.uk)  
[wilkinsplumbingandheating.co.uk](http://wilkinsplumbingandheating.co.uk)

**hgkc****Management Consultancy**

hgkc specialises in leadership, innovation and helping business owners build value for their exit. We work with our clients to develop an innovative approach to problem-solving to successfully overcome their business challenges. We challenge our clients to evolve.

**Peter Quintana, 07775 795867**  
[peter.quintana@hgkc.co.uk](mailto:peter.quintana@hgkc.co.uk)  
[hgkc.co.uk](http://hgkc.co.uk)

**Mploy Staffing Solutions Ltd****Recruitment and Staffing**

Independently owned, award-winning and established in 2001, Mploy is a professional recruitment services company (temporary and permanent) serving Somerset from offices in Taunton and Yeovil. Multi-sector experience recruiting into manufacturing, engineering, hospitality, office and industrial settings.

**James Thompson, 01823 806588**  
[taunton@mploystaff.com](mailto:taunton@mploystaff.com) [mploystaff.com](http://mploystaff.com)

**QSS IT Solutions****Technology**

Qss IT is a well-established family run technology solutions company offering the complete business IT solution, including cyber security, IT support and telecommunications covering Bridgwater, Taunton, Somerset and the South West.

**Paul Moore, 01278 550000**  
**paul@qssit.co.uk**  
**qssit.co.uk**

**Total Wellbeing Matters****Health and Wellbeing**

Total Wellbeing Matters' goal is to improve understanding around mental health. We provide the training and the toolkits to enable individuals to look after their own mental health and well-being. We empower people to feel confident in talking about mental health.

**Amanda Whitlock, 07786 251637**  
**info@totalwellbeingmatters.com**  
**totalwellbeingmatters.com**

**Shakespeare Martineau LLP****Legal and Professional Services**

Shakespeare Martineau provides specialist legal advice and services for life and business. The firm, which has over 1,200 people across 18 hubs in the UK, including Bristol, is a certified B Corporation and has been listed in Best Companies 2022.

**Kit O'Brien, 01179 069222**  
**Kit.Obrien@shma.co.uk**  
**shma.co.uk/offices/bristol-solicitors**

**Willmotts Transport Ltd****Warehousing and Distribution**

Willmotts Transport is one of the leading independent warehousing and distribution companies in the South West, based just outside Shepton Mallet. We are a high-performing supplier of end-to-end logistics solutions for a wide range of companies and products operating in the fast-moving consumer goods markets.

**Daniel Hart, 01749 880333**  
**daniel.hart@wtl.uk wtl.uk**

**Singer Instruments****Engineering**

Singer Instruments develops and manufactures mechatronic workstations and laboratory automation robotics for public and private research institutions in genetics, neuroscience, systems biology, cancer biology, biofuel engineering and microbiology. We design, manufacture, program, assemble and QC our core products on-site.

**Katie Parrington, 01984 640226**  
**Katie@singerinstruments.com**  
**singerinstruments.com**

**You are my Sunshine****Health and Social Care**

We provide quality, affordable, reliable care and support to the rural areas of Somerset promoting independence within people's own homes. We visit the most vulnerable in society and specialise in dementia care. We also hold two daycare groups within the area of Cheddar and a newly-started carers support group.

**Katie Andreoletti, 01934 710073**  
**youaremysunshine2018@yahoo.com**  
**youaremysunshine.info**

**Somerset Jobs****Recruitment/Advertising/Events**

Jobs fair organiser across Somerset and a jobs board covering the South West on our regional site. We have four radio station partners who promote jobs on air with our "job of the day"!

**Stuart Wright, 01823 777000**  
**info@somersetjobs.co.uk**  
**somersetjobs.co.uk**

**Your Eco****Renewable Energy**

Your Eco is a Certified B Corp company working across private estates and country homes, along with the agricultural and commercial sectors delivering solar PV and battery storage systems helping power us towards a clean energy future. As featured on Channel 4, Your Eco has delivered over 30 megawatts since 2016.

**Nick Spicer, 01225 931666**  
**info@yourecouk.com yourecouk.com**

**Sustainable Food Somerset****Food and Agriculture**

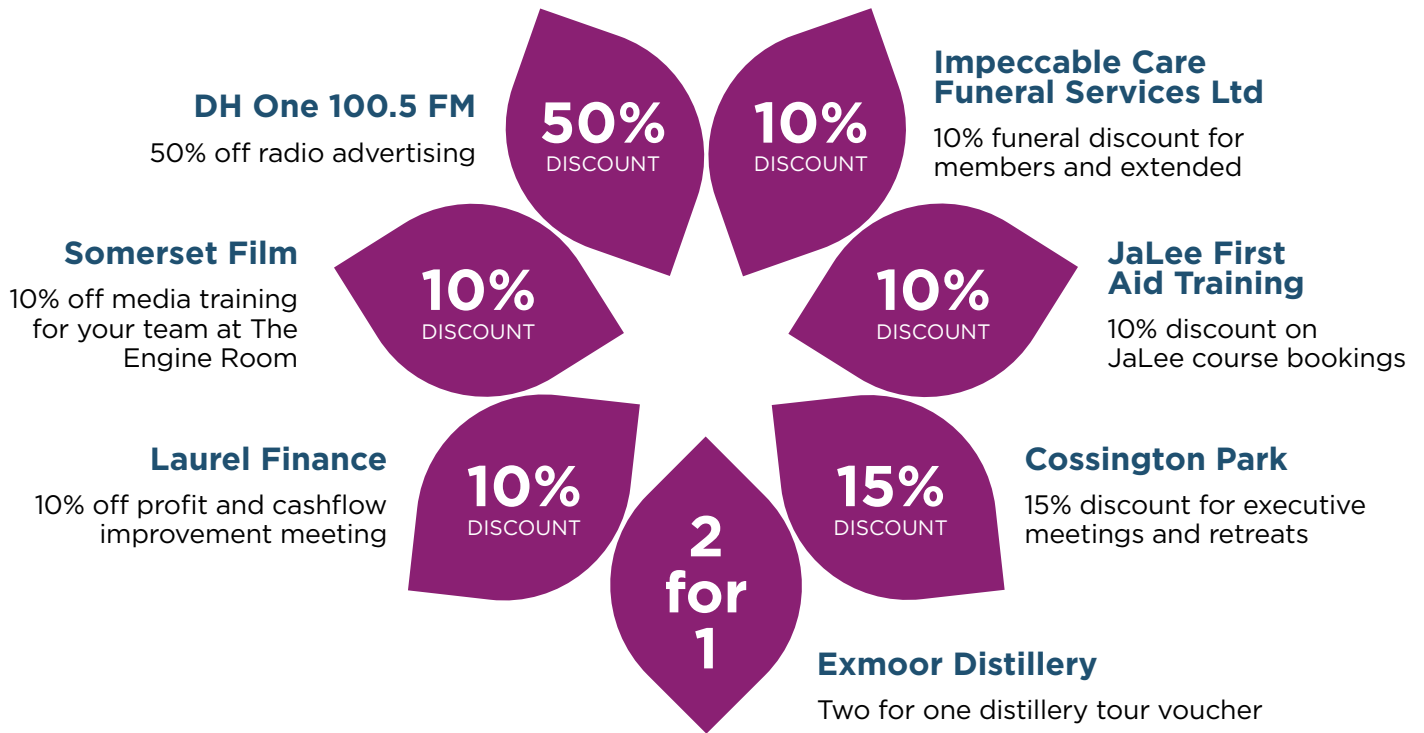
A cross-sector alliance promoting sustainably grown, local food to conserve the natural environment, increase economic prosperity and enhance public health. We run the annual Somerset Food Trail Festival and are creating a county-wide sustainable food and farming conference.

**Stewart Crocker, 07767 776685**  
**stewartcrocker1@outlook.com**  
**sustainablefoodsomerset.org**



## Latest member-to-member offers

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



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

## Somerset Chamber drop-in for businesses in the Wellington area

The Somerset Chamber's membership team will be in Wellington on Wednesday, September 20, hosting an informal drop-in to give local businesses the opportunity to find out more about the Chamber of Commerce network.

The team will be at Braziers Coffee Roasters from 9am to 12 noon and have issued an open invitation to all businesses from Wellington and the surrounding area to call in for a free coffee and chat.

Somerset Chamber is one of only 53 Chambers accredited to the British Chambers of Commerce (BCC),

which represents over 100,000 businesses in the UK. It is the only truly independent UK business support organisation which has local representation, and credibility in the eyes of the Government and the media and is consulted at all levels by the Government.

The BCC accreditation standards provide assurance of the high quality and range of services offered to businesses, which differentiates accredited Chambers from other business membership organisations who do not provide the same level of business support.

As business support organisation, Somerset Chamber works as an integral part of the business community, supporting members at all levels, across all sectors – we know developing strong working relationships and partnerships is vitally important in business.

The team will also be offering a special 20% discount off membership on the day!

If you would like to learn more about Somerset Chamber of Commerce before the drop-in, please get in touch by calling 01823 444924 or emailing [membership@somerset-chamber.co.uk](mailto:membership@somerset-chamber.co.uk).



## Somerset agency ADPR wins coveted industry awards

Somerset-based communications agency, ADPR, has walked away with two awards at the South West PRCA Dare Awards 2023. The agency won Small PR Consultancy of the Year and its Senior Account Executive, Kira Daly, won Rising Star of the Year 2023.

Awarding the coveted Small PR Consultancy of the Year, the judges praised ADPR for their people-first approach and



▲ ADPR team members, from left, Jack Loomie, Liberty Ash, Kira Daly, Jenny Walford, Kate O'Sullivan



dedication to apprenticeships and for their clear vision for the future of the company.

Awarding Kira Rising Star of the Year award, the judges said she was a "tremendous, tremendous asset not only to her agency but to the profession as a whole". Kira started her journey with ADPR in March 2020 on an apprenticeship, at the very beginning of the global pandemic. She quickly becoming an integral part of the ADPR team, supporting clients through turbulent times.

ADPR's Acting Managing Director, Jenny Walford, said: "I am so proud of the whole team for winning these awards. Being recognised as one of the best in the industry is a testament to the team's passion and dedication to their work and to each other. They are what make ADPR a trusted partner to our clients and a brilliant place to work!"

Kira Daly, ADPR's Senior Account Executive, added: "I'm absolutely thrilled to be awarded the PRCA's prestigious Rising Star of the Year - it's a real honour! I'm beyond grateful for the recognition by the PRCA, my incredibly encouraging team and amazing clients."

These awards are hot on the heels of two awards at the annual CIPR Pride Awards, where the agency won Gold for both Small PR Consultancy of the Year and for the best Not-for-Profit Campaign of 2022.

## Somerset's Alpha Housing Services wins Managing Agent of the Year Award



Alpha Housing Services, a leading property management agency from Taunton, has claimed the nationally-coveted title of Managing Agent of the Year at the revered Association of Residential Managing Agents (ARMA) 2023 ACE Awards.

The awards recognise the work of managing agents, suppliers and individuals in the property management industry across the UK. Receiving an 'ACE' award is an honour in the property management

field, reflecting those that have proven themselves to be the highest-performing companies.

Alpha Housing Services was established in the 1980s and has been run by the Wrangham family since 2004. The company has grown to accommodate the increased demands but continued its dedication to integrity, client-centricity, and professionalism.

Being a long-standing, trusted choice for property owners and tenants in the South West, the ACE awards recognised Alpha Housing Services for never losing a client since its establishment.

It is not the first award for Alpha - the team picked up two awards for outstanding customer service in the last year and was shortlisted and commended for multiple others, showing how far Alpha is willing to go to maintain its long-standing legacy as one of the best in the business.

Director Piers Wrangham said: "We are incredibly humbled and grateful to have been awarded the esteemed title of Managing Agent of the Year 2023. This recognition reflects our team's dedication to providing exceptional service and inspires us to continue striving for excellence."

The company is also currently on a journey towards net zero: "We have pledged to achieve net zero status, striving for carbon neutrality or even carbon negativity," Piers explained.

"Our sustainability journey has already begun, and over the next two years, we will continue taking steps to reduce our environmental impact."

He said Alpha has an impressive track record and a team of knowledgeable professionals, keeping it at the forefront of the industry.

To learn more about Alpha Housing Services Ltd., visit: [alphahousingservices.co.uk](http://alphahousingservices.co.uk).



## Hamper Guys get into the swing at celebrity golf day

In May, corporate gift providers and Chamber members The Hamper Guys were invited to the 10th Annual ISPS HANDA Mike Tindall Celebrity Golf Classic, held at the Belfry Golf Course.

Money raised from the event was split between two charities close to Mike's heart: The Matt Hampson Foundation and Parkinson's UK.

Approximately 50 teams took part, with one of Mike's celebrity friends joining each of the teams. Celebrities included Jamie and Harry Redknapp, James Nesbitt, Jenni Falconer and Sir Tony McCoy. A drinks reception and meal, auction and live entertainment all followed the golf competition, with guests treated to live music from Ronan Keating and Alfie Boe in the evening.

Having previously received one of The Hamper Guys gifts as a prize in 2017, at a Red Bull Charity Clay Pigeon shooting event, Mike contacted the team to request support for his event.

Alongside providing gifts for the winning teams, The Hamper Guys also

ran a putting competition whereby those successful in putting through a custom-made board were entered into a draw to win either a £250 or £500 hamper. Fellow chamber members Sally Maidment at Design Bean and Carly Press were instrumental in the design and print of the board.

Clive Mallon, from The Hamper Guys, said: "We were delighted to be approached to support this event for



▲ Clive Mallon of the Hamper Guys with Mike Tindall.



▲ Singer Ronan Keating helps Clive Mallon of the Hamper Guys.

such worthwhile causes. Showcasing some of Somerset's finest produce within our hampers, to so many of the guests, was fantastic. A wonderful experience!"

Following the event, Mike said: "Having the Hamper Guys putting competition at the Halfway House added a really fun element to the day and I know our guests really enjoyed it!"

"The amazing Hamper prizes also added something very special to the day and I really am so grateful for all your efforts and generosity. Thank you again and I hope we are lucky enough to see you again in 2024!"

[thehamperguys.com](http://thehamperguys.com)

## Sign-up for the Dorset and Somerset Air Ambulance 5k Twilight Shift

Dorset and Somerset Air Ambulance has launched online registration for the fundraising 5K Twilight Shift.

The event will take place for the second year running at Henstridge Airfield on Saturday, September 23, and involve people running, jogging, or walking 5K around Henstridge Airfield, the home of the Dorset and Somerset Air Ambulance team.

Supporters can enter the 5K Twilight Shift as an individual, as a family, or a group. People can take part as a serious runner or simply use it to have fun and exercise on what will, hopefully, be a beautiful late afternoon in September.

Participants could even wear fancy dress, or for the more experienced 5K challengers, carry extra weight, just like the air ambulance team need to do, when they are attending an incident.

Businesses or groups might like to use the 5K Twilight Shift as an opportunity for team building, or in-house



competitions with friends and colleagues; it really is an event that is open to all.

There are only 500 places available and the first 100 adults who enter will receive a free t-shirt. The charity hopes that anyone who is fortunate to gain a place, will use the opportunity to raise a minimum of £25 in sponsorship.

Emma Jones, Dorset and Somerset Air Ambulance Fundraising Manager, said: "Last year was the first ever 5K Twilight Shift and we all had such a wonderful time. We were thrilled with the amount of people that came out to support the event and hope this year will be even better. So many people say how they would love to visit our airbase, meet our crew and see Peggy, our AW169 helicopter up close.

"This event gives people that opportunity, whilst raising funds for our life-saving service. It's a truly inspiring event and I would encourage everyone, no matter your age or ability to register and take part!"

Registration is available online via the Dorset and Somerset Air Ambulance website. Entrance fees: Adults (£15), Under 16's (£10). Please note, children under the age of 16 must be accompanied by an adult.





## Summerfield and Tauntonfield celebrate 200 years as a family business

Summerfield, the Taunton-based property development company and Tauntonfield, the founding family business, previously Stansell Builders, has marked a special anniversary with events for partners, suppliers and employees in a year when it is joined by the eighth generation of its founding family.

Summerfield grew out of a business started 200 years ago by William Stansell who moved to Taunton from London offering his services as a painter, plumber and glazier - 14 years before Queen Victoria began her reign.

In the years since, the company has left its mark across Somerset and the South West, working on many famous buildings and more recently creating new communities and business parks in key locations.

William's son Alfred inherited his father's skill as a heraldic painter and gilder with one of the gold vanes on the tower of St Mary's Minster, Taunton still bearing his name. Running the business from his home in Billet Street, Alfred's son William lived above its showroom and offices. He took an interest in lighting and Taunton was



the first town in England to benefit from electric street lighting.

Charles Stansell took over the company around the time of his father William's death and concentrated more on building and joinery. After World War II, Stansell worked with the local authority on some of the area's first council houses.

Known as 'young governor', William (Bill) Stansell moved the growing business into its current offices at Tauntonfield and as chairman oversaw its restructure. In 1987 Summerfield Developments was founded. His daughters Elizabeth and Julia joined the holding company Board with Julia's son James Holyday starting at Stansell in 1992 and grandson, Chris, joining Summerfield in 2023 as the

eighth generation.

Stansell Builders and the name was sold in 1996, but the business based at Tauntonfield that has been developing property throughout the South West for generations, is operating with two distinct divisions of the Summerfield Developments limited company; building residential property with Summerfield Homes, and building and managing workplaces with Summerfield Commercial across the region.

Residential projects have included Killams Park, Taunton; Blackdown Meadows, Wellington and Liddymore Park, Watchet. Commercial schemes include Blackbrook, Taunton; Vantage Point, Exeter and Westpark 26, Wellington.

James Holyday, Managing Director at Summerfield said: "I am delighted to be able to share this remarkable and special milestone in our company's history with over 170 people who work with us and support us now, as we remember with gratitude and pride all the amazing hard work of previous generations of the family."

## Patient Choice achieves Cyber Essentials Plus certification

Wellington-based healthcare business Patient Choice Ltd has reached a significant cybersecurity milestone by achieving Cyber Essentials Plus (CE+) certification.

The award is a UK Government-backed, industry-supported certification for cybersecurity.

Peter Roberts (pictured), director of finance and systems, said: "We are growing rapidly, and since we provide core services in prescription delivery for the NHS, it's vital that our systems are secure.

"Patients, clinicians and healthcare bodies trust us on a daily basis to manage their data and maintain the quality of our prescription management services. This certification demonstrates that our policies and procedures are strong enough to protect against cyber threats.

"There are increasing security challenges in the healthcare sector, and cyberattacks can have severe consequences, potentially disrupting NHS operations and compromising sensitive patient and clinical information. We see certification as the starting point and will continue to evolve and improve our processes and procedures."

Patient Choice is a dispensing appliance contractor (DAC) for the NHS, and dispenses prescriptions for a range of products in specialist areas of healthcare. An independent assessment has demonstrated there are robust cybersecurity principles and capabilities at the company's sites in Somerset and Essex.

With advances in technology increasingly affecting their business, such as electronic prescriptions, they see CE+ as an essential requirement to demonstrate how seriously they take



their commitment to ensuring that patients' data is secure and protected.

CE+ helps companies protect themselves against a wide variety of the most common cyber-attacks and was introduced by the UK Government's National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC). The certification requires independent verification by an external auditor who conducts a series of technical assessments to ensure the company is protected against various attack scenarios.



## Milsted Langdon rings in 35 years with firmwide celebration

South West-based accountancy firm Milsted Langdon recently held a firm-wide staff party to celebrate its 35th anniversary.

The independent firm, which has offices in Bath, Bristol, Taunton, Yeovil and London, was founded in 1988 and has been delivering trusted, accountancy advice for businesses and individuals alike ever since.

During that time, the practice has grown to 20 partners and 250 staff, with specialist teams including forensic accountancy, restructuring and insolvency, and financial services, as well as being part of a top 20 international accounting network, MGI Worldwide.

To celebrate the milestone, Milsted Langdon brought together 140 staff from all five offices for a party held at the picturesque Quantock Lakes in Somerset.



Not only was the party a chance to celebrate Milsted Langdon's 35th anniversary, but a great opportunity for the firm's hardworking staff to catch up with colleagues from other offices.

Simon Rowe, who became Chairman in May 2023, said: "It's not often we can bring together our staff from all five offices, especially those who are based in London, so what better occasion than to celebrate the milestone of our 35th year?"

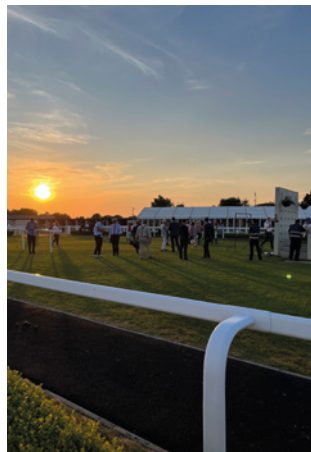
"A fantastic time was had by all, and it was a perfect event to celebrate the firm's achievements so far, as well as welcoming in what feels like a new chapter in ML's journey to help our clients and our people to thrive.

"As a firm, we are proud that Milsted Langdon has been proving high calibre accountancy, tax and business advice for 35 years now, and long may it continue."

## Race evening to mark 20-year milestone for Amarin Rubber & Plastics

Amarin Rubber & Plastics hosted the company's staff and their respective families at Bath Racecourse for an evening of celebration to mark the company's 20th anniversary.

With the year of celebration ongoing and including commemorative gifts for customers, a new website and more, the race evening was one of the highlights to mark the company's special birthday.



The 5.30pm race was sponsored by the company and the "Amarin Rubber & Plastics 20th Anniversary Handicap" proved an eventful race when it ended in a very rare dead heat.

Managing Director and Founder Ian Howells presented the winning trainers with their trophy as the team watched, capping a memorable evening for Amarin.

For more information and photos from the event, visit [amarinrubber.co.uk](http://amarinrubber.co.uk).

## Office interior specialist celebrates 10th anniversary



Workplace design and fit-out specialists, AMH Projects, have celebrated their 10th anniversary.

The company designs and builds office interiors throughout Bristol and the South West, as well as across the UK.

They have worked with and are working with clients like The British Heart Foundation, Bouygues, Regus, Edit and Plessey, just to name a few.



Jason Sanders, Business Development Manager, at AMH projects, said: "We are a caring company that is designed, that creates wonderful office interior environments and fully engages with the client building long-lasting relationships.

"The last 10 years' success has been built on a great reputation and repeat business.

"With our rebrand, new website and a growing team, we are looking to solidify the next 10 years and really put AMH on the map throughout the Southwest and beyond!"

For more information, visit [amh-projects.co.uk](http://amh-projects.co.uk).

## Stephens Scown expands with Taunton office opening

Employee-owned and now B Corp™ Certified law firm, Stephens Scown, has announced its expansion eastwards with the launch of a new office in Somerset, supporting the firm's strategic growth into the Greater South West.

Expanding beyond its current strongholds of Cornwall and Devon, Stephens Scown has announced that from July 1, it will also be operating out of a new office in Somerset.

Taking over the lease of a spacious open plan office across one floor of Bonville House in the thriving Blackbrook Business Park in Taunton, the move is in large part thanks to the successful development of professional and client relationships in the Somerset marketplace over the past 12 months.

Managing Partner, Richard Baker, said: "As the region's only B Corp™ Certified and employee-owned law firm, we believe we have much to offer businesses and individuals in Somerset and the Greater South West.

"Our people are passionate about the sectors and clients they work with and



devote time and energy to developing a deeper understanding of their challenges and aspirations, whether supporting the future plans of a multi-generational farming family or boosting business growth for a tech start-up.

"For our clients, we are seen as more than just lawyers, we are trusted advisors and part of their community and we look forward to meeting up with existing and new contacts as we embed ourselves further into the Somerset business community."

Already with a number of key personnel based in Somerset, the firm will be looking to recruit further.

Stephen Wray, who has been leading Stephens Scown's Somerset development plans since joining the

firm in 2021, said: "We will be building on our existing cohort of people known in the local market, including Alistair Tudor who joined us from Somerset Chamber, Ellie Hibberd, Tom Chartres-Moore, Amy Ralston, Helen Wallwork and Simon Morris, as well as introducing some exciting new people to the organisation to further add breadth and depth to our offering."

Located in Bonville House in the thriving Blackbrook Business Park in Taunton and, with parking on site, BLOCK Workspace provides the perfect base for Stephens Scown's Somerset base, conveniently located just off Junction 25 of the M5. As a B Corp™, it was also important to support the firm's journey to net zero by 2025 that BLOCK offered a sustainable working solution.

Carbon neutral, BLOCK has worked with sustainability consultants to continually find ways to be as green as possible and improve its eco credentials across every aspect of the business.

For more information visit [stephens-scown.co.uk](http://stephens-scown.co.uk)

## Charity hails success of annual Test Fest music event

The fifth annual Test Fest has been hailed a success by charity organisers from It's in the Bag.

The event has been running since 2017 and organisers Sue and Bill Brand said it was the only one of its kind in the UK, as it raises awareness of testicular cancer and the importance of self-checking and early detection.

The charity's volunteers were also on-hand to talk to attendees about what the charity does and how it helps men and their families in the West Country.

Testicular Cancer is the most common cancer in young men. It's in the Bag's aims to support men at diagnosis and during treatment, raise awareness to encourage early detection and celebrate the 98% survival rate from Penzance to Worcester.

The festival is always opened by two bands from Richard Huish College's music department and took place at Taunton Rugby Club.

The team also worked on promotional materials with local artist Jonathan Dixon and students from Bridgwater & Taunton College's creative arts department.



## Kloeckner Metals UK achieves Great Place to Work certification

Kloeckner Metals UK, one of the UK's leading suppliers of metal products and services, has announced it has been certified as a Great Place to Work.



The Great Place to Work certification is awarded to organisations that provide excellent employee experiences and showcase exemplary people practices. It is a global authority on workplace culture, with a robust assessment process that evaluates an organisation's employee satisfaction, trust and overall workplace culture.

Tracey McQuade, Director of Human Resources at Kloeckner Metals UK, said: "We are thrilled to have achieved the Great Place to Work certification, as it validates our ongoing efforts to prioritise our employees' well-being and satisfaction.

"This recognition motivates us to continue investing in our employees, enhancing their experience and fostering an environment where everyone can thrive."

## Exmoor Blacksmiths shortlisted for prestigious GAGA Construction Award

Exmoor-based bespoke metalwork specialists West Country Blacksmiths has had a project shortlisted for the 2022 GAGA Construction Awards.

The awards celebrate the innovative use of galvanized steel by architects, engineers, constructors, and artists from all over the UK and has been running for over 20 years, with previous winning projects including The Eden Project and the London Palladium.

From thousands of entries, 35 projects were shortlisted within six separate categories with a staircase, gate and railing project undertaken by the blacksmiths for a private property in Hampshire bring shortlisted.

The project required the craftsmen to work directly with the client to bespoke design the perfect staircase which was made in Victorian style staircase to fit on a curved wall which is 3.2 meters wide at the opening, along with a gate and six-and-a-half meters of Victorian style railings.

All the metalwork was galvanised and powder coated to matt black prior to the team installing the metalwork over two days.

Kieren Roberts, joint owner and director of West Country Blacksmiths, said: "We are incredibly grateful of the recognition of our work. We are privileged to have an incredibly talented team and together we work extremely hard to produce metalwork to the very best standard regardless of the size and type of project.

"This specific project was challenging, but enjoyable, as it allowed our team to use their wide range of skills throughout the project from CAD designing and developing ideas and



through throughout with very difficult forging, high level fabricating and a quality installation.

"As a small rural based company this type of recognition is vital to help us share the range of work we are capable of. The support we get from the local community is amazing and our primary focus is to continue serve the community of Somerset, producing the very best possible metalwork service."

The craftsmen work has been shortlisted for the awards alongside projects including External Stair at George's Roman Catholic Cathedral in Southwark, The Superunification sculpture in South Dublin and the refurbishment of Southend on Sea Pier project.

Jareena Nasreen, from the GAGA Construction awards, said: "The calibre of projects was truly outstanding, making the selection process both challenging and exhilarating."

The winners of the awards were due to be announced as Somerset Voice went to print.

## CL Drylining team triumphs in inaugural charity football match

A team from Bridgwater-based CL Drylining organised a fundraising charity football match against a local ladies team which is sponsored by the company.

The match between CL Drylining and Sydenham Rangers FC raised over £1,500 for Breast Cancer Now - and the drylining side also managed to beat the ladies 7-4!

Chris Loynes, Managing Director, of CL Drylining, said: "Some had played football before and some were completely new to football and despite most of our team waking up feeling like we had all been hit by a bus, we actually won!

"The charity Breast Cancer Now is close to my partners heart after losing her mum to this horrible disease and then, unfortunately, years later going through the battle herself with two young girls of her own.



CL DRYLINING LTD

"The chosen charity gave her much comfort and support and probably many others. It was great to be able to give back to them.

"In all it was an amazing day and success for everyone involved, we were all very proud to be a part of the event."

Such was the success of the fundraiser, the match will now become an annual event in aid of a different charity each year.

Chris added: "Preparations have already started for a stroke charity next year and we have already secured a stadium for this event.

"We are aiming to raise 10k for the



▲ The triumphant CL Drylining team.



▲ Players from Sydenham Rangers FC.

next charity football match now that we have more time to prepare and promote."



## PKF Francis Clark is a Top 100 Apprenticeship Employer

PKF Francis Clark has been recognised as an outstanding apprenticeship employer in England.

The Taunton-based chartered accountancy firm is ranked 28th on the new Top 100 Apprenticeship Employers list for 2023. First compiled in 2020, the prestigious annual rankings have been developed by the Department of Education in partnership with High Fliers Research, who independently assess and rank the nation's top apprenticeship employers.

The rankings recognise employers for their commitment to employing apprentices, their creation of new apprenticeships, the diversity of their new apprentices, and the number of apprentices who complete their apprenticeships and progress further.

A total of 108 apprentices started apprenticeships with PKF Francis Clark in the year to March 2023. With nine offices across the South and South West of England, the firm offers accountancy and tax apprenticeship pathways for graduates, school leavers and career changers.



Amy Taylor, chief people officer at PKF Francis Clark, said: "Growing our own talent is fundamental to our success as a firm, so we're proud to be ranked as a Top 100 Apprenticeship employer. In recent years we have recruited a record number of graduates and school leavers, as well as providing opportunities for our existing colleagues to start apprenticeships."

PKF Francis Clark offers three main entry routes for accountancy and tax trainees, with apprentices usually starting in January and September:

- The Association of Accounting Technicians (AAT) apprenticeship is aimed at school leavers and combines learning on the job with attending college one day a week, leading to a level 3 or 4 qualification.
- Graduates work towards a level 7 qualification from the Association of Chartered Accountants (ACA), combining on-the-job learning from experienced colleagues with studying via a leading professional training provider.
- The firm also has a specialist tax pathway for apprentices to achieve the level 7 Chartered Tax Adviser (CTA) qualification.

Applications for apprenticeships starting next year will open in September.

The Top 100 Apprenticeship Employers accolade comes after PKF Francis Clark was certified as a Great Place to Work in September 2022. The firm is also ranked among the UK's Best Workplaces and Best Workplaces for Wellbeing by Great Place to Work, the global authority on workplace culture.

More information about trainee accountant jobs at PKF Francis Clark can be found at [careers.pkf-francisclark.co.uk/early-careers](https://careers.pkf-francisclark.co.uk/early-careers).



## Carbon - what are you doing about it?

The pressure on businesses to measure their carbon emissions is growing and is unlikely to go away, advises energy specialist Chris Barrett, of Auditel.

Larger companies have had the requirement to report carbon emissions for some time, but demands from a wide variety of stakeholders, means that few business can afford to ignore this for much longer.

Supply chains are becoming increasingly demanding, either through the requirements in tender applications or due to customer pressure to demonstrate sound environmental credentials.

It is no longer becoming acceptable to simply measure your own carbon footprint (for which there are bewildering number of tools and approaches). Setting clear goals



about your businesses aspiration to reduce carbon, backed by validated independent measurements to some form of international standard, ISO14,000, PAS2060 etc. is adding a significant burden on businesses.

The starting point is identifying clearly what your businesses objectives are: these might be determined by your commercial objectives, or in some cases your ethical ones. Either way you need to start with a clear, agreed



aim, which can be measured and validated to the satisfaction of your stakeholders.

To do this you may need to appoint qualified resources, either in the form of permanent employees, who have the training and experience to deliver carbon management programmes, or out-source this to one of the many organisations who can help you through the minefield of terminology, schemes and regulation and help you achieve your goal.

What is clear is that complacency could see businesses severely damaged if they become unable participate in the market through lack of a carbon strategy.

[auditel.co.uk](https://auditel.co.uk)

## Bank of England summary – business and consumer confidence increases slightly and fewer price increases expected in coming months

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



@BoESouthWest



Economic activity recovered modestly with slightly improved consumer and business confidence in the last quarter. Input cost inflation continued to decline but food price inflation remained high, although is expected to come down.

Lags in the pass-through of price changes along the supply chain and a desire to rebuild squeezed margins will delay the moderating impact of lower material and energy costs on consumer prices. Companies expect to make fewer and smaller price increases over the next year as input costs ease.

Business and financial services activity was moderately better. Contacts said consumer demand was more resilient than they had expected across goods and services. Manufacturing output activity stabilised.

Employment intentions were marginally positive with varying trends across sectors. Recruitment difficulties continued to ease, in particular, for less skilled positions but were still above normal levels.

Pay settlements continued to average 6%–6.5%. Contacts anticipated that pay settlements will fall in 2023 H2.

Housing activity stabilised. Investment intentions, corporate credit conditions and activity in the commercial property sector continued to be subdued. Construction activity continued to fall, owing to uncertainty about the economic outlook and higher costs.

Consumer spending growth was driven by high price inflation, as expected. Sales volumes across goods and services proved more resilient than anticipated.

Sales growth was generally driven by prices while volume was relatively flat. Contacts in restaurants and pubs reported strong nominal consumer spending as prices have risen, despite slower footfall trends. Demand for accommodation was generally strong.

Contacts in the tourism sector expected a strong summer and any loss of demand from fewer staycations is likely to be offset by higher numbers of foreign tourists.

Business services stayed resilient. Price inflation continued to drive higher turnover. Overall activity continued to recover owing to improved confidence about the economic outlook.

Contacts in less cyclical businesses such as litigation, audit, IT, communications, and insurance continued to report robust performance with strong demand and increased pricing. Corporate events/tourism continued to recover with



## BANK OF ENGLAND

improved demand and higher pricing. Wholesale contacts supporting the retail market saw better than expected demand levels.

Recruitment contacts reported fairly flat volume levels though higher salary levels supported revenue growth.

By contrast, contacts that specialise in mergers and acquisitions and other corporate transactions continued to report weaker revenue levels owing to higher funding costs weighing on the number of such corporate decisions.

Companies in construction and logistics also reported subdued domestic demand. Contacts reported stable growth in manufacturing output, supported by a modest improvement in exports, particularly to the US and China.

Contacts in the food and drinks sector reported stable volumes, although consumers were trading down for lower-value products, while durable consumer goods reported weaker demand.

Construction output volumes continued to fall, driven by softer demand from the public sector and in housing. Higher costs and planning constraints also affected output.

Investment intentions continued to be subdued. This owed to higher investment costs, some reduction in returns to capital investment and on-going uncertainty about the economic outlook.

There was variation in appetite to invest and the nature of investment across sectors and size of business.

Credit demand remained subdued, especially across property development, mergers and acquisitions, and investment. But working capital needs remained high.

There were some signs that trade credit availability had tightened. Among smaller firms in vulnerable sectors (retail, hospitality and construction) trade credit insurance remained tight.

Insolvencies, among the smallest firms, had picked up to a high level relative to pre-COVID years, and were expected to continue to rise.



## Agreement to direct pension funds to start-ups

The Government has secured an agreement with nine UK pension funds to invest at least 5% of their default funds into start-ups and fast-growing companies by 2030. The agreement, known as the Mansion House Compact, could unlock up to £50 billion in assets from private defined contribution pension schemes.

**Read more about the agreement at:**

[sifted.eu/articles/uk-government-pension-funds-startups-jeremy-hunt-news](https://sifted.eu/articles/uk-government-pension-funds-startups-jeremy-hunt-news)

## Plans to ease cancelling subscriptions criticised

Government plans to force companies to make it easier for UK customers to cancel subscriptions have been attacked by small business organisations for being too onerous and costly. Companies would be required to send customers more frequent reminders before a contract renews automatically, and to give them simpler and more straightforward means of exiting rolling contracts.

**Read more about the rules at:**

[ft.com/content/8cc19f43-2b24-4ff7-bf57-d3fa4bba585b](https://ft.com/content/8cc19f43-2b24-4ff7-bf57-d3fa4bba585b)

## Hub to support limited company directors

The Insolvency Service has launched an online information hub to support directors of micro, small and medium-sized limited companies. The hub includes guidance on a range of business themes commonly faced by company directors.

**Read more about the hub at:**

[gov.uk/government/news/new-information-hub-launched-to-help-limited-company-directors-make-the-right-decisions-at-the-right-time](https://gov.uk/government/news/new-information-hub-launched-to-help-limited-company-directors-make-the-right-decisions-at-the-right-time)

## Inquiry into small business finance

The Treasury Committee has launched an inquiry into small business access to finance and lending. The cross party Committee of MPs will examine the key challenges smaller businesses face when seeking finance, the regulation of small business lending, and the role the Government can play in enhancing lending to small businesses.

**Read more about the inquiry at:**

[committees.parliament.uk/committee/158/treasury-committee/news/196093/mps-launch-inquiry-into-the-financing-of-small-and-mediumsized-enterprises/](https://committees.parliament.uk/committee/158/treasury-committee/news/196093/mps-launch-inquiry-into-the-financing-of-small-and-mediumsized-enterprises/)

Source: BAD News (Business Advisers News)

## COGNIQUE

“It’s a big deal to rebrand and simultaneously design a new website, but Cognique take all of the stress away, going above and beyond to deliver a site with great design and functionality. Massive thanks guys.”

**Sandra Sampson,**  
Director, Motiv-8

**Nige | Managing Director**



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