

# Somerset Voice

The Official Magazine of  
Somerset Chamber of Commerce

October /  
November  
2023

## Somerset Business Awards 2024

6 | SPONSORS AND  
JUDGES ATTEND  
OFFICIAL LAUNCH



### 15 | SOMERSET SUPPLY CHAIN

Somerset Chamber launches new service

### 22 | #WELLCONNECTED

Are you in our events photo gallery?

### 27 | NEW MEMBERS

Three pages of new Chamber members

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Chamber of  
Commerce

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## CONTENTS

First word	4
Somerset Business Awards 2024 launch	6-7
Business partner news	8-11
Feature	
- events and conferencing	12-14
Chamber news	15-16
Sector focus	
- business consultancy	17-21
Hinkley update	21
#WellConnected	22-25
Upcoming events	26
New members	27-29
Membership	30-31
Member news	32-37
Business news	38-39

Front page: Somerset Business Awards 2024 sponsors and judges. Photo: Tessa Chapman

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## FIRST WORD

Business investment is vital to stimulate economic growth. Yet the constant threat of ever-increasing interest rates is stunting investment in people, equipment and products.

According to figures from the Office for National Statistics, the UK economy shrank more than expected in July, contracting by 0.5%.

The figures were worse than analysts had predicted and continue a trend of weak economic growth in the UK.

In a Chamber network survey, almost half of businesses said the cost of borrowing was negatively impacting their business, with the business-to-consumer sector, such as retailers and hospitality firms, far more likely to report negative impacts.

The data is a timely reminder about the pain many businesses are suffering due to rising interest rates.

Firms tell us every day that they are struggling to pay off debts and finding it difficult to take out loans.

Business investment is fundamental to the economic growth everybody wants. Firms will only be able to invest when the financial burdens, including interest rates, ease.

The Bank of England has indicated rates are nearing their peak. But businesses need clarity and certainty that an end to the cost-of-borrowing pressures are really on the horizon.

But it's not just interest rates that are currently stunting investment and economic growth. Small and medium-sized businesses continue to battle against stubbornly high inflation, trade barriers with the EU, higher taxes and an uncertain labour market.

Based on its own research, the Chamber network has predicted that GDP will flatline over the next two quarters, leading to 0.4% growth for this year. Longer term growth is also expected to be less than 1% for 2024 and 2025.

Businesses need to see a clear framework from politicians, outlining how long-term investment can be unlocked, and economic growth accelerated.

*Emma Rawlings*

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

## OUR BUSINESS PARTNERS

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We value relationships above all else

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## Entries open for the Somerset Business Awards 2024

The 19th annual Somerset Business Awards have been officially launched at a reception for judges, sponsors and would-be winners at Hurds Hill, near Langport.

Guests were able to find out more about the awards, the new sponsors and new categories, including a new Business Resilience and Growth Award to recognise businesses which, despite the soaring costs of doing business, have reinvented their offering to go from strength-to-strength.

There is also a new-look Manufacturing and Engineering Award, together with awards for the Best Use of Digital Technology and Environmental and Sustainability. The awards are the county's biggest and most prestigious annual business awards and are organised by Somerset Chamber of Commerce to celebrate the very best of the county's businesses.

They are free to enter and businesses

do not need to be a member of the Chamber to take part. Once again, leading accountancy firm Albert Goodman will be the main sponsor, with the awards culminating in a gala final on March 22.

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

"This is our fourteenth year as main sponsor and we have seen some excellent businesses enter the awards and then go on to even greater things. The awards are a fantastic celebration of the very best of Somerset business, and entering is a great chance to boost your profile, boost staff morale and ultimately boost your business."

To help businesses and organisations, there will be online 'how to enter' event on Wednesday, October 11, from 2pm to 3pm, with judges and past



winners on-hand to pass on their top tips for success.

Businesses have until midday November 24 to submit their entries via the Somerset Business Awards website at [www.somersetbusinessawards.org.uk](http://www.somersetbusinessawards.org.uk). Full details of the 'how to enter' online workshop can be found on Somerset Chamber of Commerce's website at [www.somerset-chamber.co.uk](http://www.somerset-chamber.co.uk).

Emma Rawlings, Chief Executive of Somerset Chamber of Commerce, said: "There are 14 categories which cover all sectors and sizes of businesses and charities. Taking part is a great way to raise your profile, engage your staff and celebrate your achievements.

"As always, I am grateful for the sponsorship of so many of Somerset's leading businesses who, like me, are keen to celebrate our incredible business community."



▲ Mike Cahill of main awards' sponsor Albert Goodman and Emma Rawlings, Chief Executive of Somerset Chamber of Commerce.



▲ Kelly Davies (left) of Westcotts, Dave Crew of Weston College and Heather Davis of Westcotts.

Proud to be a partner of the  
**Somerset Business Awards 2024**

# GOOD LUCK

to all the entrants from  
everyone at **global**

Radio | Outdoor | DAX  
Contact: [david.collins@global.com](mailto:david.collins@global.com)

## Awards this year are:

**Small Business of the Year**  
(turnover up to £0.5 million)  
sponsored by Gather Technology Ltd

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

**Large Business of the Year**  
(turnover over £6 million)  
sponsored by Stephens Scown

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

**Best Use of Digital Technology Award**  
sponsored by Teapot Creative

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

**Employer of the Year**  
sponsored by Blossom HR

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

**Start-up of the Year Award**  
sponsored by Westcotts

**Apprentice of the Award**  
sponsored by Weston College

**Environmental and Sustainability Award**  
sponsored by Gravity

**Service Excellence Award**  
sponsored by Porter Dodson

**Somerset Manufacturing and Engineering Award**  
sponsored by Leonardo UK

**Business Resilience and Growth Award**  
sponsored by Barclays UK



▲ Andy Cockcroft (left) and Jeremy Holland (centre) of Hinkley Point C with Nick Porter of Barclays.



▲ Sarah Emmerson and William Vaughan of Gather Technology.



▲ Vicky Banham (left) and Karen Morledge of Morledge & Co.



▲ Emma Rawlings of Somerset Chamber of Commerce and Rosie Wicks of Blossom HR Consultancy.

The Somerset Business Awards 2024 media sponsors are Newsquest and the Somerset County Gazette Series and Global.



## WPA secures coveted Which? Recommended Provider status for private medical insurance

A recent Which? survey ranked WPA as the leading UK health insurer based on customer feedback.

For the first time, Which? has reviewed the PMI industry, also including Aviva, Axa, BUPA, SAGA and Vitality, for a recommended provider and WPA is the only company to be singled out in this year's results published at the end of August 2023.

The scores reflect how satisfied customers are with, and how likely they are to recommend, their provider and further information around these impressive scores can be found in Which?'s more detailed 'Get the best private health insurance' article published on August 31, 2023).

With an industry average claims score of 72%, WPA leads with a remarkable 82%. Similarly, the industry's 64% average customer score is led by WPA with 74%.



In the claims review, WPA-led the speed settling claim, access to services wanted and range of hospitals available sections. They were also first equal in the clarity of process, informing customers of costs of the claim, waiting from initial referral to treatment, choice of consultants available and keeping customers updated about claim sections.

In the customer evaluation, WPA-led the clarity of terms and conditions section. They were first-equal in the ease of contact, clarity of written communication, how well cover fits customer needs, range of hospitals available, choice of medical professionals and value for money sections.

Consumer champion, Which? only

endorses the best products and services and recommended providers are companies that are rated highly by Which? members that have made recent claims with their insurer.

According to Which?, recommended providers are companies which go the extra mile when it comes to satisfying their customers'. WPA stood out in the analysis when it came to their customer and claims scores.

Nathan Irwin, WPA's Chief Executive, said: "This outstanding achievement reflects WPA's unwavering commitment to treating customers as we wish to be treated ourselves providing market leading service in the private medical insurance industry.

"Which? has affirmed our market reputation and it's great to have external endorsement of the compassionate, empathetic and enthusiastic work of our people."

## Albert Goodman secures B Corp status

Somerset-based accountancy firm Albert Goodman is celebrating after securing prestigious B Corp status.

The Taunton-headquartered chartered accountants, tax consultants and financial planners have earned the coveted B Corp status due to an enhanced commitment to environmental and social goals.

It follows a rigorous assessment of the firm's commitment to its 'triple bottom line' of people, planet and profit.

Iain McVicar, Managing Partner at Albert Goodman, said: "We are immensely proud to become one of the very first accountancy firms in the South West to secure B Corp status, which is not only a huge honour but also a strong endorsement of our determination to be a business which is a true force for good.

"B Corp status confirms we are doing the right thing across governance, people, community, environment and clients. It will also help us to grow



as a company and have a positive impact on the environment as we work towards net zero."

Led by Albert Goodman Technical and Training Partner Sophie Parkhouse, the company launched its bid for B Corp status as part of its efforts to work towards net zero by 2030, but also to be community-focused.

To achieve the sought-after seal of approval, a comprehensive assessment of the company's practices required detailed evidence and supporting data.

Sophie said: "Albert Goodman prides itself on being trustworthy and impactful, progressive and collaborative,



and we put this to the ultimate test by targeting B Corp status.

"Assessment of our impact has been the most robust of processes to prove our credentials and while this accolade shows we are doing business correctly, we know it will also inspire our colleagues to strive for better things as we move towards net zero.

"We are delighted to be only the second South West-based accountancy practice to gain B Corp status. Albert Goodman is friendly, fair and forward-thinking and we are confident the company will continue to grow and attract great people who share our values."

Albert Goodman is currently working on a series of initiatives to enhance its environmental impact including leading the Blackbrook Green Forum to make the Taunton business park a better place to work and introducing a cycle to work day.

## The Home of British Helicopters: Yeovil celebrates official status

Yeovil, home to Britain's only onshore helicopter manufacturer Leonardo, is celebrating its official recognition by the town and local councils as the "Home of British Helicopters". The status reflects Yeovil's storied history of aviation firsts and the huge value helicopter design and manufacture contributes to the local, regional, and national economies.

To mark the new status, official signage identifying Yeovil as the Home of British Helicopters now greets people arriving in town via road and rail. The sobriquet is also already appearing around town, at Yeovil College, in the Quedam shopping centre, and in Huish Park, home of Yeovil Town F.C.

Emma Rawlings (pictured at Leonardo), Chief Executive of Somerset Chamber of Commerce, said: "Leonardo's presence in the region has far-reaching benefits, from the direct employment opportunities it provides to the indirect economic stimulus created through its supply chain. The local community has the enviable status of having such a unique business here in Yeovil.



"I think that we are all very proud when we watch a film and see a helicopter designed and manufactured from Yeovil featuring in it. It makes you so incredibly proud to be British and, more importantly, from Somerset."

To celebrate the occasion Leonardo held a commemorative event at its helicopter production line, attended by multiple generations of Leonardo employees, including from its top-rated apprentice and graduate schemes. They were joined by local politicians, community partners and representatives from the Ministry of Defence.

Many of those attending seized the opportunity to take photos with Leonardo's G-LYNX, the helicopter that set the world speed record in 1986, and the AW149, Leonardo's latest-generation contender for the UK's New Medium Helicopter competition.



Speakers included Emma Rawlings, Chief Executive of Somerset Chamber of Commerce, and Mark Bolton, CEO and Principal of Yeovil College. They reflected on how helicopter manufacturing is central to the fabric of the town, as well as how Leonardo is investing to ensure a bright future for the site's 3,000 employees and local young people looking to embark on an exciting career in aerospace.

Clive Higgins, Chair and CEO, Leonardo UK, said: "As a former apprentice at Leonardo and Yeovil College, I recognise the significance the company currently plays and will continue to do so in our local Somerset community.

"We hope that Yeovil's official recognition as the Home of British Helicopters will help to attract even more young people from across the UK to work in an interesting, varied, and exciting workplace here in the heart of the South West."

For 108 years, Yeovil has played a fundamental role in the defence of the nation. During the Great War, the town built around 1,100 aircraft, including seaplanes and bombers.

Today, the same ground hosts a cutting-edge Leonardo factory that designs, manufactures and supports helicopters for the British Army, Royal Navy and their allies, although many nods to the history of the site survive, such as its WWII-era test pilot's office.

Its latest-generation helicopters include the AW101 Merlin and AW159 Wildcat, both currently embarked on the UK's HMS Prince of Wales aircraft carrier.

Leonardo in Yeovil has exported helicopters all over the world for more than eight decades. Customers range from Norway and Canada to Japan and South Korea. The site has 34 customers across 26 countries and supports over 500 aircraft around the globe.



## Gordon Hollins to step down as Somerset County Cricket Club CEO

Somerset County Cricket Club has announced that after nearly four years with the club, Gordon Hollins will be stepping down as Chief Executive in March next year to be closer to family in York.

Prior to joining Somerset, Hollins was ECB Managing Director of County Cricket for over 12 years.

He said: "I feel privileged to have served such a wonderful club as Chief Executive and I am proud of what we have achieved together over the last four years. This has not been an easy decision to make but for me to live a happy life, I need to see more of my family.

"I would like to thank everyone connected with Somerset Cricket – the board, the executive team, support staff, players, colleagues at the Somerset Cricket Foundation, our wonderful commercial partners, and stakeholders, along with the members and supporters who are the heart and soul of the club.



"I will take with me some precious memories of which the team on and off the field, should be proud, including the winning of the YouTube Sports Channel of the Year Award, the return of members and supporters to the ground in 2021, the strengthening of the club's relationship with the foundation and, of course, that tremendous win at Edgbaston in July.

"There is a lot more to do before I leave in March and I am totally committed to completing the Strategy for the next five years, progressing our ground development plan and providing further support to Western Storm over the next few months."



Somerset Chair, Sir Michael Barber, said: "Gordon Hollins has been an outstanding Chief Executive of Somerset.

"Gordon's reputation around cricket is second to none, his dialogue with the ECB has been vital and his advice to the Board has been consistently good. In addition to this, players and staff admire and respect him.

"We will miss him hugely but absolutely respect his reasons for moving on. He leaves a legacy on which his successor will no doubt be able to build. In the meantime, Gordon will be here until next March to ensure a smooth transition into next season."

The search for a successor to Gordon has already begun, with industry recruitment specialists, Brewster McBride leading the process.

## College duo to compete in South West Chef of the Year 2023

Bridgwater & Taunton College (BTC) students Olivia and Izzy returned to college before the start of term to practice dishes they will debut during the semi-finals of South West Student / Apprentice Chef of the Year 2023.

This continues the trend of BTC students demonstrating their high standards and commitment to their chosen profession, as they compete against regional apprentices who are embedded in the industry full-time.

South West Chef of the Year highlights the skills and creativity of the region's professional chefs, including students, home cooks and juniors.

The prestigious judging panel is composed of several leading chefs who operate within the South West, providing their insight, passion and experience to the judging process

Previous winners have continued their careers in award-winning establishments such as The Manor House Hotel in Castle Combe and Lympstone Manor in Exmouth.



Both Olivia and Izzy are stepping out from their comfort zones in what is both a professional and personal challenge that highlights their industry talents.

Within 90 minutes, Olivia and Izzy will prepare a two-course meal to serve a table of three, incorporating specified ingredients whilst utilising their own creativity to impress and surprise the judges.

Rebecca Tomlinson, Course Leader, said: "I am immensely proud of my students for tackling this challenge head-on. Their professionalism and aspiration to leave their mark in the industry is a delight to see, and I'm excited to continue working with them as they progress their studies, learn innovative skills, and reach all-new heights as young chefs.

"A huge thank you to James Jones, our chef lecturer, for his support, expertise and guidance throughout!"

Izzy, professional cookery Level 3 student, added: "I'm very excited to have gotten this opportunity and I'm looking forward to seeing what all the other contestants have been busy creating!"

For more information about our hospitality and catering course offerings and facilities, please visit [www.btc.ac.uk](http://www.btc.ac.uk), call information and guidance on 01278 441234, or go along to a college event.



## Business partner spotlight on Clarke Willmott



### New leadership and strong growth at Clarke Willmott

Taunton law firm Clarke Willmott LLP has reported another year of strong growth – as a new chief executive takes the helm.

Clarke Willmott's recent results reveal sizeable profit growth and revenues above £60 million for the first time in the firm's history. The firm has no bank debt with over £13 million in the bank at year end.

Peter Swinburn recently became CEO of the firm after having served as a managing director.

He said: "As we focus on growing our client relationships, we are also building a 'right size, right shape' business for the future. Our investments in tech are focussed on enabling our people to work effectively and flexibly wherever they are based on any given day.

"We are also transforming our property portfolio to better meet our future needs. We have already moved or redesigned offices in Southampton, Birmingham and Taunton. In 2023 we will move into the new, high spec Bristol office at Assembly C, and plans for a new Cardiff office are also in place."

### Deals accolade

The Taunton corporate team has been recognised for its expertise after being named among the winners for the second year running in a prestigious awards ceremony.

The firm was among the advisers involved in the Management Buyout (MBO) of Fargo Systems, which won Small Deal of the Year (sub £10 million) at the 2023 Insider South West Dealmakers Awards.

Partners Kirill Bingham, Tom Potts and Bethan Evans advised the founder shareholders of Exeter-based Fargo Systems, which develops products for planning and operations in the shipping and road transport sectors.

Clarke Willmott was also among the firms which advised on the transaction named Deal of the Year at the 2022 Insider awards, the sale of Vian Marketing, the holding company of Red Paddle Co., to Myers Business Trust.

Clarke Willmott is a national law firm with office in Birmingham, Bristol, Cardiff, London, Manchester, Southampton and Taunton. It's had a presence in Somerset for more than 125 years and Taunton is the firm's second largest office, with more than 190 staff and 22 partners, known in particular for its expertise in agriculture, debt recovery and private client work.



### Taunton's expanding team and expertise

In recent weeks Clarke Willmott's Taunton office has also welcomed two new partners as well as announcing several promotions.

Philip Whitcomb acts for a large number of farmers and landowners and specialises in advising on succession planning and the structuring of farm businesses. He joins the firm as a partner in the private capital team.

Victoria Morley-Jones has also joined the firm as a partner in the home sales team. She specialises in new home sales, property development, development infrastructure, affordable and social housing and all aspects of residential conveyancing.

Laura Mackain-Bremner and Tom Potts have also been promoted to partner at Clarke Willmott in Taunton.

Laura, who is vice president of Taunton Chamber of Commerce, is a partner in the commercial and private client litigation team. She specialises in commercial disputes, contentious wills, trusts and probate and agricultural property litigation.

Tom is a partner in the growing corporate team. He advises businesses at all stages of the cycle, including on acquisitions, disposals, investments, shareholder agreements and restructures, with a particular specialism in start-ups and investments.

Making the switch from associate to senior associate in Taunton are Carly Blunn, home sales; Harriet Neusinger, private capital; Emma Barry, tax and trusts; Kayleigh Cullis, debt recovery; Irene Richardson, commercial property and Mel Smith, commercial property. Also promoted are Ben Tasker in private capital and James Dunster in property litigation, both making the transition from solicitor to associate.

Please get in contact with 01823 230100 if you have any questions about your personal, family or business legal needs, or visit [www.clarkewillmott.com](http://www.clarkewillmott.com).



## Events and Conferencing

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

### Bath & West Showground

Set in a stunning 240-acre site, the award-winning Bath & West Showground offers businesses the perfect location for their next meeting, conference or event that combines the modern facilities often found in the city with the beautiful Somerset countryside.

As well as adopting new approaches that focus on the wellbeing of their own staff, the Bath & West Showground is taking it one step further and offering event clients the opportunity to create an environment in which their teams can thrive by introducing a new day delegate rate with a focus on workplace wellbeing.



Included in our day delegate rate, choose

from our carefully curated menu that is packed full of health benefits, including mouth-watering fruit platters, immune strengthening superfood salads and mood-boosting energy balls. Of course, if you just want to keep simple with the traditional tea, coffee and cake option, this is available too.

With a selection of rooms available from large conference areas to intimate meeting rooms, we can accommodate a range of events and have a specialised team dedicated to making your event one you won't forget. With part of our team dedicated to catering, we have an on-site restaurant and a list of trusted catering units available for your event.

If you would like to find out more about the Bath & West Showground, you can get in touch with the event team, headed up by MiaList Individual Award finalist, Charly Andrews, on [events@bathandwest.co.uk](mailto:events@bathandwest.co.uk) or call 01749 822217.

**BATH & WEST**  
SHOWGROUND

### Haynes Motor Museum

Party the night away at our marvellously merry Christmas work get-together at Haynes Motor Museum. Join the festive celebrations on Friday, December 1 and Friday, December 15 with our shared party nights and a glitz and glamour theme.

Sip some welcome bubbles while marvelling at the museum's glorious motors. Relish a scrumptious feast and ignite the festivities with drinks from our vibrant bar. Then let loose on the dancefloor and boogie the night away. Celebrate Christmas with us in true Hollywood style!

Included in your party reservation:

- Welcome glass of bubbly
- Access to the museum's famous Red Room
- Two-course festive meal
- Table magician
- Party selfie station
- Casino table
- Rodeo reindeer
- DJ
- Licensed bar\*

\*Additional costs for drinks  
The nights are Hollywood glitz and glamour themed. Black tie and cocktail dresses are optional, however, there will be prizes for the best dressed on the night!

For groups of party-going teams of all sizes, get in touch now to book your spectacular evening.

Want to go bigger? Book a private party for your entire company. Speak to the team at [venue@haynesmuseum.org](mailto:venue@haynesmuseum.org) or 01963 442785.



**HAYNES**  
MOTOR MUSEUM

### Cricket St Thomas Golf Club

Whether it is a short meeting, a morning workshop or an all-day conference, the Horizons Suite at Cricket St Thomas Golf Club is the ideal venue to host your event.

Horizons is a purpose-built conferencing and event facility with a maximum capacity of 80 guests. The suite is a versatile space and can be used for a variety of purposes; that is meetings, corporate lunches, classes and lots more.



Boasting two projectors, free Wi-Fi and ample car parking, Horizons has the

essentials to ensure your day goes as smoothly as possible. Add to that a huge variety of catering options, tailored to your preferences, and you've found yourself the perfect venue for your next meeting or event.

Horizons also makes for a fantastic party venue! Here at Cricket St Thomas Golf Club, we host our Christmas Party Nights in December and they offer businesses an evening of celebration and fun.

This year, our party nights are on Saturday, December 2, Saturday, December 9 and Saturday, December 16. The cost is £39.50 + VAT per person, to include a three-course meal and disco. The collection of local businesses and groups makes for a fantastic atmosphere.

We also offer Christmas lunches and dinners throughout the week in December, and a completely private Christmas party is certainly something we can organise also. Please simply get in touch to discuss your preferences and we will tailor an event just for you.

**CRICKET ST THOMAS**  
GOLF CLUB

### Ferne Animal Sanctuary

Ferne Animal Sanctuary provides a unique event space located in the idyllic setting of the Blackdown Hills. Ferne is home to over 300 resident animals who have needed a second chance in life, alongside the cats and dogs we have for re-homing. Each event held at the sanctuary helps towards the care and upkeep

of these amazing animals.

Ferne can cater for a variety of occasions ranging from birthday parties, baby showers and family get togethers to corporate bookings (including conferences/seminars), hourly/daily room hire and team building days.

Nina's, our onsite café, can provide a variety of catered options that can be tailored to your needs and dietary requirements. Free onsite parking available.

One recent reviewer said: "The event space is suitable for a multitude of events and can be changed to suit your needs. There is plenty of parking available and the shortbread was delicious! It also feels great knowing

you're helping a local charity."

Escape the office with one of our team-building days. In the morning explore the sanctuary with a behind the scenes tour and in the afternoon, enjoy a buffet lunch and a host of engaging and creative workshops held within idyllically located conference space.

Our team-building days provide the perfect blend of engaging workshops and nature-based activities, all with a strong emphasis on mental health and strengthening the camaraderie among team members.

To ensure an exceptional experience, we have partnered with the finest local artists and organisers, tailoring a bespoke team-building package that suits your preferences.

**FERNE**  
ANIMAL SANCTUARY



## St Audries Park

Set within 100 acres of inspirational grounds and boasting a glorious country manor house, St Audries Park is an easily accessible, secluded backdrop that offers corporate events, ticketed social dinners and Christmas parties.

With over 30 years of experience hosting events from as few as 30 delegates to as many as 250 depending on your event type, our professional team will be able to create a corporate event that suits your business needs. Whether that be small or large conferences, in-house



or industry award ceremonies, brunch or dinner meetings, private dinners, photoshoots or filming for product

launches, corporate fun days, team building activity days, training days, or similar.

Our facilities provide everything you need to create your perfect away day including internal and external space for team building activities, a dining room, two fully stocked bars, evening reception and party space if required, and a range of multi-purpose reception rooms, from smaller breakouts to conferences for up to 120 delegates.

We have in-house catering specialising in a wide range of food offerings from simple buffets to fine dining, and our Head Chef has created a fantastic menu that can be tailored to create a bespoke offering especially for your event. This includes accommodating allergies, intolerances, and dietary requirements.

If you would like to arrange an appointment to tour our venue or would like to know more information about hosting your event in our country house, then we will be more than happy to assist with a personalised quote for your event requirements – enquiries@countryhouseweddings.co.uk.



## Somerset Supply Chain launched to help local businesses benefit from town deal opportunities

Local businesses are being encouraged to register on a new Somerset Supply Chain website to ensure they are first in line to find out about contracts arising from a £23.6 million pot of funding to revitalise Glastonbury.

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

Somerset Chamber of Commerce is working in partnership with the Glastonbury Town Deal team within Somerset Council to help match local businesses to work opportunities through the programme and has launched the Somerset Supply Chain website as a single access point for those keen to bid for contracts.

Emma Rawlings, Chief Executive of Somerset Chamber of Commerce, said: "This is a once-in-a-generation opportunity for local businesses to get involved with a wide range of exciting projects which will bring a massive economic and wellbeing boost to the people of Glastonbury and the wider area.

"By registering on the new Somerset Supply Chain website we can ensure their capabilities are matched to upcoming tenders for work through

the town deal funding initiative, making it easier for businesses to win work and for contractors to find firms with the skills they need."

In total, 11 projects have been approved by Government and are at different stages of the planning and design process.

The projects include the regeneration of Bailey's Buildings, the creation of a Glastonbury Enterprise and Innovation Hub at Beckery House, the regeneration of Red Brick Building C to establish a skills and creative space called The Life Factory, investment in renewable energy generation and the refurbishment of the Sports Hub.

The Robert Richards Initiative will bring together education and training, green infrastructure and wellbeing through a website and targeted investment, while visitors to the town will also be welcomed with an upgraded Glastonbury Abbey Piazza.

In addition, a new educational visitor destination will be created at St Brigid's Chapel and Field, a Glastonbury Food and Regenerative Farming Centre will be set up, and a new health and wellbeing centre will be created in St Dunstan's House next to the town hall.



### Somerset Supply Chain

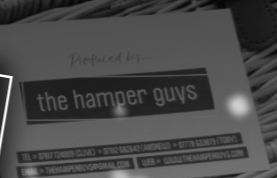
Dr Lynne Sedgmore, Chair of the Glastonbury Town Deal Board, said: "We're starting to see some real, tangible progress with the Glastonbury Town Deal projects so would encourage businesses to register on the Somerset Supply Chain website to find out how to get involved as a local supplier.

"These are very exciting times for Glastonbury and we're keen to get as many local businesses involved as possible."

The Somerset Supply Chain website can be found at [www.somersetsupplychain.co.uk](http://www.somersetsupplychain.co.uk), while more information about the Glastonbury Town Deal is available at [www.glastonburytowndeal.co.uk](http://www.glastonburytowndeal.co.uk). Alternatively, email [somersetsupplychain@somerset-chamber.co.uk](mailto:somersetsupplychain@somerset-chamber.co.uk).

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the hamper guys  
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## Book your place at Somerset Chamber's AGM

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

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

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

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

This year's AGM will be held at Rumwell Farm Shop & Restaurant, Bradford-on-Tone, on Thursday, November 30, from 5.30pm to 9pm.

There will also be the chance to network, find out about the Chamber's plans for the future and have a chat with both Chamber staff and directors.

Places can be booked online via the events section of the Chamber website at [www.somerset-chamber.co.uk](http://www.somerset-chamber.co.uk). Booking is essential and early booking is advised! To find out more about joining the Board of Directors and for an application form, please email [manager@somerset-chamber.co.uk](mailto:manager@somerset-chamber.co.uk).





## New BCC Business Council ushers in partnership era

The British Chambers of Commerce (BCC) has held the inaugural meeting of its new Business Council alongside Cabinet Minister, the Rt Hon Michael Gove and Shadow Chancellor, the Rt Hon Rachel Reeves.

The new body, comprising some of the most prominent British businesses, has been brought together to work in partnership with politicians to drive the future of the economy at this crucial time.

The Business Council will focus on five key challenges and will develop policy proposals that will help transform the future of the UK economy. Its initial recommendations will feed into a Business Manifesto in the new year that will aim to influence political party manifestos ahead of the General Election.

The council will then work to develop follow-up papers - to help the next Government set a business-backed agenda from day one and establish a long-term strategy for growth.

Business Council members will focus on at least one of the challenges. The challenge themes will all be chaired by five experienced business leaders, working with commissions of businesses, experts, Chamber representatives and academics.

They will begin meeting in the coming weeks and will produce their first policy recommendations in early 2024.

BCC President and Business Council Chair, Baroness Martha Lane Fox, said: "Now more than ever, businesses must come together to tackle the challenges facing the UK economy.

"In the face of economic disruption and with a general election looming, our new, national Business Council will help the voice of business to be heard loud and clear by policymakers.

"Together, in partnership with politicians, it will find the answers to the key issues facing the UK economy, so it was great to have Michael Gove and Rachel Reeves join us for our inaugural event today.

"The expertise and experience that our council members bring to the table allows for a powerful and engaging

debate about the problems but also helps to identify the solutions.

"Firms are realistic and understand the financial limitations that the Governments of both today and the next five years will be facing.

"But it's through initiatives like these that we can work collectively to make a real difference for businesses on the frontline of the economy and give them the tools they need to succeed.

"This was an excellent first meeting to act as a springboard in developing practical and pragmatic policies across the five challenge areas."

The Rt Hon Michael Gove said: "The Government is focused on the Prime Minister's missions to grow the economy and halve inflation.

"Levelling up plays a crucial part in that which is why I'm so pleased to be meeting with leading businesses at the BCC Business Council to discuss challenges and opportunities across the country and am very grateful to the British Chamber of Commerce for their excellent work on the Business Council.

"Boosting skills up and down the country and improving digital connectivity are key tenets of spreading opportunity across the UK, and will in, turn, contribute to economic growth."



## Plans well underway for Somerset Skills and Careers Fair

We are in the middle of autumn and whether we are in business or education we can enjoy the changing leaves and endure the shortening evenings.

Beyond this, you could be forgiven for thinking that these two worlds have little in common. Except, the young people currently in education will soon enter the workplace.

In fact, many young people are both in business and education - as apprentices, in part time roles or with their own online businesses.

Somerset Education Business Partnership continues to build connections between Somerset's employers, its education providers and the young people who will provide the county's future skill base.

We are planning the Somerset Skills and Careers Fair welcoming over 1,000 young people and showcasing Somerset Chamber members and businesses from accountancy to photonics.

If you missed that opportunity to identify future talent then keep an eye on [www.somerset-ebp.co.uk/events](http://www.somerset-ebp.co.uk/events) for future events and activities. You could be the one who inspires a young person about their future in your industry!

Better still contact us on [support@somerset-ebp.co.uk](mailto:support@somerset-ebp.co.uk) to discuss your future skills needs and how we can help you make the connections to fulfil these. We have helped businesses from aerospace to web-design to increase the early careers candidate pool.

We look forward to working with you: [andrew.hanson@somerset-ebp.co.uk](mailto:andrew.hanson@somerset-ebp.co.uk) and [Imelda.leetch@somerset-ebp.co.uk](mailto:Imelda.leetch@somerset-ebp.co.uk); or visit [www.somerset-ebp.co.uk/employers](http://www.somerset-ebp.co.uk/employers).



## Business consultancy

### Bartlett Bid Management

When you submit a bid or tender response, your expectation is to win it. To increase your chances, your business can benefit from our background of over 20 years' experience in bid writing, bid management, tender support and business development - to help you stand out from the crowd.

This is how our bid consultancy adds value, by providing bespoke, professional bid writing and tender support services that are tailored to help you achieve your business outcomes across all sectors. Based in Somerset, our growing client list now encompasses all geographical areas across the UK.

We offer:

- Professional bid writing and copywriting
- Bid and tender support
- Total bid and proposals management
- Pre-qualification questionnaire submissions
- Tender quality submissions

- Framework or single event submissions
- Professional case studies
- Grant writing
- Training and workshops

How can we help your business? We know that the fundamental overview of a bid comprises essential components - compliance, case studies and evidence, cultural fit, and continuous improvement and innovation.

Highly skilled in bid writing and bid management our role is to bring these components together by writing, managing and delivering creative, innovative and compelling proposals that will increase your chances of winning tenders.

BBM is actively involved in Somerset Chamber and you can contact us at any time for an introductory chat to see how we can help you win more bids!

Contact Curtis Bartlett on 07889 038296, email [curtis@bbmnow.co.uk](mailto:curtis@bbmnow.co.uk) or take a look at the website [www.bbmnow.co.uk](http://www.bbmnow.co.uk).



### AB Heritage

As we head into late summer, I wanted to take this opportunity to remind those of you who are managing development projects of the importance of planning ahead for your archaeological and heritage consultancy needs, writes MD Andy Buckley.

AB Heritage can help you assess your site's potential archaeological significance and develop a strategy for managing any remains that may be present. We can also help with the planning process and ensure that your project complies with all relevant legislation.

It isn't too early to start planning your 2024 pipeline projects this autumn and winter, and by contacting us now, you can avoid delays to your project schedule.

AB Heritage Limited is a leading provider of archaeological and heritage consultancy services. We have over 14 years of experience, and a team of highly qualified and experienced professionals.

We are committed to providing our clients with the highest quality of service, and to working with them to achieve their goals, helping to protect our heritage while progressing new development for future generations.

We offer: heritage statements, historic building services, archaeology desk based assessments, written schemes of investigation and we design and manage programmes of archaeology for on-site works.

To learn more about our services or to discuss your needs, visit us at [www.abheritage.co.uk](http://www.abheritage.co.uk). We would be happy to answer any questions you have and to help you get the information you need to make informed decisions about your development scheme.



## Total Training Solutions

It is a rainy Tuesday morning and the telephone rings. Excellent news – it is a potential customer. “Ah, good morning, Jack. We notice you have got a two-day supervisor’s development course. It looks great, but could you deliver it over a morning?”

After a sip of tea and a brief pause, I swing into ‘expectations management’ mode! My answer begins, “Yes, however . . .” and the dialogue starts.

After an additional Teams call and a few back-and-forth emails, it transpires that what the customer thought they wanted actually turns out to be something very different. But good news – we can still help

them out with developing the key members of staff in need. This has very much been the bedrock upon which Total Training Solutions has been founded. My job is to help people who know they have a management or skills issue somewhere in the organisation but



are not sure what or where that issue is.

Only later do we start to also wonder why. In this sense, training and development is a journey that we all go on – sometimes formally and sometimes informally.

I include myself in this process. So many subjects I would have never thought interesting back in school and university have become fascinating to me, having since learnt them and then trained in them for customers.

Stock management and financial principles, how to carry out a fair disciplinary, motivating people who don’t want to be motivated and so on. You always think you have heard everything and then the phone rings again . . .



## Ethical Sales Pro

Founded in 2021 by Stuart Martin, we take an ethical approach to client acquisition and retention. Using honesty and integrity as our benchmark we enable our clients to maximise the full potential of their business opportunities.



We believe every member of an organisations’ staff plays a part in making the business appealing to their ideal consumers and keeping them loyal for the long term.

Consequently, we provide consultancy to develop and strengthen your overall sales strategy, taking account of your business vision and mission, so that you remain true to your own values.

Additionally, our training in sales and customer service is individually written to your business needs. Our coaching style of delivery ensures teams are engaged with a blend of theory and practical applications resulting in effective skills in communication, relationship building, presentations and gaining consumer commitment.

Stuart Martin is a former Head of Business with Jaguar and BMW and Franchise Director with Skoda. During this time, he won National Sales Dealer of the Year, Most Improved Retailer of the Year and Retailer Group of the Year.

As a qualified coach, mentor and member of the Institute of Leadership, Stuart offers his strategic and operational services through Ethical Sales Pro either on a retainer basis or single projects. Initial consultations are without fee or obligation.

Call Stuart on 07739 939347 or email: [stuart@ethicalsalespro.com](mailto:stuart@ethicalsalespro.com)



## Legitimate Leadership

According to a recent McKinsey article, 53% of employees in an average organisation are either quitters (10%), disruptors (11%) or mildly disengaged (32%). The impact on productivity and profitability is enormous, and together with challenges in recruitment, this makes leadership a critical factor in ensuring that businesses achieve a talent advantage.



Most employers know they need an employee value proposition (EVP) – including competitive pay, career development pathways, flexible working and wellbeing programmes.

The factor that often gets overlooked is the quality of leadership - the willingness and the ability

of leaders to make a meaningful difference in the lives of their people. In our experience it is true that people leave their boss rather than the business, and conversely, people stay and give of their best for exceptional leaders.

For the last 30 years Legitimate Leadership has helped clients all over the world through a research-based approach and proven leadership practices. Our team of Associates in the UK have or are currently working with Babcock, Salary Finance, DAC Beachcroft and NHS Oxford University Hospitals Trust.

A high-performance culture is only possible when most people in the organisation are giving of their best – leading to improved quality, safety, productivity and profitability metrics and excellence at all levels of the organisation.

Call us to explore how Legitimate Leadership can help you and your business achieve leadership excellence email [joolz@legitimateleadership.com](mailto:joolz@legitimateleadership.com), or telephone 07748 113538.



## Naval Solutions Ltd

You might hear the term “psychological safety” and think it is corporate speak, but this is actually a hard-nosed business strategy we are talking about.

Psychological safety is like a seatbelt for your team’s emotional well-being. It lets them share ideas and voice concerns without worrying about negative fallout.

At Naval Solutions, we are not just about Naval training; we are committed to empowering businesses to innovate and stay safe. One of our standout offerings is consultancy centred on psychological safety.

Why it should be on your radar:

- Innovation - when people feel free to talk, you get a whole heap of ideas that could be the next big thing for your business
- Retention - losing an employee can cost up to £30,000 in recruitment and training. A psychologically safe environment is a retention tool, saving you a lot of money in the long run
- Performance - teams with high levels of psychological safety outperform others, translating into higher revenue and less wasted time



- Safety - in risk-sensitive industries, open communication can spot hazards before they become accidents
- Mental health and sick days - poor mental health costs UK businesses up to £45 billion a year, with an average of 17.9 days lost per employee. Investing in a psychologically safe workspace can reduce stress and absenteeism, saving you a packet

So, we are offering more than just psychological safety consultancy, it is a strategy that directly impacts your bottom line. If you are interested in taking it to the next level – contact us at [enquiries@navalsolutions.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@navalsolutions.co.uk).

## hgkc

hgkc was founded by consultants who brought together years of experience, expertise, and knowledge to help the owners and leaders of small and medium businesses.

We enable our clients to lead with insight, to innovate confidently, especially in these uncertain times, and to build value to achieve the exit they want. We ask questions to inspire thought and understanding of the real challenges at the heart of your business.

Using a library of tools built and collated over more than 10 years, we run workshops to establish client goals, mapping the outcomes that you want to achieve.

hgkc is also well known for roundtables that gather business leaders to discuss relevant topics and the challenges organisations may be facing in areas such as the growth of AI, planning and preparation for exit, the hidden value in IP, to name a few. We also run regular Business Book Clubs for our network of friends, colleagues and clients, reading Simon Sinek, Jim Collins, Brene Braun and many others.

hgkc's advice and guidance helps clients on their journey to reach their North Star. We ask: "Where are you now? Where do you want it to be? And how ready are you for the journey?"

Whether your North Star is to exit your business, to help grow your team and build a positive work culture, or whether you need an innovation strategy to build value, we bring our experience and knowledge to help you overcome your challenges and achieve your goals.



## Growing Vision

As a specialist leadership consultancy, we know so many of our clients struggle to achieve high performance. They are continually pulled away to deal with people issues, which other leaders and managers struggle to deal with.

They know they need to support managers with the right tools; to

have better conversations, to focus on what is important rather than urgent, or how to delegate. The reality is they just do not have the time.

That is why our clients trust Growing Vision to deliver key behavioural change in their managers, delivered through our flagship Confident Leader Programme. Over an average of just three contact days, our delegates report a 55% improvement in performance on average. That is an improvement that benefits everyone year on year.

What our clients say: "I joined John's Confident Leader Programme on the recommendation of a teammate. Within one week, it was worth it. I was able to immediately implement his guidance. His delivery, credibility and overall quality have shone

through, and I am looking forward to the rest of the programme!"

On our last 100 coaching sessions, 100% said it helped them resolve their challenges. We have been delivering leadership programmes for over 20 years and are accredited with the Institute of Leadership. All of our coaches are accredited and in supervision.

Contact John now to start your own, or a colleague's, journey 'to become the leader others choose to follow'. Contact John Garland on 07811 372038, email [John@growingvision.com](mailto:John@growingvision.com) or visit the website [www.growingvision.com](http://www.growingvision.com).



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

Sector focus: manufacturing, engineering and producing

Feature: skills and training

Deadline: November 15



## Cosmic

Cosmic is a social enterprise on a mission to empower individuals, businesses and communities through digital. We specialise in digital skills training, business consultancy, IT technical support and website development. Our core values revolve around people, planet, purpose and aim to foster a helpful community of digital leaders.

Digital inclusion is the heartbeat of everything we do. In today's world, digital proficiency is the linchpin to success. Whether you are a

business leader shaping the future, an individual striving for career advancement, or a community confronting its unique challenges, we are here for you.

Our commitment to digital inclusion spans all ages and abilities. For leaders, mastering digital technologies leads to better decisions, impact, growth and productivity. For career seekers, it's the key to unlocking new opportunities. And for those facing physical, mental, or social challenges, it's a lifeline that fosters connection and progress.

Cosmic does not just provide solutions; we provide inspiration. Our range of services and training is designed to help you identify your digital needs and achieve your ambitions. We're here to boost your confidence, enhance your trust in technology and ensure your journey is safe, responsible and secure.

Upgrade your future with Cosmic, where we can transform your challenges into opportunities, one click at a time.



## HINKLEY UPDATE

### Check out the latest progress at Hinkley Point C with a new video tour



Hinkley Point C has released a new film showing progress at the new nuclear power station in Somerset.

The video shows how 10,000 workers a day are approaching the next major engineering feat, when Big Carl will lift the 245-tonne steel dome to close the first reactor building.

The tour goes out several miles under the seabed to see the final stages in the completion of the cooling water intakes. It also shows work on the 50m tall turbine hall, which will house the world's largest Arabelle turbine. Work to fit the miles of cables, pipes and equipment is also well underway.

More than £5bn has been spent with companies across the South West and 3,700 British companies have contracts with the project.

The power station will provide six million homes with reliable, low-carbon energy, and will be vital in helping Britain achieve net zero and stronger energy security.

You can watch the film on Hinkley Point C's dedicated YouTube channel.



▲ The 245-tonne steel dome will be lifted onto the top of the first reactor building this year.



◀ In the tunnels, work is underway to make the breakthrough connection between the miles of tunnels with the intake and outtake cooling water heads.

## Summer barbecue at Rumwell Farm Shop and Restaurant, Bradford-on-Tone



▲ From left, Fran Deely, Kelly Criddle and Tyler Whitehouse of L&F Training Ltd.



▲ Richard Oliver (left) of Impact Design and Marketing with Sandra and Bill Wilson of Ylem.



▲ Kayleigh Oaten of Albert Goodman (centre) with Tasha Astill and Dominic Cowie of Bridgwater & Taunton College.



▲ Andy Hirst of bibic (left), Scott Jenkins of Somerset Chamber of Commerce and Peter Quintana of hgkc.



▲ Ben Collard of Air-Seal Products (left) and Simon Morris of Stephens Scown.



▲ Emma Rawlings, Chief Executive of Somerset Chamber of Commerce (centre) with Bill and Sue Brand of It's in the Bag Cancer Support.



▲ From left, Nigel Pearce of The Pearce Practice, Jonathan Rigley of Hawksmoor Investment Management and Dave Crew of Weston College.



▲ Stuart Wright (left) of Somerset Jobs and Ritchie Cridge of Connectable.



▲ Ben Grave of Mark One Consultants (left) and Nick Porter of Barclays.



▲ Hollie Mills of Mercure Bridgwater Hotel (left) and Sally Maidment of Design Bean.

**Somerset Chamber of Commerce**

“Being a member of the Chamber has given us access to exclusive member discounts and benefits, such as healthcare plans, HR, legal, tax and health and safety advice. It also provides us with opportunities to promote our business to other members at networking events and through various publications.

**DAN'S ENGINEERING**  
Bridgwater

**01823 444924**  
[somerset-chamber.co.uk](http://somerset-chamber.co.uk)

[f](#) [t](#) [in](#) [@](#)

## Construction Connections at Glastonbury Town Hall

▲ Guest speakers from Dowlas Property Group Matt Tyler and Gemma Day with Emma Rawlings (right) of Somerset Chamber of Commerce.





Bank of England annual update at Taunton Racecourse



▲ From left are Harriet Del Rey and Ellie Lister of Lendology CIC, Emma Rawlings of Somerset Chamber of Commerce and Olena Kofan of Lendology CIC.



▲ From left are Sarah Edwards of Albert Goodman, Sarah Warren of Everys and Jon Stocker of Milsted Langdon.



▲ From left, Richard Tempamy of Ponsford Insurance Services, Ben Grave of Mark One Consultants, Ben Trickey of Summerfield Developments and Mike Cahill of Albert Goodman.



▲ Olena Kofan (left) of Lendology CIC and Sally Williams of SJM Training Consultants Ltd.



▲ From left, Chris Kimmins of CETSAT, Derek Smart of Amberley Management Selection, Stuart Martin of Ethical Sales Pro and David Baum of Begbies Traynor.



▲ Laura Mackain-Bremner (left) and Richard Holt of Taunton Chamber of Commerce and Nigel Harris of Frome Chamber of Commerce.



▲ Christine Cleaves (left) and Laura Wolfers of Street Chamber of Commerce and Jo Reynolds of Yeovil and District Chamber of Commerce.

▼ Cllr David Woan of Somerset Council and Diogo Rodrigues of Bridgwater Chamber of Commerce.



▲ Emma Rawlings of Somerset Chamber of Commerce (left) and Sue Shillabeer of Weston-super-Mare Chamber of Commerce.

### Chambers coming together for a better Somerset at Monk's Yard, near Ilminster

Somerset Chamber of Commerce worked in partnership with Somerset Council to bring together the county's town chambers to help the council shape future economic policy to maximise support and opportunities for local businesses. All town chambers were invited to the session to give an insight into the challenges that businesses were facing, from area specific businesses to high street retailers.

### Workshop with Somerset Council – energy efficiency for business

Wednesday  
**18 OCT**

In association with



Ashley Webber of Balanced Energy and Laura Jensen, Climate Business Liaison Officer, Somerset Council, will lead the workshop, helping businesses to optimise energy use and reduce energy costs. He will give practical tips for reducing energy use and examples of how other Somerset businesses have reduced their energy costs.

**Time:** 10am – 12 noon at County Hall, Taunton  
**Cost:** £12.50 plus VAT

### Let's network over breakfast

Tuesday  
**31 OCT**

Sponsored by



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 Hornsbury Mill, Chard  
**Cost:** £19.99 plus VAT

### Workshop with Somerset Council – the circular economy

Wednesday  
**1 NOV**

In association with



Led by Philippa Roberts of Binit, this interactive workshop will give businesses an understanding of the circular economy and the economic opportunities it offers. Binit is a tech-led waste and recycling broker, providing smart, responsive service using data, analytics and specialist network.

**Time:** 10am – 12 noon  
at Yeovil Innovation Centre, Yeovil  
**Cost:** £12.50 plus VAT

### Meet the Neighbours – Devon

Thursday  
**2 NOV**

Sponsored by



Join us for a two-course lunch and the chance to network with businesses from across the border in Devon. Organised in partnership with Plymouth & Devon Chamber of Commerce, this is the perfect opportunity to expand your business contacts, find new clients and branch out into a neighbouring county.

**Time:** 12.30pm – 2.30pm at Exeter Golf and Country Club  
**Cost:** £36.50 plus VAT members;  
£39.50 plus VAT non-members

### Afternoon tea and networking

Thursday  
**16 NOV**

Sponsored by



This will be our first afternoon tea for all and will be held in the stunning location of St Audries Park, in West Quantoxhead, between Bridgwater and Williton. It will be the perfect opportunity to see the facilities offered at the venue, which is now branching out into corporate hospitality, as well as weddings, while also enjoying networking with familiar faces and new contacts.

**Time:** 2pm – 4pm at St Audries Park, West Quantoxhead  
**Cost:** £28.75 plus VAT members;  
£33.75 plus VAT non-members

### Somerset Chamber Annual General Meeting

Thursday  
**30 NOV**

In association with



Join the Somerset Chamber board of directors and staff for the annual general meeting to find out more about the Chamber's activities over the last year and to gain an insight into plans for the next 12 months. The evening will include presentations and the election or re-election of directors.

**Time:** 5.30pm – 9pm at Rumwell Farm Shop & Restaurant, Bradford-on-Tone  
**Cost:** £29.50 plus VAT

Welcome to our newest members of Somerset Chamber.

#### Approach Training for Safety

Health and safety, on road training

Elevate your fleet's performance with Approach Training for Safety! Our expert instructors deliver exceptional professional training for company car drivers, trailer towing, and motorcyclists, on-road and in class. Benefit from real-time feedback reduced collision costs, enhanced safety, and improve your drivers' and riders' skills and efficiency.

**James Richards 01935 804777**  
[james@teamapproach.co.uk](mailto:james@teamapproach.co.uk)

#### Aspect3Sixty Limited

Construction and planning

Aspect3Sixty provides work at height, inspection, and confined space entry services to numerous sectors of industry including, rail, power generation, oil and gas, and facilities management companies both throughout the South West and across the UK.

**Richard Milton 07855 425472**  
[richie@aspect3sixty.com](mailto:richie@aspect3sixty.com)  
[www.aspect3sixty.com](http://www.aspect3sixty.com)

#### Auditel

Cost, procurement and carbon solutions

I help businesses in two ways. One is helping businesses understand what carbon means for them, and how to tackle the subject. The second is by reviewing and delivering cost savings on their indirect spend.

**Nick Scull 01935 311030 / 07501 084569**  
[nick.scull@auditel.co.uk](mailto:nick.scull@auditel.co.uk)  
[www.auditel.co.uk](http://www.auditel.co.uk)

#### Auxilium HR Solutions Ltd

HR services

Our brand of HR is not beige! We offer complete HR solutions with impact for SME businesses providing HR problem solving, recruitment and training services. We are a team of experienced HR consultants who integrate and become part of your team.

**Ben Malik 03305 519986**  
[hello@auxiliumhr.co.uk](mailto:hello@auxiliumhr.co.uk)  
[www.auxiliumhr.co.uk](http://www.auxiliumhr.co.uk)

#### B Christmas Consultancy

Food and drink; manufacturing

Compliance support service for the food manufacturing industry. Assisting with continuous improvement and maintenance of food/feed safety management systems, to successfully comply with food safety accreditations and legislation. Support with HACCP, internal and hygiene audits, and quality management systems.

**Becky Christmas 07376 467639**  
[becky@bchristmasconsultancy.co.uk](mailto:becky@bchristmasconsultancy.co.uk)

#### Gather Technology

IT

Gather Technology is an IT firm which offers bespoke IT services to UK businesses. Ranging from managed solutions, software development, cyber security and infrastructure projects our dedicated team of experts ensure our customers have IT solutions that suit their needs.

**Sarah Emmerson 020 3880 9864**  
[Help@gather.tech](mailto:Help@gather.tech)  
[www.gather.tech](http://www.gather.tech)

#### Greengage Garden Solutions Ltd

Landscaping and garden design

We are a very customer focused, friendly company. We offer an in-house design, landscape and build team, with many years of collective experience working throughout our beautiful Somerset county. Our five-star Google reviews speak for themselves.

**Jude Eastick 01458 224576**  
[enquiries@greengage.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@greengage.org.uk)  
[www.greengage.org.uk](http://www.greengage.org.uk)

#### Hale Events Ltd

Trade show organisers

Organisers of early season gift, and food and drink trade shows, in South West England. Attracting buyers from independent, multiple-site, and multi-channel businesses. Helping buyers compare offerings from suppliers, network with colleagues, and stock up for the tourism season ahead.

**Mike Anderson 01934 733433**  
[mail@hale-events.com](mailto:mail@hale-events.com)  
[www.hale-events.com](http://www.hale-events.com)

\*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.

**Hollam Solicitors****Legal services**

Hollam Solicitors is a West Somerset firm offering a very personal and friendly service while providing top legal advice. Our services include wills, lasting powers of attorney, probate, family law, divorce, children matters. We provide modern, and affordable legal services.

**Deborah Schneider 01984 390037**  
**info@hollamsolicitors.co.uk**  
**www.hollamsolicitors.co.uk**

**ONYX Business Parks****Commercial property**

Onyx Business Parks take pride in shaping the future of commercial, multifunctional spaces. Our commitment to innovation, flexibility, and community is unrivalled. With each project, we're not just constructing buildings; we're crafting thriving environments where businesses flourish.

**Charles Berry 07790 855668**  
**spaces@onyxbusinessparks.com**  
**www.onyxbusinessparks.com**

**Optimise Workplace Wellbeing Ltd****Health and wellbeing**

We look at the challenges your organisation may have around wellbeing, and help you to find the best, most suitable options to remedy this. We then work with you collaboratively to implement these solutions. We care, because you do.

**Jo Ashton 07912 446261**  
**hello@optimiseworkplacewellbeing.co.uk**  
**www.optimiseworkplacewellbeing.co.uk**

**Reccobiz****Marketing and networking**

Reccobiz is a membership community, focused on growing our businesses and supporting our fellow members grow theirs. We are passionate about the small business community, we support growth through our many initiatives, including our social media platform, networking, podcasts, workshops.

**Camilla Medcalf 0118 492 414**  
**info@reccobiz.co.uk**  
**www.reccobiz.co.uk**

**Royal Ashton Town House****Hotel**

Our beautiful 37-roomed, room-only town house located by the train station offers convenient accommodation for travellers and visitors, making it an ideal choice for those looking to explore the area or attend events in nearby locations.

**Meghan Griffiths 01823 272456**  
**ashton@pineappletownhouses.com**  
**www.royalashton.co.uk**

**Seen Creative & Digital Marketing Somerset****Creative and digital marketing**

Empowering brands and business, our creative design and digital marketing agency offers innovative, dynamic solutions to amplify your online presence. At the forefront of industry trends, we manage artistry with strategy to cultivate your success and build lasting digital impressions.

**Sean Stinchcombe 07930 099959**  
**info@be-seen-somerset.co.uk**  
**www.be-seen-somerset.co.uk**

**Shreeve Care Services Ltd****Healthcare**

Shreeve Care Services work with care providers to develop their business by looking at different opportunities. We provide an advice service to clients looking for care for their loved ones and can help with attendance allowance and power of attorney.

**Janet Shreeve 07827 324590**  
**janet.shreeve@shreevecare.com**  
**www.shreevecare.com**

**South West cyber resilience centre****IT**

We support small businesses and charities with cyber resilience. We are police-owned, and Home Office-funded, which means that we do not need to make money from our members. We help with initial guidance, regular updates on scams to avoid, and much more.

**Mark Moore**  
**enquiries@swcrc.co.uk**  
**www.swcrc.co.uk**

**Spots Social Media Management****Social media management/marketing/graphic design**

Providing services to get you spotted, Spots manages your brand awareness and social presence, whilst driving business growth and sales. We manage social media so that you can manage your business, offering guaranteed results through creative campaigns and social strategies.

**Hannah Kaye 01278 282332**  
**hello@spotsocials.co.uk**  
**www.spotsocials.co.uk**

**St Audries Park****Hospitality**

Picture perfect manor house set in a serene and tranquil deer park. Private dining, meetings, and corporate days are available along with overnight accommodation for up to 115 guests in the main house and four cottages with the 40-acre estate.

**Aly Claydon-Mills 07827 039354**  
**Alyson.claydon@countryhouseweddings.co.uk**  
**www.audries-park.co.uk**

**Teklagraf Limited****Label manufacturing**

We manufacture labels and placards for very tough environments. Customers include aerospace, defence and heavy industry. Established in 1999, we work with the biggest names in aerospace and defence, shipping all over the world - ISO 9001 and 14001 certified.

**Ben Whitwell 01934 645485**  
**sales@teklagraf.co.uk**  
**www.teklagraf.co.uk**

**The Levels Financial Ltd****Mortgage and insurance protection**

The Levels Financial was established in 2019 and are South West based. We pride ourselves on a high level of outstanding service regarding mortgage and protection advice with glowing five-star reviews.

**Connor Fitzgerald 01458 772040**  
**admin@thelevelsfinancial.co.uk**  
**www.thelevelsfinancial.co.uk**

**Total Training Solutions SW Ltd.****Training, learning, and development**

We are a bespoke training, learning, and development business based in the Somerset and Bristol area. We specialise in delivering great training courses for other businesses and organisations to help them improve, such as recruitment, time management, leadership and more.

**0117 2141 395**  
**jack@ttsweb.co.uk**  
**www.ttsweb.co.uk**

**W Gadsby & Son****Wholesale and imports**

Established in 1864, Gadsby is a sixth-generation family business. From its roots on the Somerset Levels it has evolved to be a global business. It supplies gift packaging, hampers and retail displays to customers across the retail sector.

**Matt Wales, Sales Manager 01278 437123**  
**sales@gadsby.co.uk**  
**www.gadsby.co.uk**

**West Country Women Awards CIC****Events, marketing, networking**

West Country Women Awards CIC is an organisation that recognises and celebrates outstanding women in the West Country region. It aims to empower and inspire women by highlighting their achievements in various fields, fostering a supportive community for all.

**Tess Stuber / Alexis Bowater**  
**07824 388079 / 07786 362454**  
**contact@westcountrywomenawards.co.uk**  
**www.westcountrywomenawards.co.uk**

**Wet and High Adventures Ltd****Outdoor adventure and educational and leisure courses**

We are based in Somerset but operate throughout the UK providing courses and experiences to everyone and anyone. Courses include: teaching, assessing, end point assessment, leadership and management, first aid, lifeguard, camping, walking, climbing, paddle boarding, mental health and safeguarding.

**Gail Cornish 07973 147655**  
**info@wetandhigh.co.uk**  
**www.wetandhigh.co.uk**

## 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 Langport area businesses

The Somerset Chamber's membership team will be in Langport on Tuesday, November 21, 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 The Bridge Bakery and Canteen from 9am to 12 noon and have issued an open invitation to all businesses from Langport 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).

## The importance of training agreements for employers

As a member of Somerset Chamber, businesses automatically receive membership of Quest, a national British Chambers of Commerce scheme which offers Chamber members access to advice on HR, legal, health and safety, tax and VAT at no additional cost to their annual membership fee.

Here, the Quest experts look at the implications for employers of increasing mental health issues in the construction sector.



Employers need to be aware of investing in employee training costs and how to ensure employees remain in the company for a reasonable period of time to ensure the company benefit from its investment.

To develop your business, it is important to invest in your employees training. Staff will gain experience, qualifications, and skills. Both the employer and employee will benefit from the training.

Employers should be mindful that such an investment in their staff needs to be protected by having an effective training agreement. Training employees can be a costly investment. The risk is if you fail to provide a training agreement and the employee leaves shortly after completing the training. Your loss could be your competitor's gain!

So, what is a training agreement and how will it protect the employer?

The training agreement is a contract between the employer and employee defining the terms on which the training is given to the employee. A training agreement should state the cost of the training and who will be paying for the training.

Where the employer contributes to the cost of the training the agreement will provide an agreed repayment plan in the event the employee was to leave after completing the training. Such repayments should be made on a sliding scale.

Basically, the longer the employee remains with the employer the less is repaid. The contract should be accompanied by a right to deduct money from the final salary of the employee.



A training agreement will be a valuable to protect your business investment in your staff. Smaller employers will be protected as it will enable them to recover the money employee and reinvest it back into the business.

Without a training agreement the employer will not be able to recover training costs. Making a deduction from an employee's wage without the employees' consent will result in an Employment Tribunal Claim for unlawful deduction of wages.

The training agreement must be drafted reasonably to avoid the repayments being interpreted as penalty clauses. Its purpose is to protect your investment in training but not to retrain staff from leaving the business. The repayment scale must be proportional. The longer the employer stays with you the less the loss will be you as a business. Employee can present a claim to an Employment Tribunal to have the training contract assessed for its enforceability.

Where attendance on a training course is a contractual requirement in connection with the worker employment. Any charge made by either a deduction or payment will reduce National Minimum Wage pay since the amount is an expense incurred in carrying out the employment.

A carefully drafted training agreement will protect your investment in your employee and keep you out of the Employment Tribunal. Quest can assist you in producing training agreements and other HR documents. Should you wish to discuss any employment issue please contact the Quest Advice Line.



## Rags to riches - GTE Training Academy Managing Director reveals his story to motivate others

Kevin Browning, Managing Director of Global Tunnelling Experts and GTE Training Academy based in North Somerset, has unveiled his life story in an autobiography he hopes will motivate others to aim high when it comes to business.

From working as a shepherd on the Falkland Islands to becoming a respected and successful businessman, Kevin Browning reveals his extraordinary rags to riches story in his book *No Ordinary Man*.

The book covers everything from his loveless abusive childhood, the invasion of his homeland and being held in captivity as a civilian prisoner of war, to how he became a hugely respected industry leader.

Kevin takes his readers on a journey from humble beginnings in the Falkland Islands to the present day working and living in the UK. In his book he talks about the past and the future and includes boardroom



challenges, tough negotiations and tales of doing business around the globe.

He said: "I came from a tough upbringing and have done pretty well for myself, despite the odds being stacked against me. My main purpose for writing the book was to show people that if you're not happy with the cards you're dealt with you can

change them and you don't have to let your past rule who you are today.

"It's also about grabbing opportunities and demonstrating how hard work and determination really can pay off. It shows that even those of us who had limited education, no money and little direction, can become successful.

"If my story can motivate just one person to move on from a troubled past, or inspire someone without much of an academic education to go on to better their life, it will have been worth it. I hope it also instils confidence."

*No Ordinary Man* also reveals how, as a member of the Leaders' Council, Kevin is pushing for change in employment to allow experience and ability to overrule academic qualifications and provide opportunities for those who may otherwise be discounted in the employment selection process.

*No Ordinary Man* is available from Amazon price £9.99.

## HPC Community Fund gives £220,000 boost to Bridgwater Baptist Church

Bridgwater Baptist Church is using a £220,000 grant from the Hinkley Point C (HPC) Community Fund, managed by Somerset Community Foundation (SCF), to power their community-focused 'Energise' project.

The exciting scheme has involved reimagining unused space in the church and transforming it into a hub for local people and organisations to work together. A lift has also been installed to provide everyone access to the new areas, from the basement café to the upper-level offices.

The renovation also includes turning derelict storage rooms into areas that street pastors can use as a base while serving the community. Meanwhile, downstairs the new wellbeing café is connecting mental health organisations like Mind in Somerset with people who need support and counselling.

Amelia Thompson, Senior Programmes Manager at Somerset Community Foundation said: "The Energise project

is helping create social connections in the community by bringing people together. While the offices offer affordable space for start-ups and other organisations, the wellbeing café supports people's mental health in a safe and welcoming environment.

"Funding projects like Energise enables organisations to create long-lasting community-led services to people across the area. This speaks to the priorities of the HPC Community Fund."

Andrew Cockcroft, Senior Stakeholder Relations Manager at Hinkley Point C, said: "The church is an important asset in our local area, and we're thrilled that this grant is helping to breathe new life into it. This is another great example of the HPC Community Fund helping to improve lives of people living locally."

The HPC Community Fund includes the Small Grants Programme which awards grants of up to £20,000, and the Open Grants Programme, for larger applications.



The funding is for groups working in local communities to address changes to people's quality of life or to make the most of the opportunities created by Hinkley Point C. Visit [www.hpcfunds.co.uk](http://www.hpcfunds.co.uk) for more details.

The HPC Community Fund is part of a wider commitment of funding provided by EDF through Section 106 agreements. Hundreds of projects have benefitted so far, and in total almost £15.5 million in grants have been awarded to date, including £8.34 million from the fund managed by SCF.



## C&D South West keeps it in the family with latest promotion

Somerset-based haulage company C&D South West has promoted Charles 'Sam' Hammond to Operations Director after seven years of working in the family business.

C&D has been operating for over 35 years and are now under the third generation of leadership with siblings Lorna, Cayla and Sam all working for the family business.

Working as Fleet and Compliance Manager for the past few years, Sam joined the Board of Directors in August.

Over the years, Sam has had numerous roles in the business spanning warehouse operative, operations and planning, warehouse management and, most recently, setting up a new Martock site.

The Martock depot now allows C&D to offer clients a range of services, including pallet storage and warehousing services, including container receipt, palletisation, product processing, order fulfilment

and pick and pack.

C&D Managing Director, and Sister to Sam, Lorna Hammond said Sam had a full understanding of the day-to-day operations across the entire business, so it was the perfect time for him to take on the new role.

She added: "Sam is wholly deserving of his recent promotion, not only demonstrating his commitment to the success of the business, but also the team that we employ. This is a fantastic milestone for C&D, and for us as a family, as I now get to work alongside my Brother in this capacity and focus on ensuring the future is truly bright."

Lorna has been Managing Director since 2019, taking on the role from her father, Charles Darren Hammond. During this time, she has ensured that C&D has taken numerous strides to become a sustainable, innovative, and successful business in Somerset.

Sam: "We are a people company, family-owned with many long-standing



employees, I have demonstrated my commitment to the business and its success during the years I have worked across different roles, and now look forward to putting all of my learning into practice in my new role as Operations Director."

C&D was founded in 1987 and has been providing quality distribution to clients for over 35 years from its base in Chard, Somerset.

For more information about C&D South West, please visit [www.cdsw.co.uk](http://www.cdsw.co.uk)

## Continued growth leads to further recruitment for law firm Stone King and the opening of a new office

Bath-headquartered Stone King continues to expand with new recruits in its business property, construction, immigration and international and cross-border teams.

In addition, the firm has opened an office in Manchester which, along with its Leeds office, will support clients in the north.

Senior associate Katie Shire has joined the business property team in Bath, while the firm's construction team has been boosted by solicitor Duncan Ho in Cambridge and in Bath, paralegal Olivia Howard and legal assistant Eve Souter.

The international and cross-border team has welcomed paralegal Shirain Zund who is based in Bath, while apprentice paralegal Freya Newman has joined Stone King's immigration team in Cambridge.

Head of Immigration Team and head of Faith Sector, Julie Moktadir, said: "We act for both business and individual clients with our immigration work much in demand. We are delighted to welcome Freya to the team and support her with her legal career."

Head of Construction Team, Sean Randall-Morris, said the new recruits and promotion reflected the firm's increased work in this area: "Our expanded team can help ensure construction projects are delivered on time and on budget, and we pride ourselves on managing potential issues before they arise saving time and money."



▲ Katie Shire. ▲ Olivia Howard. ▲ Shirain Zund

Daniel Harris, Head of International and Cross-border, added: "Clients come to Stone King because they know they will get expert legal advice and we are delighted to welcome Shirain to support with that."

Stone King has offices in Bath, Birmingham, Cambridge, Leeds, London and Manchester.

Chair Alison Allen said the new recruits reflected Stone King's commitment to clients: "I am delighted to welcome all our new joiners to the firm and look forward to supporting them in successful legal careers."

## PKF Francis Clark rated one of UK's Best Workplaces in Consulting and Professional Services

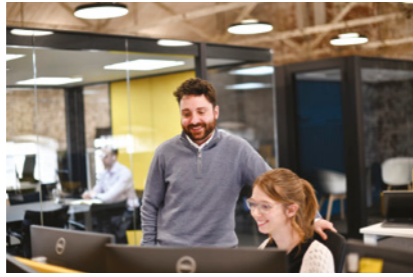
PKF Francis Clark has been recognised as a leading employer on a new list of the UK's Best Workplaces in Consulting & Professional Services, launched today by Great Place to Work UK.

A focus on wellbeing, professional development and a friendly, supportive culture are among the strengths praised by colleagues at the chartered accountancy firm in an anonymous survey on which the list is based.

Amy Taylor, chief people officer at PKF Francis Clark, said: "Our success as a firm depends on recruiting and retaining the best people to deliver an outstanding service to our clients, so it's very pleasing to receive this recognition.

"Our place on this prestigious list of the UK's Best Workplaces in Consulting and Professional Services is driven by the holistic feedback colleagues have shared with Great Place to Work UK about their experiences of working here.

"While that's hugely satisfying, we're always listening to our people and



looking at what more we can do to make PKF Francis Clark an even better place to work."

With over 900 members of staff, PKF Francis Clark is highlighted as a top achiever in the large employer category of the Best Workplaces in Consulting and Professional Services list, created using anonymous feedback from employees of firms in a diverse range of knowledge-intensive sectors, from legal services to management consultancy, engineering, marketing and advertising.

Great Place To Work UK asked employees to comment on how their company supports their work-



life balance, sense of fulfilment, job satisfaction, psychological safety and financial security. Evaluations of the survey results also included an assessment of how well organisations deliver consistency of their employee experience across all departments and seniority levels.

Anonymous comments from PKF Francis Clark colleagues included: "All staff, including senior management, are kind and welcoming, regardless of your level in the organisation. I feel managers are genuinely interested in helping me to perform at my best professionally and that they genuinely care about me as a person."

Since being certified as a Great Place to Work, PKF Francis Clark has been ranked among the UK's Best Workplaces, Best Workplaces for Wellbeing and Best Workplaces for Women.

## Are you going to the ball?

Every two years It's in the Bag holds its ball to thank volunteers, followers and supporters for helping the charity to continue to support men in the South West with Testicular Cancer. The Testicular Ball Extraordinaire is a night of celebration of everything that is It's in the Bag.

Many charities hold balls to raise money but It's in the Bag have mixed it up a bit and now hold an event that volunteers can enjoy to showcase what has been achieved in the past two years. This year the theme is Steampunk and ball-goers will be treated to a welcome drink, two-course dinner, live music, premier of new It's in the Bag Video and Golden Pants Awards.

The ball takes place on Saturday, October 28 at The Elmgrove Centre in Redland, Bristol. More information is available on the website [www.itsinthebag.org.uk](http://www.itsinthebag.org.uk).

## RK Bell Projects Ltd Acquires majority shares of GWorks Surfacing Ltd

RK Bell Projects Ltd has successfully secured the majority shareholding in local successful Southwest Surfacing Business, GWorks Surfacing Ltd. The acquisition allows GWorks Surfacing to continue trading following the administration of GWorks Construction Ltd.

The RK Bell Group is a third-generation family run business founded in 1941, suppliers of civil engineering and surfacing throughout the South West of England and Wales.

Nick Bell, Managing Director of the RK Bell Group, said: "I am incredibly pleased to announce this acquisition. We have secured employment for the current staff and will continue to deliver a high-level professional service to the existing client base."

Nick also acknowledged and thanked suppliers for their ongoing support as it continued to be "business as usual" for GWorks Surfacing Ltd alongside The RK Bell Group.

The acquisition of the majority shareholding in GWorks Surfacing Ltd adds to the extensive remit of RK Bell Projects Ltd and allows both to nurture and build current and new working relationships. It also ensures the security of all jobs and contracts for GWorks Surfacing moving forward.

Michael Watkins, Managing Director of GWorks Surfacing Ltd, said: "Following on from a difficult period due to the administration of GWorks Construction, the acquisition of the majority shareholding in GWorks Surfacing by RK Bell Projects allows us to swiftly return to normal trading, securing all employee jobs. I am excited to work with Nick and his team to further develop and grow the business together."



## King's College celebrates official opening of sixth form centre

Sir Michael Barber, Chancellor of Exeter University, has officially opened the state-of-the-art sixth form centre at King's College.

Distinguished guests and community members joined staff to commemorate the event and Sir Michael, an eminent figure in the education sector, delivered an inspiring keynote address, emphasising the importance of providing pupils with the best possible resources for their educational journey.

A college spokesman said the centre was a testament to the school's commitment to excellence in education. Designed to meet the evolving needs of sixth form pupils, the building was flexible, technologically advanced and anchored in sustainable energy principles.

It aimed to foster academic growth, critical thinking and personal development by providing opportunities for collaborative working, formal and semi-formal academic experiences and discussions.

It boasts cutting-edge facilities, including state-of-the-art classrooms,

a creative learning space, futures room, breakout areas and a café.

Over the past two terms, the sixth form centre has played a pivotal role in supporting pupils as they pursue their A Level studies. Its sophisticated infrastructure and resources enables teachers to deliver engaging lessons, while providing pupils with opportunities to collaborate, explore and extend their learning beyond the classroom.

The centre has quickly become a hub of intellectual curiosity and academic excellence, driving pupils to reach their full potential and achieve outstanding results.

Headmaster Michael Sloan said: "The innovative and creative teaching and learning being delivered in our outstanding new building is helping to ensure that King's remains the school of choice in the South West for intellectually curious and academically minded Sixth Form pupils.

"I would like to express my sincere gratitude to everyone who worked so hard to oversee and deliver the building to such a high-quality specification."



▲ Sir Michael Barber (left) and Kings College Headmaster, Michael Sloan.



▲ Sir Michael Barber officially opened the new sixth form centre.

He said the realisation of the sixth form centre would not have been possible without the generosity of donors whose financial contributions were instrumental in bringing the vision to life.

## Entries open for Cornish Mutual Young Farmer Bursaries

Agriculture students in the South West are being offered the chance to secure extra funding to support their studies by applying for a Cornish Mutual Young Farmer Bursary.

Building on the success of the existing Further Education Bursary for Level 1-3 students, the farming insurance expert is offering two levels of bursary to include students studying a Level 5 or 6 course.

Also new is an additional award - the Cornish Mutual South West Agricultural Student of the Year, with the winner selected from the 2023 bursary recipients.

The bursaries comprise the Higher Education Bursary of £750, open to any student studying an agriculture-based Level 5 or 6 course at University Centre Somerset and Duchy College.

For those studying a Level 1-3 agriculture-based course at Bicton College, Bridgwater & Taunton College (Cannington Campus), Duchy College or Kingston Maurward College, the Further



Education Bursary of £500 is available.

In each category, one bursary is awarded per college and students must be enrolled to study during the 2023-2024 academic year.

Previous bursary recipients have used the monies to fund PPE and safety equipment, laptops, college books,

training certificate fees and travel expenses.

"The bursaries form a key part of our Future Farming Programme and support talented young farmers," says Peter Beaumont, Cornish Mutual Managing Director.

"We encourage any student with an enthusiasm for agriculture to apply for a Cornish Mutual Young Farmer Bursary and look forward to celebrating the passionate young people who are the future of British agriculture."

Bursary applicants should submit either a 500-word essay, 20-image photo essay or two-minute video or podcast on the following subjects:

Higher Education bursary: 'What excites me about the future of agriculture'. Further Education bursary: 'Why I am studying agriculture'

Entries open on September 8, 2023 and close at midnight on November 5, 2023. To find out more and to apply, visit: [www.cornishmutual.co.uk](http://www.cornishmutual.co.uk)

## Award-winning Somerset agency ADPR announces a new shareholder and Board of Directors

ADPR has a new shareholder and two new additions to the Board. Jenny Walford has been Acting Managing Director for the past year while Kate O'Sullivan was on adoption leave.

Kate has now returned to the business and Jenny has become a shareholder, joining the board as a company director. ADPR also welcomes Randy Weeks as Non-Executive Director.

Kate and Jenny will be Joint Managing Directors of ADPR and will be working together to ensure the ongoing growth and development of the company.

Kate O'Sullivan, Joint Managing Director at ADPR, said: "Jenny and I have worked together for many years and have always been aligned on our values and vision for the future. Two heads are always better than one, and I am excited about combining our skills and experience to further strengthen the ADPR brand."

Jenny joined ADPR in 2016 with a mix of agency and in-house experience, previously working across brands such as Visa, Philips, P&G, Wickes DIY,



Hotpoint and Tesco Telecom.

Jenny Walford, Joint Managing Director at ADPR, said: "I am very excited to be joining forces with Kate to forge a path for ADPR's future. It has been a privilege to be at the helm of her business for the past year, and I'm looking forward to working with Kate and the rest of our team to take ADPR to new heights.

We are also pleased to welcome Randy to the Board of Directors, who has a wealth of experience growing successful



communication businesses. ADPR will greatly benefit from his expertise in the industry."

Randy Weeks, Non-Executive Director at ADPR, said: "I am excited to be joining ADPR and I look forward to working with the Board and the leadership team to help the agency realise its full potential."

ADPR was set up more than 30 years ago and has a strong heritage within the marine sector. The agency now has a range of clients from across the marine, health, wellbeing, tourism and outdoor sectors. Clients include Helly Hansen, Polar, Sunsail and Wookey Hole.

The agency has won a host of awards for its work, most recently the Small PR Consultancy of the Year and Rising Star Award at the PRCA Dare Awards 2023. It has also been shortlisted for Best Long-term Campaign and Small PR Consultancy of the Year at the CIPR Pride Awards 2023 (winners announced in October 2023).

For more information about ADPR, visit [www.adpr.co.uk](http://www.adpr.co.uk).

## Bristol Airport helps form the UK Hydrogen Alliance to accelerate zero carbon aviation

A group of leading companies in the UK aviation and renewable energy sectors including easyJet, Rolls-Royce, Airbus, Ørsted, GKN Aerospace and Bristol Airport, has established the Hydrogen in Aviation (HIA) alliance to accelerate the delivery of zero carbon aviation.

HIA will work to ensure the UK capitalises on the huge opportunity hydrogen presents to both the aviation industry and country as a whole.

While there are various options for decarbonising the aviation sector, including sustainable aviation fuels (SAF), synthetic fuels or batteries, HIA believes that more attention should be paid to the potential of the direct use of hydrogen.

Hydrogen is a very promising alternative-fuel option for short-haul aviation. Airbus is developing new hydrogen powered aircraft with the aim of entering commercial service from 2035 and Rolls-Royce has already proven that hydrogen could power a jet engine following successful ground tests in 2022.

Many smaller operators are making rapid progress on hydrogen-powered aircraft, notably ZeroAvia and

Universal Hydrogen who have already carried out flight tests.

The group will be drawing on its considerable expertise to propose a clear and deliverable pathway to achieving hydrogen-powered aviation. HIA will work constructively with Government, local authorities, and the aviation and hydrogen sectors to enable the UK to fulfil its potential as a global leader in this critical application of hydrogen technology.

This will include setting out the pathway for scaling up the infrastructure and the policy, regulatory and safety frameworks needed so that large scale commercial aviation can become a reality.

The alliance has set out that three key areas for Government to focus on if the UK is to see the economic benefits and meet decarbonisation targets:

- Supporting the delivery of the infrastructure needed for the UK to be a global leader
- Ensuring the aviation regulatory regime is hydrogen ready
- Transforming the funding for hydrogen aviation R&D support into a 10-year programme



Johan Lundgren, CEO of easyJet and first Chair of HIA, said: "There is no doubt that the UK has the potential to become a world leader in hydrogen aviation, which could bring with it a £34bn per annum boost to the country's economy by 2050, but in order to capture this opportunity, rapid change is needed and the time to act is now."

Dave Lees, CEO of Bristol Airport, said: "We're proud to be part of this new alliance, coming together to call for action now so hydrogen flight can become a reality in the future.

"The potential opportunities of hydrogen flight are huge - most of Bristol Airport's routes could be served by zero emissions aircraft and our region is uniquely positioned to become a global centre for the new technology, creating thousands of new aerospace jobs."

## Gather Technology earns prestigious Solutions Partner designation in the Microsoft AI Cloud Partner Program

Gather Technology has been recognised as a Solutions Partner in the Microsoft AI Cloud Partner Program. The company said the achievement stood as a testament to the dedication of Gather's exceptional tech team who had to complete multiple, rigorous exams to achieve the accreditation.

The Solutions Partner designation signifies a significant milestone in Gather's journey, showcasing its technical capabilities, extensive experience and a demonstrated ability to consistently deliver successful customer outcomes that are closely aligned with the Microsoft Cloud ecosystem. This accomplishment reinforces Gather's commitment to excellence and innovation.

As a Solutions Partner for Infrastructure (Azure), Gather



Technology has demonstrated expertise in harnessing Microsoft's cutting-edge Azure cloud platform. This expertise enables Gather Technology to provide clients with scalable, secure, and efficient infrastructure solutions. By achieving this designation, Gather Technology has further solidified its position as a trusted partner for organizations seeking to leverage Microsoft's cloud services to drive their digital transformation initiatives.

Najeeb Sughayer, Managing Director of Gather Technology, said: "We are immensely proud of our tech team's dedication and hard work in achieving



Infrastructure  
Azure

this significant milestone. Being recognised as a Solutions Partner by Microsoft is a testament to our commitment to delivering exceptional value to our clients.

"It's an exciting chapter for Gather Technology, and we look forward to further enhancing our capabilities to better serve our customers."

For more information about Gather Technology Ltd visit the website [www.gather.tech](http://www.gather.tech) or email [Help@gather.tech](mailto:Help@gather.tech)

## Rotec Hydraulics Ltd announced as a finalist at The Manufacturer MX Awards 2023

Rotec Hydraulics has made it through to the finals of The Manufacturer MX Awards 2023 in the Achieving Customer Value category.

Organised by The Manufacturer in partnership with the Institution of Mechanical Engineers (IMechE), The Manufacturer MX Awards (TMMX Awards) exist to encourage, benchmark, and celebrate manufacturing excellence.

Over 50 of Britain's top manufacturing companies have been selected as finalists, competing across 11 award categories.

Rotec Hydraulics Ltd's Managing Director, Paul Prouse, said: "To be named award finalists at The Manufacturer MX Awards in the

Achieving Customer Value category is great recognition of our team's unwavering commitment to our clients, working together to develop industry-leading manufacturing solutions alongside outstanding customer service."

Based across the South West of the UK, Rotec Hydraulics provides hydraulic, pneumatic and electrical engineering services and components. The firm will be celebrating 45 years of trading next year.

The company's strong customer-focused ethos to develop and produce innovative, bespoke engineered solutions, together with its outstanding customer survey results and impressive client portfolio particularly impressed the judging panel.



Managing Director of The Manufacturer, Grace Gilling, said: "It has been the best year for entries which has made for a really fierce competition."

The winners will be revealed at a gala dinner and ceremony, held at the Exhibition Centre in Liverpool on November 15.

For more information visit [www.themanufacturermxawards.com](http://www.themanufacturermxawards.com) or [www.rotect.net](http://www.rotect.net).

## Bank of England summary – uncertainty clouds the outlook for activity and inflation

From the Annual Report to the Treasury Select Committee written by Swati Dhingra, External Member of the Bank's Monetary Policy Committee



### BANK OF ENGLAND

Economic forecasts and market expectations of future policy evolution can be informative of magnitudes of various policy options. But they are highly contingent on assumptions that they are conditioned on and often come with large forecast errors.

Even in normal times, the market-expected rate is neither an accurate prediction of the future, nor necessarily the optimal path for achieving our target. Assessments of market participants and external forecasters have shown much volatility and often little agreement on even the direction of whether the economy has been in excess demand or supply.

Leading indicators can be informative in periods of high uncertainty. However, it is important not to be too sensitive to short-term movements, otherwise this can create volatility in policy and activity, making it harder to return to target sustainably.

Consequently, my policy decisions have been based on various pieces of evidence regarding the evolution of inflation. In terms of developments in the global economy, supply has significantly recovered over the past twelve months and the terms of trade shock continues to unwind. Insofar as this trend continues, international pressures on CPI inflation are likely to continue to ease.

Prices of commodities – especially energy and food – and intermediate inputs will remain important to the evolution of UK inflation. Another shock, for instance due to geopolitics or extreme weather, could push up on UK consumer price growth. It will, therefore, be important to monitor indicators further up the supply chain, including international, wholesale and producer prices.

As I have argued, we need to continue developing our statistics and analytic methods to ascertain these supply chain price signals. Domestic factors are likely to continue to ease the pressure on CPI inflation, especially as housing costs through rents and mortgages cumulate.

There is not yet evidence to suggest firms will seek to increase their margins, particularly as output producer price inflation has been falling. While weak demand is likely to reinforce this view, it remains an area where measurement poses significant challenges.

The labour market continues to ease as the committee's recent hiking cycle takes effect with a lag, gradually pushing up on the unemployment rate and down on the V/U ratio. Wage growth remains an area of further inquiry, but it is a lagging indicator and one of the last outcomes to be impacted in the transmission of monetary policy to the real economy.

Recent data indicates pockets of strong wage growth, but a broader picture of falling or stagnating real wages. As the terms of trade shock unwinds, a deferred pass-through of level changes to wages would not necessarily pose a risk to our target in the medium term. I will continue to focus on the composition of wage growth, as well as the headline figures – which should give a clearer sense of the outlook.

The committee has raised bank rate sharply in a short span of time. Policy is already sufficiently restrictive and the lagged effects of further tightening pose serious risks of output volatility in order to make a small dent on inflation.

While each additional increase in the bank rate intensifies the effect on currently exposed subsets of the economy – for example those rolling off fixed-rate mortgages – it takes time for the breadth of the effects to increase.

The duration of our restrictive stance is important and I have argued that our communications should seek to emphasise this aspect of monetary policy and to reduce volatility arising from month-to-month news.



## New climate hub for smaller businesses

A new hub has been launched to provide business owners and finance professionals with a one-stop shop of authoritative guidance for the journey to net zero. The UK Business Climate Hub provides guidance for small and medium-sized businesses on a range of topics such as low-carbon heat pumps, electric vehicles and generating green energy.

Read more about the Hub at:

<https://businessclimatehub.uk>

## Exporters unaware of EU/UK regulation changes

Research by the British Chambers of Commerce has revealed that the vast majority of businesses are unaware and unprepared for changes to EU/UK regulations which are due to come into force from October 2023. The changes include new EU VAT requirements for exporters, reporting requirements on exports of goods containing high-carbon steel, and on selected other products, and an alternative product safety marking system.

Read more about the changes at:

<https://www.britishchambers.org.uk/news/2023/09/business-in-the-dark-over-regulatory-avalanche-for-eu-trade>

## Apprenticeship starts fall by almost 5%

In the 2022/23 academic year, apprenticeship starts fell year-on-year by 4.6%. Under-19s accounted for 24.8% of starts, advanced apprenticeships for 43.2% and higher apprenticeships for 34%.

Read more about the figures at:

<https://www.fenews.co.uk/skills/new-data-showing-apprenticeship-starts-have-fallen-almost-5-over-the-last-year/>

## Post-Brexit investment only a third of lost EU funds

The British Business Bank, along with the UK Infrastructure Bank, the Scottish National Investment Bank and the Development Bank of Wales, are investing only a third of what the UK received from the European Investment Bank before Brexit. The new banks have invested in fewer, smaller and lower-risk projects than the European Investment Bank, which invested in larger infrastructure projects.

Read more about the investments at:

<https://www.theguardian.com/business/2023/sep/14/exclusive-new-uk-banks-post-brexit-investment-only-one-third-of-lost-eu-funds>

Source: BAD News (Business Advisers News)

## Increase in small firm tax investigations

Between 2020/21 and 2022/23, there was a 21% rise in HMRC tax investigations into sole traders and small businesses. However, around two-fifths of investigations failed to yield a single penny in unpaid tax.

Read more about the increase in investigations at:

<https://www.taxassist.co.uk/resources/news/hmrc-tax-investigations-into-small-firms-and-freelancers-on-the-rise>

## UK joins Horizon Europe

The Government has confirmed that the UK is now associated to the Horizon Europe programme through a bespoke new agreement with the European Commission. UK researchers can now apply for grants and bid to take part in projects under the programme. The agreement will run until 2027.

Read more about the agreement at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-joins-horizon-europe-under-a-new-bespoke-deal>

## Consultation on Provision of Services Regulations 2009

The Government has launched a consultation on proposed reforms to the Provision of Services Regulations 2009, which provide a framework for how services are regulated in the UK. The reforms include making sure businesses can apply for licences all year round, and providing clarity on when competent authorities can deviate from certain requirements.

Read more about the consultation at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/provision-of-services-regulations-2009-proposed-reforms>

## Database for Government research topics

The Government has launched a new database that brings together all Areas of Research Interest (ARI) documents from across government departments. ARIs are lists of research questions or topics which government departments and agencies would welcome more research on to help inform policy.

Read more about the database at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-one-stop-shop-to-find-the-topics-government-is-interested-in-researching>

## Social media guidance for charities

The Charity Commission has issued new guidance on charities' use of social media. The guidance recommends that every charity using social media should have a social media policy in place and ensure it is followed.

Read more about the guidance at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/regulator-publishes-new-guidance-on-charities-social-media-use>



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