

# Somerset Voice

The Official Magazine of  
Somerset Chamber of Commerce

April / May  
2024

News and  
photos from  
the grand final

6 | SOMERSET BUSINESS  
AWARDS 2024



SOMERSET  
BUSINESS  
AWARDS

2024

## 15 | FEATURE

Tips for making the most of technology

## 25 | EVENTS GALLERY

Are you in our round-up?

## 29 | MEMBERSHIP

All the latest money-saving offers for members

 Somerset  
Chamber of  
Commerce

Connect | Influence | Grow

## Affiliate Town Chambers & Business Associations

### Axbridge Chamber of Commerce

T: 01934 733078 | E: [mike.sartain@hale-events.ltd.uk](mailto:mike.sartain@hale-events.ltd.uk)  
[axbridgechamber.co.uk](http://axbridgechamber.co.uk)

### Bridgwater Chamber of Commerce

T: 01278 228004 | E: [info@bridgwaterchamber.org.uk](mailto:info@bridgwaterchamber.org.uk)  
[bridgwaterchamber.org.uk](http://bridgwaterchamber.org.uk)

### Bruton Chamber of Commerce

T: 01749 813291 | E: [brutonchamber@gmail.com](mailto:brutonchamber@gmail.com)  
[brutonchamber.org](http://brutonchamber.org)

### Burnham-on-Sea Chamber of Trade & Commerce

T: 01278 238959 | E: [deryk@kds-interiors.co.uk](mailto:deryk@kds-interiors.co.uk)  
[burnhamonseachamber.org](http://burnhamonseachamber.org)

### Business Exmoor

T: 01643 851895 | E: [admin@businessexmoor.co.uk](mailto:admin@businessexmoor.co.uk)  
[businessexmoor.co.uk](http://businessexmoor.co.uk)

### Cheddar Chamber of Commerce & Industry

T: 01934 741792 | E: [beccycheddarchamber@gmail.com](mailto:beccycheddarchamber@gmail.com)

### Frome Chamber of Commerce

T: 01749 342255 | E: [president@fromechamber.com](mailto:president@fromechamber.com)  
[fromechamber.com](http://fromechamber.com)

### Glastonbury Chamber of Commerce

T: 01458 835678 | E: [office@glastonburychamber.co.uk](mailto:office@glastonburychamber.co.uk)  
[glastonburychamber.co.uk](http://glastonburychamber.co.uk)

### Ilminster Chamber of Commerce

T: 01460 52506 | E: [enquiries@ilminsterhomehardware.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@ilminsterhomehardware.co.uk)  
[ilminsterchamber.org.uk](http://ilminsterchamber.org.uk)

### Shepton Mallet & District Chamber

T: 01749 681413 | E: [sheptonchamber@gmail.com](mailto:sheptonchamber@gmail.com)  
[shepton.biz](http://shepton.biz)

### Street Chamber of Commerce

T: 07552 170725 | E: [secretary@streetchamber.co.uk](mailto:secretary@streetchamber.co.uk)

### Taunton Chamber of Commerce

T: 01823 230898 | E: [office@taunton-chamber.co.uk](mailto:office@taunton-chamber.co.uk)  
[taunton-chamber.co.uk](http://taunton-chamber.co.uk)

### Watchet Chamber of Trade

T: 07836 239 932  
[visit-watchet.co.uk](http://visit-watchet.co.uk)

### Wells Chamber of Commerce

T: 01749 685236 | E: [info@wellschamberofcommerce.co.uk](mailto:info@wellschamberofcommerce.co.uk)  
[wellschamberofcommerce.co.uk](http://wellschamberofcommerce.co.uk)

### Weston-super-Mare Chamber

T: 07850 363249 | E: [President@westonchamber.org.uk](mailto:President@westonchamber.org.uk)  
[westonchamber.org.uk](http://westonchamber.org.uk)

### Wincanton Chamber of Commerce

T: 01963 34327 | E: [chair@wincantonchamber.co.uk](mailto:chair@wincantonchamber.co.uk)  
[wincantonchamber.co.uk](http://wincantonchamber.co.uk)

### Wiveliscombe & 10 Parish Business Group

T: 01984 684777 | E: [secinfo@10pbg.co.uk](mailto:secinfo@10pbg.co.uk)  
[10pbg.co.uk](http://10pbg.co.uk)

### Yeovil & District Chamber CIC

T: 01935 385912 | E: [hello@yeovilchamber.org](mailto:hello@yeovilchamber.org)  
[yeovilchamber.org](http://yeovilchamber.org)

# Do a clever headline.

Then some body copy that explains how we drive innovation, creative journeys and digital performance. From powerful brands and websites to game-changing marketing and technology.

Make sure to include something about the services we offer (brand, creative development, SEO and PPC, content writing, Mailchimp, social media, etc). Don't just put them in a long list.

End it with a call to action?  
[hello@teapot.agency](mailto:hello@teapot.agency)



# CONTENTS

First word	<b>4</b>
Somerset Business Awards 2024	<b>6-11</b>
Business partner news	<b>12-14</b>
Feature	
- audio visual and digital	<b>15-19</b>
Hinkley update	<b>20</b>
Upcoming events	<b>21</b>
Chamber news	<b>22-23</b>
Sector focus - recruitment	<b>24</b>
Events gallery	<b>25-27</b>
New members	<b>28-29</b>
Membership	<b>29-31</b>
Member news	<b>32-37</b>
Business news	<b>38-39</b>

Front page: Heart FM and Global broadcast journalist Cormac MacMahon hosted the grand final of the Somerset Business Awards 2024. Photo: Tessa Chapman Photography

## Disclaimer

The views expressed in this magazine are not necessarily those of the Chamber. This publication (or any part thereof) may not be reproduced, transmitted or stored in print or electronic format (including, but not limited to, any online service, any database or any part of the internet), or in any other format in any media whatsoever, without the prior written permission of the publisher. Although every effort is made to ensure the accuracy of information contained in the magazine, Somerset Chamber do not accept any responsibility for any omissions or inaccuracies it contains.

Somerset Chamber of Commerce  
Equity House  
Blackbrook Park Avenue  
Blackbrook Business Park  
Taunton, Somerset TA1 2PX

## Editorial and advertising:

**E:** marketing@somerset-chamber.co.uk  
**T:** 01823 444924  
**Printers:** Carly Press, Somerset  
**Design by:** Thoroughbred Marketing, Somerset



## We are social



@chambersomerset



Find us on Facebook



@somersetchamber



Find us on LinkedIn



## FIRST WORD

Huge congratulations to all the finalists and winners in our annual Somerset Business Awards!

It was wonderful to be able to honour so many incredible businesses in the 19th Somerset Business Awards – all the finalists should feel justifiably proud of their achievements. You can find out who won which award in our six-page round-up on pages 6-11.

But it is fair to say times remain challenging for many others. The Chamber network is continuing to lobby Ministers on behalf of its members as businesses, particularly SMEs, face an ongoing struggle with high interest rates and inflation.

After a disappointing Budget for business, the British Chambers of Commerce is maintaining pressure on the Government to develop a sustainable growth plan, working in partnership with businesses.

While cuts in National Insurance and an increase in the child benefit threshold announced in the Budget may bring additional people back into the workforce, a raft of economic challenges remain.

Increasing the VAT threshold to £90,000 from April will help SMEs in the Chamber network to grow and invest but a more fundamental review is still required.

With a General Election looming, the Government needs to ensure it puts the needs of business front and centre. Inflation, interest rates and staffing shortages are continuing to hamper investment and growth and without these, the economy will continue to stagnate.

And there were no major announcements in the Budget to help shift the dial on these challenging conditions for business.

*Emma Rawlings*

CHIEF EXECUTIVE

## OUR BUSINESS PARTNERS

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

T: 01823 444924 E: [membership@somerset-chamber.co.uk](mailto:membership@somerset-chamber.co.uk)



## Get in touch

### Membership

Jenn Chidley-Sanders

Membership Manager

T: 01823 444924 | M: 07872 063039  
E: [jenn.c.sanders@somerset-chamber.co.uk](mailto:jenn.c.sanders@somerset-chamber.co.uk)

Natalie Hodgson

Membership Officer

T: 01823 444924 | M: 07749 493145  
E: [natalie.hodgson@somerset-chamber.co.uk](mailto:natalie.hodgson@somerset-chamber.co.uk)

Robert Dakin

Membership Development Officer

T: 01823 444924 | M: 07512 317391  
E: [robert.dakin@somerset-chamber.co.uk](mailto:robert.dakin@somerset-chamber.co.uk)

### Events

Sallie Barnes

Events Manager

T: 01823 444924 | M: 07706 360398  
E: [sallie.barnes@somerset-chamber.co.uk](mailto:sallie.barnes@somerset-chamber.co.uk)

Emma Rudkin

Senior Events Officer

T: 01823 444924 | M: 07821 950379  
E: [emma.rudkin@somerset-chamber.co.uk](mailto:emma.rudkin@somerset-chamber.co.uk)

### Communications and PR

Annelise Cowie

PR and Communications Executive

T: 01823 444924 | M: 07702 537630  
E: [annelise.cowie@somerset-chamber.co.uk](mailto:annelise.cowie@somerset-chamber.co.uk)

### Hinkley Supply Chain

Emma Rawlings

Chief Executive

T: 01823 444924 | M: 07706 329974  
E: [emma.rawlings@somerset-chamber.co.uk](mailto:emma.rawlings@somerset-chamber.co.uk)

Oliver Morgan

Data Analyst

T: 01823 443425 | M: 07525 809274  
E: [oliver.morgan@hinkleysupplychain.co.uk](mailto:oliver.morgan@hinkleysupplychain.co.uk)

### Glastonbury Town Deal

Dayna Bee

Project Officer

T: 01823 444924 | M: 07512 311573  
E: [dayna.bee@somerset-chamber.co.uk](mailto:dayna.bee@somerset-chamber.co.uk)

# ARE YOU MAKING THE MOST OF YOUR CHAMBER MEMBERSHIP AND SAVING YOUR BUSINESS MONEY?



- **AA Roadside assistance breakdown cover** - 67% discount for the company, this also includes staff within the business that have business insurance on their vehicle
- **AXA Health** - business healthcare cover. When you take out an AXA Healthcare package, you are entitled to 50% off of membership to Somerset Chamber\*
- **AXA Free Health at Hand phone line** - this service is available to all members of Somerset Chamber of Commerce
- **Barclaycard Payments** - discounted merchant charges, saving members money when taking card payments. Whether trading online or face-to-face, you could now get a specially negotiated discount on merchant charges.\*\*
- **Chamber Finance Finder** - the Chamber finance finder platform simplifies and speeds up the funding process, matching member businesses with the right funding solutions across loans, equity and grants
- **Cyber Essentials** - receive a discount on your Cyber Essentials Certificate
- **Moneycorp** - low rates on foreign exchange rates
- **Quest** - HR, health and safety, legal and tax support - a document library with up to 800 template documents and phone line to use as frequently as needed
- **Wiltshire Friendly** - Personal Income Protection on an individual plan basis, whether you are employed or self-employed, with access to the terms and pricing only associated with this scheme
- **WPA** - a bespoke health Cash Plan scheme for Somerset Chamber members, to help support employee health and wellbeing, as well as contributing towards the cost of routine healthcare including optical and dental treatment

\* Direct new customers only. 50% off up to a value to £125 per employee covered per year for up to three years.

\*\* The partners may receive commission from each other. Please check merchant's terms and conditions at: [barclaycard.co.uk/takingpaymentsresources](https://www.barclaycard.co.uk/takingpaymentsresources). Subject to application, financial circumstances and borrowing history. To receive next-day settlement, transactions need to be taken before 9pm. T&Cs apply.



## CELEBRATIONS FOR SOMERSET BUSINESS AWARDS 2024 WINNERS

The winners of the 2024 Somerset Business Awards were announced at a glittering gala dinner and presentation at the Winter Gardens Pavilion, in Weston-super-Mare, on Friday (March 22).

Nearly 400 business people from across Somerset attended the gala evening, which was organised by Somerset Chamber of Commerce and hosted by Global and Heart FM broadcast journalist, Cormac MacMahon.

This year was the 19th anniversary of the awards and Somerset Chamber Chief Executive, Emma Rawlings, said the quality of entries had again been incredible and thanked everyone who had supported the awards.

She said: "We have some amazing businesses in Somerset and it was fantastic to be able to honour just some of their achievements.

"We know many have faced some extremely challenging trading conditions again this last 12 months, so it was



▲ Heart FM and Global broadcast journalist Cormac MacMahon hosted the final.

encouraging to hear about the successes of our finalists and winners and to be able to help them celebrate through the awards."

Albert Goodman was again the main sponsor of the awards, with winners coming from Bridgwater, Taunton, Weston-super-Mare, Midsomer Norton, Frome, Yeovil, Highbridge and Curry Rivel.

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

Michael Cahill, a Partner at Albert Goodman, said: "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 helps to boost your profile, boost staff morale and ultimately boost your business."



▲ From left, Iain McVicar of Albert Goodman, Emma Rawlings of Somerset Chamber of Commerce and Cormac MacMahon of Heart FM and Global.



▲ The team from main awards sponsor Albert Goodman.

▲ As well as providing the dessert course for the final, Marston Foods also donated a cheque for £500 to the Charity of the Year winner, SWALLOW Charity. Pictured, are Sarah Green (right) of Marston Foods and Beverley Craney of SWALLOW Charity.

**THE 2024 WINNERS ARE:**



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

**Winner - Talking Stick Digital, Bridgwater**

Runners-up: ARK at Egwood CIC, Merriott and Little Kickers (North and Mid Somerset), Weston-super-Mare

◀ Sponsor and judge Najeeb Sughayer, of Gather Technology, with Zoey and David Reading, of Talking Stick Digital.



▲ Laura and Tom Filer (right), of Family Adventures Group, with sponsor and judge Alan Clarke, of Higos Insurance Services.

▲ Sponsor and judge Stephen Wray, of Stephens Scown (centre), with Andy Berry and Derek Randall, of Bridgwater & Taunton College.

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

**Winner - Family Adventures Group, Bridgwater**

Runners-up: Filbert's Fine Foods Ltd, West Pennard and Netitude Ltd, Frome

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

**Winner - Bridgwater & Taunton College, Bridgwater**

Runners-up: Rotec Hydraulics Ltd, Taunton and Synertec, Wellington



- ▲ Sponsors and judges Barry and Lizzie Tottle (left), of Teapot Creative with Ben Warren and Dan Cooper, of Somerset County Cricket Club.

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

**Winner – Somerset County Cricket Club, Taunton**

Runners-up: Glastonbury Abbey, Glastonbury and Mark One Consultants, Yeovil



- ▲ Sponsor and judge Kirill Bingham, of Clarke Willmott with Beverley Craney, Sarah Stanton-Hobbs and Emily Watmough, of SWALLOW Charity.

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

**Winner – SWALLOW Charity, Midsomer Norton**

Runners-up: bibic, Langport and It's in the Bag Cancer Support, North Somerset



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

**Winner – Netitude Ltd, Frome**

Runners-up: Poolbridge Accountancy Limited, Highbridge and Singer Instruments, Roadwater

- ◀ Sponsor and judge Rosie Wicks (left) of Blossom HR with business partner Sarah Hart (right) and Adam Harling and Elena Henderson, of Netitude.



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

**Winner – Battens Solicitors, Yeovil**

Runners-up: Bridgwater & Taunton College, Bridgwater and The Ascot Group, Weston-super-Mare

- ◀ Ceri Stephens and Naomi Dyer, of Battens Solicitors, with sponsor and judge Andy Cockcroft of Hinkley Point C.





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

**Winner - Wessex Pop-Up Coldrooms Ltd, Curry Rivel**

Runners-up: Milton and Chambers, Wellington and Our Precious Earth, Minehead

◀ Ed Rosa and Gareth Turnbull, of Wessex Pop-Up Coldrooms with sponsor and judge Heather Davis, of Westcotts.



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

**Winner - Poolbridge Accountancy Limited  
- Chloe Smith, Highbridge**

Runners-up: SBA CIC - Natasha Margetts, Langport and Turnbull Infrastructure and Utilities - Ryan Jones, Bridgwater

◀ Sponsor and judge Dave Crew, of Weston College, with Chloe Smith, of Poolbridge Accountancy Ltd.



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

# CONGRATULATIONS

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

**Radio | Outdoor | DAX**  
Contact: david.collins@global.com



▲ Sponsor and judge Paul Lowndes, of Gravity, with Emma Lower and Ellie Lister, of Lendology CIC.

**Environmental and Sustainability Award  
sponsored by Gravity**

**Winner - Lendology CIC, Taunton**

Runners-up: Cookwood Development - Lomax Design and Build, Stoke St Michael and Zebra EM, Taunton



▲ Laura and Tom Filer, of Family Adventures Group with sponsor and judge Evelyn Adfield, of Porter Dodson.

**Service Excellence Award  
sponsored by Porter Dodson**

**Winner – Family Adventures Group, Bridgwater**

Runners-up: Rotec Hydraulics Ltd, Taunton and West Country Drainage Services Ltd, Burrowbridge



▲ Sponsor and judge Rob Burns, of Leonardo UK with Jim Winchester and Will Keeble of Electrified Automation.

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

**Winner – Electrified Automation, Bridgwater**

Runners-up: Rotec Hydraulics Ltd, Taunton and Teklagraf Ltd, Weston-super-Mare



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

**Winner – Family Adventures Group, Bridgwater**

Runners-up: ARK at Egwood CIC, Merriott and Purplex Marketing, Weston-super-Mare

◀ Sponsor and judge Nick Porter (left) of Barclays, with Laura and Tom Filer, of Family Adventures Group.



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

**Winner – Container Team Ltd, Weston-super-Mare**

Runners-up: Mark One Consultants, Yeovil and Summerfield Developments, Taunton

◀ Sponsor and judge Mike Cahill, of Albert Goodman, with Rachel King and Steve Morris, of Container Team.



▲ Celebrations for the winners and finalists.

## National Highways welcomes legal decision for major A303 upgrade past Stonehenge

National Highways has welcomed the High Court's decision to uphold the Secretary of State for Transport's decision to grant the Development Consent Order for the A303 Stonehenge scheme.

The upgrade will involve building a new dual carriageway below ground, removing the sight and sound of traffic from the Stonehenge landscape and tackling congestion on the nine-mile single carriageway section of the arterial A303 route.

National Highways said it would improve journey times, reliability and safety, as well as unlocking economic growth for the wider South West and reducing the blight of rat running on local communities.

National Highways' proposals were granted consent last year, following a lengthy redetermination process, and has now overcome a second legal challenge, with one environmental ground yet to be determined.

In the meantime, National Highways will continue to prepare for archaeological fieldwork, civils and utilities work ahead of main construction.

David Bullock, National Highways' A303 Stonehenge Project Director, said: "We welcome the decision, it's a huge step forward in tackling the long-standing issues of the A303 at Stonehenge and it represents years of working with our stakeholders, heritage bodies and local communities.

"We will remove the existing road to reconnect the World Heritage Site and restore the landscape to something like its original setting, while the scheme will also tackle the enduring traffic bottleneck, improving journeys, bringing much-needed relief to local communities and boosting the economy in the South West."

"The current road is not fit for purpose and the main reason for ongoing congestion is the fact that the existing road simply can't cope with the volume of traffic - it regularly



carries twice the amount it was designed for.

"The existing A303 also passes directly through the World Heritage Site (WHS) at Stonehenge - splitting it in two and creating a physical barrier for visitors, with traffic impacting negatively on the unique nature of the prehistoric landscape as well as visitor understanding and experience of the site.

"The scheme will be delivered with heritage and the Outstanding Universal Value of the World Heritage Site at the heart of every decision made, we've been working with heritage bodies throughout, and this will continue through the preliminary works and through the main construction phase.

"We acknowledge the leave to appeal protocols and will work with all parties through the proper legal process. While that process is ongoing, we'll continue preparing for a successful outcome."

An 18-month programme of archaeological fieldwork and preparatory work is due to start this spring, preceding the five-year main construction phase.

## Somerset CCC and PKF Francis Clark continue partnership

Somerset County Cricket Club (CCC) has announced its partnership with PKF Francis Clark will continue in 2024.

The partnership will see PKF Francis Clark remain as an official partner of Somerset CCC, and their company branding will also once again have a high-visibility presence on block five of the Somerset Stand.

Award-winning chartered accountants and business advisers, PKF Francis Clark offers a range of services, from accountancy to business advice and financial planning, their experts are dedicated to helping their clients succeed.

Following the extension of this partnership, SCCC Commercial Director, Caroline Herbert said: "Over the years we have developed an excellent working relationship with PKF Francis Clark, and we are delighted that this is set to continue.

"They have an outstanding reputation, and throughout our partnership they have shown a genuine passion and



dedication for championing local businesses and local people. It is this alignment with our own values that makes them such a valuable partner."

Chris Reah, Partner, from PKF Francis Clark, added: "Our connection with Somerset CCC is a long held and cherished relationship. The Club is at the heart of professional sport across the South West and its many successes last year, make us proud partners.

"The club's commitment to serving its communities and more generally to excellence are values that Francis Clark hold close. As with our clients, we share their ambition."

## Bridgwater & Taunton College receives Queen's Anniversary Prize at Buckingham Palace

The team from University Centre Somerset (UCS), the higher education arm of Bridgwater & Taunton College (BTC), has been presented with the Queen's Anniversary Prize at Buckingham Palace.



The award recognises the college's outstanding achievements in developing responsive and effective nursing education pathways to address the shortage of qualified nurses in Somerset.

In a nationwide first, BTC gained consent from both the Nursing & Midwifery Council (NMC) and its university partner, University of the West of England, to deliver nursing degrees locally.

This has positioned the college as the first FE institution to join the Council of Deans of Health, lending a voice in shaping health policy and education on a national scale.

"This recognition is a fantastic achievement for our team, our students, and the wider Somerset community," said Principal Andy Berry. "Our journey to Buckingham Palace is not just an acknowledgment of our commitment to healthcare education but a celebration of our collaborative efforts to enrich the lives of those in our region. It epitomizes the

spirit of innovation, dedication, and community service that defines BTC."

The Queen's Anniversary Prize, awarded by the Royal Anniversary Trust, recognises the exceptional contributions of UK colleges and universities to the nation's life through innovative and beneficial research and education initiatives.

BTC's receipt of this award underscores the College's pivotal role in addressing critical workforce challenges and setting a benchmark for excellence in further education.

Prime Minister, Rishi Sunak, said: "I want to say a huge congratulations to the winners of the 2022-2024 Queen's Anniversary Prizes for Higher and Further Education. I know this year's honours will be particularly special as we remember the late Queen Elizabeth II and her long-standing support for these awards, and for the tremendous good that education can bring."

Sir Damon Buffini, Chair of The Royal Anniversary Trust, commended BTC and the other awardees: "The prize-winners in this round have shown remarkable leadership and innovation, addressing some of the most pressing challenges of our times.

"Bridgwater & Taunton College stands out for its proactive approach to healthcare education, significantly impacting the community it serves. Congratulations to BTC on this well-deserved honour."



## Albert Goodman boosts wealth management team with specialist appointment

South West-based accountancy firm, Albert Goodman has bolstered its specialist wealth management team with the appointment of Matthew Potter as financial planning consultant.

Matthew will utilise his 15 years' experience in the financial services industry and five years in property management, for a broad mix of clients at the Taunton-headquartered chartered accountants, tax consultants

and financial planners.

A highly qualified and experienced personal finance adviser, and based across Albert Goodman's Yeovil and Weymouth offices, Matthew will take responsibility for helping individuals and families to navigate the intricate world of financial planning and investment.

Commenting on his new position, Matthew said: "I'm excited to be joining the team at Albert Goodman, which has a tremendous reputation throughout the entire breadth of the region.

"This is a fantastic opportunity for me and I'm looking forward to collaborating with my new colleagues to ensure Albert Goodman clients have the peace of mind to plan for the future with confidence.

"Whether clients want to build a diverse investment portfolio, plan for retirement, protect assets, or safeguard their family's future, I have the knowledge and tools necessary

to help them make informed decisions."

Matthew, a father-of-two who lives with his family in Taunton, is well known in the town thanks to his sporting achievements, having launched the Taunton Dragons basketball club.

Welcoming Matthew to the company, Reme Holland, financial planning partner at Albert Goodman, said: "With his impressive experience and exceptional market knowledge, Matthew will be a key member of our team and a valuable asset.

"I'm incredibly proud that Albert Goodman is able to attract such accomplished people and Matthew's appointment signals our commitment to providing our clients with an outstanding service."



## WPA launches cutting-edge app to improve corporate wellness

WPA is using the latest digital technology for its new WPA Digital Health app – an innovative tool to help turn the tide on absenteeism through better health.

With GP and NHS waiting times regularly in the news, WPA said its new digital health app was a transformative solution, offering support to companies and employees without traditional health insurance or limited health and wellbeing budgets.

The number of days lost through sickness absence in the UK is at a 10-year high and according to the Office for National Statistics, while NHS England spends £5billion a year treating musculoskeletal conditions – 40% of which is due to potentially ‘preventable risk factors’.

WPA Digital Health offers a comprehensive suite of affordable health services and content. Its central hub contains health insights and tips ranging from fitness to sleep, guiding users towards proactive health management and illness prevention.

Key features include:

- Symptom checker: signposting employees towards pharmacists, GPs, mental health professionals or therapists
- GP and primary care services: Unlimited 24/7 access to remote GP consultations via video or phone calls, eliminating constraints on access, consultation length or frequency
- Mental health support: offering up to six telephone sessions with qualified mental health counsellors and a range of wellbeing resources



Health Insurance

- Physiotherapy access: expert advice, diagnosis and customized exercise programmes to address musculoskeletal conditions
- Wearables: the app integrates with smart watches and other wearables from companies such as Apple and Garmin

In addition, it can also be enhanced with the integration of cash benefits, such as optical, dental and audiology which are claimable within the app.

Mark Southern (pictured), WPA's Sales and Marketing Director, said: "WPA Digital Health is a great value solution to support the wellbeing of all employees proactively managing their health.

"Our aim is to help employers be more productive by supporting their workforce to access the services they need quickly and conveniently, therefore improving retention and recruitment.

"With the last Autumn Budget's emphasis upon individuals and companies being healthier, WPA Digital Health complements the ongoing HMT and DWP occupational health consultations helping companies fulfil their broader responsibilities."



## Why e-commerce is moving to the high street

Amanda French, partner and head of retail at national law firm Clarke Willmott LLP, explores why online brands are increasingly wanting physical space and the key considerations for retailers looking to move to the high street.

For years, shopping habits have been constantly changing, with retailers finding that they need to have an online presence to survive and thrive.

Increasingly, however, we have seen brands that have never had a high street presence moving to open physical stores to build their brand and customer engagement, create a new

unique consumer experience and take advantage of a resurgence in the high street and changes in technology – all ultimately leading to an increase in overall profitability.

E-commerce is usually seen as a fierce competitor to high street businesses. However, we are seeing e-commerce businesses, such as Amazon and Gymshark moving from being exclusively online retailers to having a physical presence on the high street. In addition, we have even seen more traditional businesses, like Avon, move to the high street.

There is an appeal to seeing, experiencing and trying products before committing to a purchase that cannot be matched in online retail.

Retailers who have spent years building their brand remotely are finding that physical stores enable them to reinforce their brand appeal and give customers the opportunity to engage with the brand in a way which is not possible online.

Physical stores can also attract the attention of a new audience that may not otherwise come across the brand, and this can, in turn, direct more attention to the online store.

However, the move to the more traditional "bricks and mortar" from a pure online business can have several commercial, practical and even legal implications.

Opening a physical store, or taking a concession within a department store, is likely to need new legal arrangements, while liabilities such as the length of the lease, rent-free periods and the extent and cost of any fit-out need to be considered.

For retailers which do not own the relevant trade mark themselves, there may be licensing considerations, too, then there's the marketing, advertising and data protection.

Amanda's full article can be found in the partner news section of the Somerset Chamber website.

\* clarke  
willmott





# Audio visual and digital

As technology advances so businesses need to adapt and find new ways of working to reach their staff, clients and markets. Many of our members specialise in providing audio and visual equipment or digital expertise, while others have embraced its use to stay ahead of their competitors. Some offer help and support to enable others to maximise the benefits. Here, our members share their stories and top tips on making the most of the latest audio visual and digital technology.



## Tracey Rickard Web Design

The short answer: to build a fabulous, impactful website that will drive your visitors to become customers! Then...

To focus on the credibility of your business and provide a consistent brand message. First impressions are everything and choosing the right graphics, colour schemes, fonts and layouts are vital if we are going to attract your target market.

Designing a website that is unique to you is key. Creating a

colour palette is the first step in customising your design. Then the images that are used and their placement and layout can really set you apart. A lot can be done with typography too, using different styles and sizes will make you stand out from the crowd.

You need a great user interface and user experience. A good web designer will get an understanding of who you are trying to attract and what you want them to do when they visit your site. Encouraging visitors to engage through clear calls to action.

We can't forget content strategy, the written elements of your website

need to correspond with your brand vision and your goals. The success of your site depends on a clear content strategy.

Good coding goes without saying. The website needs to be well structured, secure and standards compliant.

SEO is vital to ensure you get the best possible start with Google.

A responsive design will ensure your website looks good on every device from the smallest mobile to the largest screen.



## Netitude

Netitude was formed in 2001 by Adam Harling (Managing Director). What started as a one-person band is now rated amongst the top 5% of MSPs globally, ranking 307th in the MSP501 worldwide and 24th in EMEA in 2023. Initially operating in the South West, we now support business across the UK, Europe, USA, and Canada.

As a forward-thinking, technology-orientated business, we understand just how significant technology is in today's business landscape. Digital transformation has taken every

industry by storm, and we aim to be there for the businesses that want to evolve with the ever-changing times. In other words, we want to put the right technology in the right place at the right time.

We believe that our innovative NET9 Framework is what sets us apart from other managed IT providers. Our bespoke service offering begins with a comprehensive audit carried out by our Technical Alignment Managers (TAMs).

They then feed the information to the dedicated Virtual IT Director, who, after analysing the business's entire IT infrastructure, sets the business on

a roadmap towards technical proficiency across the board.

One area that may be picked up during this stage is how the business can enhance or update areas of its business, such as outdated servers and legacy systems, which are just not up to scratch in today's digitally focused business world.

We recommend a roadmap that includes both short-term wins and longer-term goals, which will help companies begin their journey towards digital transformation.



## Sunflower Social Media

Making sure that your website, social media and digital content is accessible means ensuring that everyone can access your content, regardless of their physical or cognitive abilities.

It helps your business reach a broader audience but also demonstrates your commitment to creating an inclusive environment,



where everyone can engage with your brand regardless of abilities.

Furthermore, incorporating these features not only enhances the user experience for those with disabilities but also improves usability for all users.

Here are some top tips:

- Add alt text to all images
- Make your text accessible - readable font size, clear colour definition
- Font usage - Verdana is seen as the most readable
- Be mindful of emojis - not too many and they need to make sense
- Add closed captions and subtitles to videos
- Use inclusive language
- Prioritise inclusivity in your images
- Make hashtags easier to read for screen readers and other users

(CamelCase where you capitalize the first letter of each word in a #)

- Avoid all caps - screen readers may read them as acronyms
- Spell out acronyms first - this helps screen readers and people not familiar with the acronym
- Write in plain language - avoid jargon and overly technical language
- Include @ mentions at the end of your posts - this helps the flow of your post, especially for screen readers
- Add closed captions and subtitles to videos - this also helps everyone who watches with sound off
- Make accessibility and inclusion part of your routine



## Seen Creative & Digital Marketing Somerset

It's no secret, the world is online and small businesses must harness the power of web design and digital technology to thrive. An impactful online presence begins with a user-centric website. It's not just about aesthetics; it's about creating an intuitive, accessible, and engaging experience for visitors.

To elevate your small business, prioritise mobile optimisation. With over half of global web traffic coming from mobile devices, your site must perform seamlessly across all screens. Incorporate responsive design to ensure your content looks great and functions flawlessly, whether accessed from a smartphone, tablet, or desktop.

Another vital element is speed. A slow website can deter potential customers, with most users expecting pages to load in two seconds or less. Optimise your website's loading times through image compression, efficient

coding and reliable web hosting services.

Content is king in the digital realm. Invest in high-quality, original content that resonates with your audience. Use compelling headlines, informative and engaging articles and calls-to-action that guide users towards making a purchase or contacting your business. SEO (search engine optimisation) plays a critical role here. By optimising your content for search engines, you increase your visibility online, attracting more traffic to your site.

Leverage the power of social media to extend your reach and connect with your audience. Platforms like Instagram, Facebook, and X offer unique opportunities to showcase your brand, engage with customers, and promote your products or services.

By prioritising these web design and digital marketing strategies, small businesses can create a compelling online presence, driving growth and success in the digital age.





## Teapot Creative

A brand battle is raging between minimalism and complex creative. This clash extends beyond visuals into the world of innovative coding and UX (user experience).

On one side stands the simple elegance of clean designs, emphasising intuitive UI (user interface) and efficient code. This approach helps with ease of use, load speed and a focus on essential content, appealing to users who crave clarity.

Champions of visual noise fight for the engagement and excitement that intricate designs can bring, with layers of interactivity creating a dynamic user experience. It may overwhelm some users but caters to those seeking a visually stimulating journey.

The ripples of this argument can be felt in digital marketing, too. Websites that embrace simplicity convey a clear message while visually complex designs capture attention, leaving a memorable imprint on users.

Striking the right balance is crucial as a lack of detail can lead to a lack of engagement, while excessive detail may alienate some users. Ultimately, the battle between blandification and chaos extends to the core principles of user engagement and brand identity.

The designers and digital marketers at Teapot carefully navigate this terrain, considering their target audiences, industry norms and the specific goals of their campaigns to find the optimal balance that resonates with their audience.



## Digital marketing that attracts, websites that convert

Our business is helping other businesses grow faster. We do this using digital marketing and user-focused websites - something that we like to think of as 'The Perfect Partnership'.

Bespoke, goal-focused digital marketing strategies start with a vital element: research. This unearths valuable business insights that you may never have explored before and it also helps us get to the very heart of a business; its unique selling point, target audiences etc. We use this data to craft detailed digital marketing strategies which we deploy using services including content marketing, SEO, Paid Media and email marketing.

Well-planned digital marketing strategies go hand in hand with user-focused website design.

We apply our technical skills and creative thinking to every website we build, making sure that they look great and are clear and easy to navigate. Partnering your website with digital marketing makes your business both visible and discoverable online, so customers searching out a particular product or service are more likely to find you.

Everything we do is based on research, strategy and producing results. As the marketing landscape continues to evolve and change, digital technologies will play an increasingly important role in business growth and success.

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



## Impact Design & Marketing

Strategically cunning. Creatively excellent. Delivering impact.

It's our mantra and what we've become known for. We're also multi-disciplined when it comes to marketing and communications, having built up a wealth of experience and expertise, it's what we call our Impact 'KnowHow' . . .

A combination of great strategy and creativity deployed across all marketing channels including: audio visual, digital and website design and build.

Whilst creating industry-leading work, we pride ourselves on being affordable and delivering great business value and ROI to our clients. Whether it's entering a new market, driving brand awareness, increasing sales, or expanding market share, we have the all-important Impact KnowHow to

deliver success, working closely with our clients to achieve their goals.

We have created some amazing communications for clients in the region and if you'd like to see examples of our marketing and creativity, or wish to discuss how we can create an impact for your business, reach out to our Managing Director, Rich: [richard@impactdm.co.uk](mailto:richard@impactdm.co.uk)



Design & Marketing

## Lendology CIC

At Lendology CIC, we harness the power of storytelling to highlight the impact of our initiatives. Through engaging videos and written success stories, we showcase the transformative journeys of our clients.

For example, our video story featuring Pow Property Ltd's renovation of a derelict property into a thriving



eight-bed HMO in Taunton exemplifies the positive outcomes of our Empty Property Loan scheme funded by Somerset Council.

By sharing these success stories on our website, social media platforms and newsletters, we not only celebrate achievements but also inspire others to explore sustainable finance solutions. We are also excited to announce the upcoming launch of a video shot by Royal London featuring our CEO and a rural homeowner; watch this space!

As a certified carbon neutral, B Corp lender, we are supporting local councils across the UK move towards their net zero goals, through loans to homeowners.

Check out our case studies for inspiration <https://www.lendology.org.uk/case-studies/>

We offer unique opportunities for individuals to contribute meaningfully to our mission of promoting sustainable finance and reducing our carbon footprint.

One of our interns from the University of Exeter led an initiative to support us with reducing our emissions.



## Elevating Business Performance

In today's fast-paced digital world, businesses must master audio visual and digital technologies for success. At Elevate Business Performance, we recognise these technologies' significant role in improving engagement, streamlining operations and driving growth. Taking inspiration from Simon Sinek's philosophy of starting with 'why', we explore how integrating these tools can transform your business strategy, encouraging a culture of innovation and connectivity.

- Your digital presence

Your website is often the first point of interaction with your audience. A well-designed site that is intuitive, informative, and visually appealing can significantly enhance user experience. Prioritise simplicity and clarity in your design to ensure your message resonates effectively with your audience.

- Your audience

In the realm of marketing, content is king. However, the medium of delivery is equally paramount. Leveraging audiovisual content like videos, podcasts, and webinars can drastically increase engagement. These formats offer a dynamic way to present information, making it more accessible and memorable. Incorporate storytelling to connect deeper, building trust among your audience.

- Streamlining operations

Digital technologies provide powerful tools for optimising operations. From cloud computing facilitating remote work to CRM systems enhancing customer relationships, the potential for efficiency gains is vast. Embrace these technologies to automate routine tasks, freeing valuable time to focus on growth initiatives.

In conclusion, integrating digital technologies is a strategic imperative. By understanding and harnessing these tools, businesses can unlock new avenues for growth and innovation, elevating their performance in the digital age.



## Thoroughbred Marketing

No matter what forms of marketing you embrace, or over which platforms, ensure you clearly communicate your messaging, whilst making sure the next action, is simple and clear.

As technologies update, Thoroughbred's long-held, key marketing principles still stand

- Common sense applied
- Keep it simple

Digital enables saying less, initially, whilst leading the viewer to more detail in multiple formats elsewhere.

Remember, good educators split content into visual, audio and written – for alternative learning styles.

Different generations increasingly consume content in alternative formats.

Digital is about presenting your messaging, to be consumed and absorbed, how your viewers want, when and where they want.

Therefore, common sense applied!

Many choose to watch videos – some without sound – are yours captioned?

Are your incoming messages collected and responded to? With more ways to receive inbound enquiries, monitoring and responses need planning and allocation.

Landing pages, ideally need similar content, each in audio, visual and written formats – for those consuming information in the different ways.

Technology advances continue, at pace. Search engines and AI algorithms are increasingly interpreting images, yet for now, the written word and webpage structure is paramount to optimisation for search engines.

Keep it simple . . .

Is your telephone number / email address easy to find (and correct)? Some still wish to call and email.

Check your details are up-to-date – wherever they appear – social media bios, web pages, articles, adverts and signage etc.

With these principles front of mind, Thoroughbred helps our clients' marketing embrace digital.

THOROUGHBRED 2004  
**MARKETING**  
STRATEGY ■ PLANNING ■ TACTIC ROLL-OUT

## Morledge & Co

In the ever-scrolling world in which we live now, it is important to have moving pictures in your armoury of promotional tools.

At Morledge & Co. we are always asking those who use our services to think about their audiences and how best to connect and communicate with them.

The huge surge in numbers of people watching video online suggests it's a fair bet that most of businesses' target audiences are doing so and even if not, they are more likely today to be captured by a moving image than a photo or text.

When we say moving, we mean it both in the sense that it is animated and that it elicits an emotional response. It is no surprise that YouTube is one of the most popular search engines in the world. YouTube does not present answers in words and pictures but in actions; videos that show you what you want to know.

PR, which is our business at Morledge & Co is and always has been about telling stories. What better way to do it than with a video? We know the traditional print media welcome a short video clip to accompany a press release. It does not have to be expensive or professional.

If it fits your brand and ethos and conveys your message, it will do the trick. What's more, you can use it on your social channels and your own website (helping your SEO) and link to it in newsletters and emails.



◀ Morledge & Co. arranged a GB News interview with an antiques dealer promoting its client Classic Antiques Fairs and submitted it with a press release about the fairs.

**Morledge & Co.**

Marketing • PR • Communications

## Hinkley Point C's tunnels ready for connection to Bristol Channel



The final stages of Hinkley Point C's offshore operations are nearing completion as the tunnels dug below the Bristol Channel are prepared for connection.

This marks a major step in the construction of the power station's cooling water system.

Two huge two jack-up barges, Neptune and Sea Challenger (pictured), have become a familiar sight in the Bristol Channel after their arrival last year to install vital components for the cooling water system.

Six giant shaft liners have been installed through the intake and outfall heads – ready for final connection to five-miles of tunnels.

The 5,000-tonne head structures were lowered onto the seabed in 2022 and will circulate water to the nuclear power station.

The 270-tonne liners have been installed 25-meters below sea level and feature a world-first "isolation cap". This will allow work to be safely carried out in the tunnels during the power station's construction and operation.

Miners will now make the final connection between the tunnels and the liners, which will allow water to start flowing into the power station.

Jonathan Smith, Area Delivery Director, said: "This is one of the final stages of our offshore operations, which has seen teams from EDF, Balfour Beatty and New Wave Solutions working together to deliver yet another incredible feat of engineering. The cooling water system is critical to the power station – which will help Britain fight climate change and achieve stronger energy security."

Roger Frost, Balfour Beatty Project Director, said: "This marks another significant step forward in the successful delivery of the first new nuclear power station in the UK for over 20 years.

"We have used our unique capability and unrivalled expertise to continue with the linking up of the six miles of tunnels which are buried below the Bristol Channel – another important chapter in the offshore works required for Hinkley Point C's critical water-cooling system."

### Lessons learned at site helping to deliver efficiencies

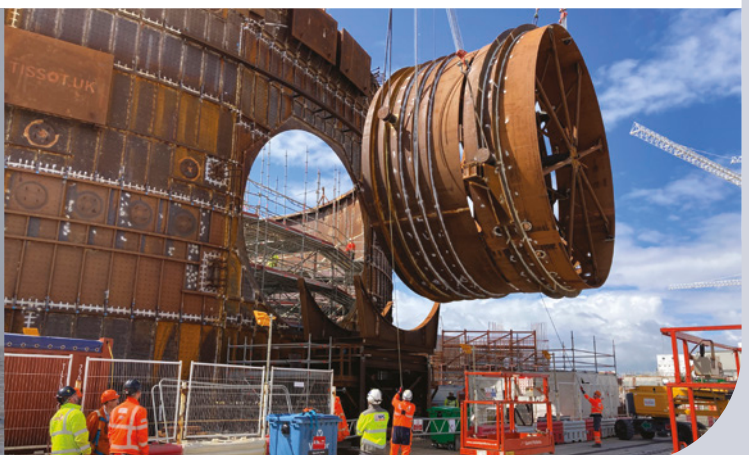
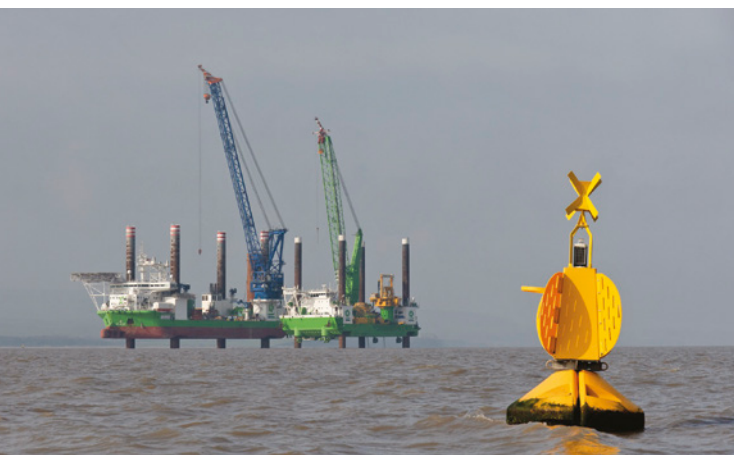
Hinkley Point C (HPC) will have two EPR reactors at site – Unit 1 and Unit 2 – once work is finished. Applying the lessons learned from the build of the first unit is already having a positive impact on the progress of Unit 2.

In turn, this will allow EDF to reap even more efficiency savings and benefits when work starts on Sizewell C, in Suffolk.

HPC Managing Director Stuart Crooks, said: "Building the first EPR of its kind is hard, but we are delivering. When we look at Unit 2 and the big efficiency savings made, we get around a 20% to 30% improvement compared to Unit 1."

The efficiency savings and benefits include:

- There are around 8,000 rooms at site and, after each one is completed, they are handed over for specialist painting. Before painting can begin, a detailed survey is undertaken to check that the room has been built to specification. Previously, data from a laser survey would take between 11-14 weeks to process and interpret. But new 3D technology means room handover times from completion to painting have been reduced from 14 weeks to just two weeks.
- Welding work for Unit 2's pools is now being completed four times faster than on Unit 1 by using a more efficient welding technique. These stainless-steel pools are filled with water so they can safely house the reactor pressure vessel and nuclear fuel assemblies and have to be completed to the highest nuclear standards.
- A 52-tonne equipment hatch was installed six weeks faster in the Unit 2 reactor building than it was in Unit 1. This was achieved by welding it to liner ring 2 on the ground before lifting the whole structure into position in one go (pictured).
- Each Reactor is surrounded by buildings housing safety systems and control equipment. Giant concrete slabs were completed on Unit 2 in six months, four months quicker than on Unit 1, by building on previous experience and increasing the use of digital modelling.



## Exclusive tour of Dorset and Somerset Air Ambulance

Wednesday  
**1 MAY**

This exclusive tour will be hosted by CEO Charles Hackett, with Emma Jones, Fundraising Manager, Georgia Beard, Corporate and Relationships Officer plus crew members, including pilots and clinicians. Together they will give an insight into the work of this life-saving charity.

Hosted by:



**Time:** 10am – 12 noon at Henstridge Airfield, Somerset, BA8 0TN  
**Cost:** £25 plus VAT members; £30 plus VAT non-members

## Let's network over lunch – Radstock and Midsomer Norton (Somer Valley)

Thursday  
**13 JUN**

This special networking event will bring together businesses in the Midsomer Norton and Radstock areas to forge connections with each other and members of Somerset Chamber. We are pleased to be able to offer a 25% discount off ticket prices for businesses in certain postcode areas, plus 20% off Chamber membership. See the Chamber website for full details.

Hosted by:



**Time:** £29.25 special discount price for Somer Valley businesses; £39 plus VAT for members  
**Cost:** 12.30pm – 2.30pm at Best Western Plus Centurion Hotel, Charlton Lane, Midsomer Norton, BA3 4BD

## Construction Connections

Thursday  
**9 MAY**

Join us for construction-specific networking with professionals from across the construction and planning industries. It is the ideal opportunity to make new contacts – plus there is the bonus of a buffet lunch and the chance to hear from experts from event sponsor InView Assets!

Sponsored by:



**Time:** 12 noon – 2pm at ibis Bridgwater, Woodlands Court Business Park, Bristol Road, Bridgwater, TA6 4FJ  
**Cost:** £25 plus VAT for members; £30 plus VAT for non-members

## Business critical forum – sustainability

Tuesday  
**25 JUN**

Join us for an informal discussion to help local businesses create a more sustainable operation by considering the ethical, regulatory and reputational requirements of being environmentally-friendly. Speakers include experts from Gridimp, Oden Services UK Ltd and Balanced Energy.

**Time:** 2pm to 4pm at Westlands Entertainment Venue, Westbourne Close, Yeovil, BA20 2DD  
**Cost:** £25 plus VAT for members; £30 plus VAT or non-members

## Exclusive tour of Harry's Cider

Tuesday  
**11 JUN**

Learn the process of making cider in the cidery and take a walk through the orchard on our behind-the-scenes tour! Attendees will also sample the award-winning ciders and limited-edition bottle fermented cider, accompanied by local cheddar, sourdough bread and crackers.

Hosted by:



**Time:** 2pm – 4pm at Harry's Cider, Littlefield Lane, Long Sutton, Langport, TA10 9NS  
**Cost:** £30 plus VAT members; £35 plus VAT non-members

## And dates for your diary . . .

### Speed Networking

**Wednesday, June 5** - join us at WPA Health Insurance, Blackbrook Park Avenue, Taunton, for an evening of speed networking. Keep an eye on our website for updates!

Hosted by: WPA

### Annual summer barbecue

**Thursday, July 4**, from 5.30pm – 7.30pm at Rumwell Farm Shop & Restaurant, near Taunton. Always a popular sell-out event in the Chamber's summer calendar!

\*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.



## Chambers lead successful start to Local Skills Improvement Plans

Local Skills Improvement Plans (LSIPs) across England “are working and beginning to make positive differences for local employers”, according to a new report commissioned by the British Chambers of Commerce (BCC).

Based on evidence from 21 of the 32 chamber-led LSIPs, the evaluation report concludes that the process is changing attitudes and encouraging more employers to collaborate and engage positively with the skills system.

Somerset Chamber of Commerce has been delivering the Devon and Somerset LSIP in partnership with Devon and Plymouth Chamber of Commerce.

The BCC is calling on the Government to commit to funding LSIPs beyond the current 2025 cut off point, to at least 2028.

The study highlights the “huge potential of LSIPs to build on the employer led system, improve strategic planning, maximise the impact of skills funding and boost employer investment”.

Using research conducted in Autumn 2023, the report analyses the approaches taken by 21 Chamber-led

LSIPs and identifies their impact so far. Data gathered as part of the research show that, as of May 2023, 65,765 employers had been engaged.

The research identifies a number of challenges for businesses, including “bureaucratic complexities” and “limited employer influence over skills spending priorities”. The report says overcoming the barriers requires “active engagement, open communication, and the advocacy of Chambers to smooth over the bumps in the LSIPs process”.

The report argues that the LSIP approach will lead to a more cohesive skills system.

Jane Gratton, Deputy Director Public Policy at the British Chambers of Commerce said: “Business-led Local Skills Improvement Plans (LSIPs) are only just getting started – but they are already making a huge difference.

“The local approach to skills planning brings huge benefits. Now we need a long-term commitment from politicians to make sure we can align skills investment with local economic growth, and help more people access the training they need for great jobs.

“Our report highlights how the



Chamber network is playing an important role in bringing employers and training providers together at a local level, to identify solutions and plan for change.

“If we get it right, the potential of LSIPs is phenomenal. It is an ongoing process that identifies business growth ambitions, the people and skills they need to achieve that growth, and the training needed for people to benefit from these opportunities.

“We need the LSIPs to stay business led, and to remain a key part of the Government’s long-term skills strategy. Without that commitment – the hard work already achieved risks being undermined.”

## Radstock and Midsomer Norton businesses invited to networking event

A special lunch will be held in Midsomer Norton in June to help businesses in the former Somer Valley Chamber of Commerce area connect with businesses both in the immediate locality and those from further afield across Somerset.

Somerset Chamber of Commerce will be hosting a dedicated Somer Valley networking lunch at the Best Western Plus Centurion hotel in Midsomer Norton on June 13 to help companies stay in touch with their existing contacts and meet new ones.

It comes after the dedicated Somer Valley Chamber of Commerce was wound-up and its remaining funds given to Somerset Chamber to ensure support continued for businesses in the Radstock and Midsomer Norton areas.

As a result, any businesses in the following postcode areas will qualify for a discounted ticket price for the lunch:

- BA3 – Midsomer Norton, Radstock, Westfield, Stoke St Michael, Coleford, Oakhill, Chilcompton, Stratton on the Fosse
- BS39 5, 6, 7 – Clutton, Temple Cloud, Bishop Sutton, High Littleton, Farrington Gurney, Hallatrow and Paulton
- BA2 0 – Camerton, Timsbury, Farmborough
- BA2 8 – Peasedown St John, Wellow, Withyditich

Business in these areas will also qualify for a special introductory Somerset Chamber membership offer of 20%

off the standard price of a year’s membership.

The lunch will include informal networking over a welcome drink before being seated for a two-course meal. A designated ‘table head’ will ask everyone to introduce themselves, giving guests the opportunity to hear from others, learn about their businesses, highlight their own companies and organisations and make meaningful connections.

More information about the networking lunch can be found in the upcoming events feature on page 21.

Representatives from Somerset Chamber’s membership team will be at the lunch, while the team can also be contacted on 01823 444924.



## Huge turnout for popular networking breakfast at iconic motor museum

Somerset Chamber of Commerce welcomed more than 90 businessmen and women from across the county to Haynes Motor Museum, Sparkford, for a morning of transport and networking.

Attendees were able to make new contacts and strengthen existing relationships while enjoying a cooked breakfast, before hearing from event sponsor National Highways.

Nick Aldworth, Regional Delivery Director and Sam Landrigan, Stakeholder and Communications lead, represented the agency and gave an update on the upgrade to the A303 Sparkford to Ilchester dualling scheme and wider project.

The new dualled section will start east

of Podimore Roundabout, follow the alignment of the existing A303 to Downhead, and then move north of the existing A303 single carriageway, allowing the existing road to be kept for use as a local road.

They said the £155m scheme between Sparkford and Ilchester would not only promote economic growth, but it would also tackle a long-standing bottleneck, reduce journey times to the South West and improve traffic flows in the area at peak times and during peak seasons.

After breakfast a handful of attendees were also given a guided tour of Haynes Motor Museum by a team of dedicated museum volunteers.

Emma Rawlings, Somerset Chamber

of Commerce Chief Executive, said she was grateful to both National Highways and Haynes Motor Museum for their support and said the networking breakfast offered invaluable support to the local business community.

“To have almost 100 business representatives in one room gave our members the opportunity to talk to other business professionals they may otherwise not have the chance to meet.

“It enabled them to both learn more about the economic landscape, raise the profile of their own companies and find out about the museum and the ongoing A303 upgrade.”

You can find the photo gallery from the event on page 25.

## Battery factory welcomed as ‘fantastic news’ for Somerset

Somerset Chamber of Commerce has welcomed the official announcement that Tata Group’s global battery business, Agravas, will build a new multibillion-pound electric vehicle battery factory at the Gravity site near Bridgwater.

It represents a £4 billion investment in Somerset, which will directly create 4,000 new jobs and thousands more in the wider supply chain.



And it is hugely significant for the UK as a whole. By the early 2030s it will contribute almost half of the projected battery manufacturing capacity required for the UK automotive sector.

Emma Rawlings (pictured), Chief Executive of Somerset

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

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

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

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

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

Read the full Gravity story on page 33.

## Call for businesses to support skills for a sustainable future

This year Somerset experienced its wettest February since 1836. With its extensive low lying coastline, levels and moors, flooding is a huge challenge for residents, businesses and public services.

So, the need to tackle climate change is a stark reality for employers and young people alike.

Somerset Education Business Partnership is supporting Somerset Council to develop ‘Sustainable Futures’ which will embed sustainability as a core theme across all national curriculum subjects, beginning with the first years of secondary school.

Many Chamber members took part in the initial curriculum scoping day in March, exploring the ‘green skills’ they require and how these link back to the curriculum. Many have also committed to share time and resources to take the work forward.

This joint approach between education and business can help Somerset to develop the skills it needs to progress towards net zero whilst providing quality employment and protecting our environment.

If you feel your business could contribute please get in touch:

E: [andrew.hanson@somerset-ebp.co.uk](mailto:andrew.hanson@somerset-ebp.co.uk)  
T: 07912 264531





## Recruitment

### Elite Staffing Solutions

What is the biggest challenge facing Somerset businesses? Recruitment is surely up there! So how do Elite Staffing Solutions support you in solving this problem?

We are the linchpin in the quest for talent, particularly when speed is of the essence. Our approach encompasses an array of activities aimed at swiftly identifying, assessing, and securing top-notch candidates for businesses.

First and foremost, we dive deep into understanding the unique needs and culture of your business. By

aligning closely with hiring managers, we gain invaluable insights into the specific skills, qualifications, and cultural fit required for each role.

Armed with this knowledge, the team embark on targeted talent sourcing, leveraging a diverse range of channels ranging from job boards to professional networks.



Efficiency is paramount in our arsenal. Using specific technological tools, we sift through CV's, identifying promising candidates for further evaluation.

This efficiency extends to the interview process, where we conduct comprehensive assessments encompassing skillsets, behavioural competencies, and cultural alignment.

Effective communication lies at the heart of our interactions. Beyond a transactional approach, we serve as brand ambassadors, adeptly conveying your organisations values while ensuring a seamless candidate experience throughout the recruitment journey.

As the hiring process progresses, we manage the pipeline, coordinate interviews, facilitate feedback and navigate offer negotiations.

The solution . . . to expedite the hiring process without compromising on quality, ensuring that businesses secure the best-suited candidates for your roles.

If your business is all to reliant on one approach, we can give you the tailored solution you need.

[www.linkedin.com/in/insurancerecruitmentexpert/](http://www.linkedin.com/in/insurancerecruitmentexpert/)

elite | staffing solutions

### HRGO

HRGO is one of the UK's leading recruitment agencies. They have been connecting clients and candidates across the UK since 1957.

Their expertise covers a range of sectors including Industrial, finance, sales, marketing, engineering, executive, commercial and warehouse.

In the Somerset, Dorset and Wiltshire area the recruiter to contact is Helen, who can be contacted by emailing [helen.lacey@hrgo.co.uk](mailto:helen.lacey@hrgo.co.uk).

With over 25 years' experience in recruitment, she is on hand to talk through your recruitment needs and see what the best solution is for you.

Why not call her today if you are looking for staff or looking for a new job! 07725 028113

Helen used to own Red berry Recruitment before selling the business to HRGO so is a seasoned professional in the sector.

She works remotely so initial contact is via phone, email or a Teams call.



She specialises on the permanent side of recruitment and always happy to see how she can help.

Visit [www.hrgo.co.uk](http://www.hrgo.co.uk) to see how we can help you with your recruitment needs or follow us on LinkedIn or on X @HRGORECSouthwest

HRGO recruitment

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

Sector focus: food, drink and hospitality Feature: going green Deadline: May 15





Let's network over breakfast at Haynes Motor Museum sponsored by National Highways



▲ Ben Grave (left), of Mark One Consultants and Mark Woods, of Somerset Skills and Learning.



▲ Amanda Whitlock (centre), of Total Wellbeing Matters.

▲ From left, Simon Lomen, of SDS, Rob Cadwallader, of Milsted Langdon, and Ritchie Cridge, of Connectable.



▲ Chris Scudds, Chief Executive of Haynes Motor Museum.



▲ From left, Lyndsay Blackshaw, of Albert Goodman, Guy Timson, of Channel Force and Helen Lacey, of HRGO Recruitment Limited.



## Afternoon tea and networking at Old Oak Farm, Curry Rivel sponsored by AmicusLaw

**Amicus Law**  
SOLICITORS



▲ Adam Hillier (left) and Brett England of sponsor AmicusLaw with Somerset Chamber's Jenn Chidley-Sanders.



▲ Vicky Banham (left) of Morledge & Co and Chantelle Znideric of TopStylista Image Consultancy Ltd.



◀ Somerset Chamber Board Director, Lizzie Tottle of Teapot Creative, hosted the event on behalf of the Chamber.





▲ James Richmond of Edward Martin Computer Services, Zena Eckford (centre) of X1 Limited and Tracey Rickard of Tracey Rickard Web Design.



▲ From left, Beki Sharman of ADPR, Jo Bartlett of Clarke Willmott and Leah Rosewell of ADPR.



▲ From left, Mariet Plaistow (left) of Amarin Rubber & Plastics, Mike O'Shea of Valiant South Best t/a SCG Solutions and Aron Charles of Amarin Rubber & Plastics.



▲ Denise Hepburn (left) of Thermomix and Jon Gilbert and Debbie Gilbert of Viva Business Group.

## Construction Connections at ibis Bridgwater sponsored by Aardvark Occupational Health



▲ Dr Catherine Lewis (left) of sponsor Aardvark Occupational Health, Somerset Chamber Chief Executive Emma Rawlings (centre) and Kate Tyndall of Aardvark Occupational Health.



▲ Sponsors Kate Tyndall (left) and Dr Catherine Lewis of Aardvark Occupational Health highlight 'occupational health essentials' at the event.



Welcome to our newest members of Somerset Chamber.

#### **DHA Fire Stopping Ltd**

Fire safety

One of the fastest-growing local businesses in the passive fire industry offering second-to-none service. Third-party accredited with the IFC, a member of the ASF, specialising in fire door inspections and upgrades, passive fire surveys and fire stopping all over the UK.

**steve@dhafire.co.uk 07825 549568**

**steve@dhafire.co.uk**

**<http://www.dhafire.co.uk>**

#### **Gympanzees**

Charity

Gympanzees provides fun and fitness for mild to profoundly disabled children (0 to 25 years). We purchased a building and through our £10.8m Project Home Appeal we will create a purpose-built leisure facility, the first of its kind in UK.

**Stephanie Wheenan 07551 615969**

**info@gympanzees.org**

**[www.gympanzees.org](http://www.gympanzees.org)**

#### **International Trade Matters Ltd**

International trade

International Trade Matters Ltd offers independent consultancy for international trade across sectors, geographies, and disciplines, offering expert advice and support to companies engaged, or interested in, overseas connections or business. We offer advice on new markets, compliance, and international marketing strategies.

**Linda Middleton-Jones 0333 7722565**

**info@internationaltradematters.com**

**<https://internationaltradematters.com>**

#### **JW Vending Ltd**

Food and drink

We are a Bristol-based family-owned vending machine company, operating throughout South-West England and South Wales. Supplying all you need for vending machines and ingredients, also comprehensive service and repair for existing units. We offer prompt, reliable and professional services at competitive rates.

**Christian Worgan 0117 9828795**

**enquiries@jwvending.co.uk**

**<https://jwvending.co.uk>**

#### **Lomax Design and Build Ltd**

Business sector Construction

Lomax Design and Build's team of skilled architects, designers, and contractors work together to blend innovative design with eco-friendly practices to create properties that are not only visually striking and unique but also kind to the environment.

**Eliza Massey 01761 232889**

**info@lomaxdb.com**

**<http://www.lomaxdb.com>**

#### **Make Me A Garden Ltd**

Ornamental horticulture

Combining a straightforward menu of options with professional guidance and support we're on a mission to deliver a friendly service, free from hidden costs that enables even beginners to inject colour, style and variation into their nature-friendly garden transformations.

**Jo Christoforides 07773 813069**

**makemeagarden@gmail.com**

**<https://makemeagarden.com>**

#### **Secret Valley, Somerset**

Hotel, tourism and events

Secret Valley delivers bespoke holistic retreats that can be tailored to suit the needs of different companies. Showcasing our natural scenery, onsite glamping accommodation, outdoor activity centre, onsite vineyard, and beautiful rustic barns. Secret Valley is the ideal corporate retreat venue.

**Will Hardwick 01278 671945**

**will@secret-valley.co.uk**

**<http://www.secret-valley.co.uk>**

#### **Secret World Wildlife Rescue**

Charity

Secret World Wildlife Rescue is a charity dedicated to the rescue, rehabilitation and eventual release of British wildlife. Each year we help around 5,000 sick, injured and orphaned wild animals and educate the public about the natural world.

**David Plant 01278 783250**

**info@secretworld.org**

**[www.secretworld.org](http://www.secretworld.org)**

#### **Somerset Counselling Centre**

Charity

Somerset Counselling Centre is a charity providing affordable therapy and a safe space to talk. Our skilled counsellors will listen and help you understand how past experiences, future worries, or low self-confidence may be affecting your life.

**Tanya Hall-Palmer 01823 337049**

**info@scctaunton.org.uk**

**<https://scctaunton.org.uk>**



**Thermomix****Food and drink**

Thermomix makes cooking fun, easy, and delicious, saves energy and money, and helps reduce waste and packaging. Also known as the world's smallest, smartest kitchen appliance, Thermomix weighs, chops, grates, slices, grinds, steams, slow cooks, blends and makes ice cream, sauces, soups and so much more.

**Denise Hepburn 07712 527221**  
**hepburndenise@gmail.com**  
**www.mixingmagicwithmythermomix.com**

**WCI Group Limited****Water and wastewater engineering**

With 40 years' expertise in water and wastewater engineering, WCI provides a complete 'design and build' service to domestic and commercial customers on all makes of sewage treatment plants, pumping stations, rain harvesting systems, borehole pumps and water filtration systems.

**Naomi Taylor, Director 01984 623404**  
**enquiries@wci.co.uk**  
**www.wci.co.uk**

**Viva Business Support****Marketing and events**

For the past 25 years we have been providing marketing and event management support for SMEs helping them create more visibility for their business. We are a full service agency offering support for both digital and traditional marketing channels.

**Debbie Gilbert 07795 684598**  
**debbie@vivabusinesssupport.co.uk**  
**www.vivabusinesssupport.co.uk**

**Wiltshire Friendly Society Limited****Insurance**

Wiltshire Friendly is an income protection provider, it's the only insurance we do! We have products for both individuals, to insure themselves against loss of income due to illness or injury, and businesses to provide a valuable employee benefit.

**Jon Gratland 01225 752120**  
**info@wiltshirefriendly.com**  
**www.wiltshirefriendly.com**

## MEMBERSHIP

### Latest member-to-member offers

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

**Wessex Pop-Up Coldrooms Ltd**

One free month and long-term lease from £8/day

**ONE**  
MONTH FREE

**Blueloop**

Half price Cyber Essentials consultancy

**HALF**  
PRICE

**10%**  
OFF

**George Albert Hotel**

10% off delegate rates for members

**Morledge & Co**

10% off PR workshops 'PR Mastery for SMEs and Entrepreneurs'

**10%**  
OFF

**10%**  
OFF

**Growing vision**

10% discount on the Confident Leader Programme

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



# How foreign exchange through Moneycorp can save Chamber members money

By Sophia Awan of Moneycorp

The outlook remains challenging. Soundbites from experts worldwide are still mentioning global recession, downturns in growth, increasing inflation and housing market crashes.

The UK, particularly, is continuing to suffer with the war in Ukraine still impacting the cost of living and high interest rates reducing demand for property while forcing up rental rates and creating a perfect storm to undermine the UK housing market.

Needless to say, times are tough for UK businesses as the purse strings of the average household tighten, and the effects of slow growth and continued inflation have more of an effect on the day-to-day.

Something often overlooked is saving money through your foreign exchange provision. This can be a smart way to save money quickly without cutting back on other areas of your business.

Here are our top five ways to save money by optimising your foreign exchange provision:

## Make sure you're getting the most competitive rates

When you're exchanging large amounts of money; a small difference

in rate can make a big impact.

We source our rates through our panel of 18 liquidity providers and but many banks are bound by a single rate.

Make sure you've managed your execution risk because depending on how much you're exchanging, the difference could be in the thousands – multiply that over the year, and your savings become significant.

## Avoid unnecessary fees

Watch out for hidden costs – some foreign exchange providers charge you to open a corporate account and to hold various currencies, while others charge fixed fees on transfers. Compare the fee structure against your foreign exchange needs, as different providers will work better for your business.

## Open a multiple-currency account

If you receive multiple currencies, make sure you have an account that supports that. It's easy to incur charges and fees inadvertently when you receive different currencies into your UK bank account – and once it's done, it's difficult to do anything about it.

With an account that holds multiple currencies, you avoid these fees. It's an easy move to cut costs and we've seen clients save over \$10,000 simply by opening a multi-currency account.

## Protect yourself against risk

The impact of fluctuations in the GBP/EUR rate these fluctuations are present all the time in business, for example when you raise invoices in foreign currencies.

In an ideal world, they would all be paid within thirty days but sometimes it can stretch over months. If there's been a big swing in the exchange rates during that time it's bound to have meaningful effect on the trade -



whether it eats into your profit margin or swallows it up completely.

To mitigate this kind of risk, your organisation can explore forward contracts. This allows you to hedge the rates on invoices for future payments, protecting you against volatility.

## Get some expert guidance

FX experts work with you to understand your exposure and suggest the most appropriate currency tools that will enable you to save money on your exchange transactions. An experienced currency management professional can execute your risk management strategy in line with your risk appetite and investment objectives.

We know it's not always easy to see the true cost of foreign exchange, so at Moneycorp, we start every client relationship with a free audit.

By looking at up to 12 months of data, including the times and dates of your transactions, the exchange rates, and the type of products your business uses, and what currencies you trade, we help paint a clear picture. This allows us to understand your foreign exchange history and the needs of your business to show you accurately how and where we can save you money.

Moneycorp can then help you protect your business from unwanted exchange rate movements with various strategies to suit your risk appetite and business plans.

All Somerset Chamber members have access to Moneycorp as one of their key member benefits. Just login to the Chamber membership area to find out more.



Please note forward contracts may require a deposit. None of the information contained in this article constitutes, nor should be construed as financial advice. Moneycorp Financial Risk Management Limited (company number 5774742) is registered in England. Its registered office is at Floor 5, Zig Zag Building, 70 Victoria Street, London, SW1E 6SQ. Moneycorp FRM is a trading name of Moneycorp Financial Risk Management Limited is authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority for the provision of designated investment business (firm reference number 452443). Moneycorp is a trading name of TTT Moneycorp Limited and is authorised by the Financial Conduct Authority under the Payment Service Regulations 2017 (reference number 308919) for the provision of payment services.



# Up to 67% off

award-winning business  
breakdown cover



We have more expert Patrols  
trained in electric vehicles  
than anyone else\*



We fix 4/5 cars  
at the roadside,  
right there and then



Track us right to your side  
if one of your vehicles  
breaks down

Contact your local  
**British Chamber of Commerce**  
representative



## Cooper Associates Foundation celebrates £100,000 donation milestone

Cooper Associates Foundation, the philanthropic arm of award-winning financial advice firm Cooper Associates Group, has reached an impressive donation milestone of £100,000 in donations.

Since its inception in 2018, the foundation has supported a wide range of charities and community projects throughout the South West, most of which have a key focus on the physical and mental wellbeing of children and young people.

Charities and good causes supported include PROMISEworks, Reminiscence Learning, All Sorts Gloucester, Ark at Egwood, JOGLE for Jude and The Nelson Trust.



The foundation raises funds through the generosity of the people within Cooper Associates Group. This includes donating money through their earnings as well as their time setting up fundraising events. These have included skydives, charity cycle rides, black tie poker nights, golf days and litter picking.

Through the foundation's support, charities can overcome hurdles in their efforts to support their communities and reach fundraising objectives.

Brainwave, a Somerset-based charity which helps children with disabilities and additional needs achieve greater independence, was one such charity to receive vital funding from the foundation.

Keith Sinclair, CEO of Brainwave, said: "We are beyond grateful to Cooper Associates Foundation for their generous donation of £4,500, which will have a huge impact on the Somerset families we support.

"Thank you for walking alongside us on our journey to support even more children and families both locally and



across the UK. We are fortunate to have you in our Brainwave Family."

Samantha Jackson, CEO for Cooper Associates Group and a Trustee of Cooper Associates Foundation, said: "The whole team at Cooper Associates Group is beyond proud to have reached this momentous goal.

"I know I speak for us all when I say we are honoured to support such important charities and enable our local communities to thrive. Here's to raising and donating the next £100,000."

Any charity or good cause looking for funding support can contact Cooper Associates foundation via its website at [www.thecooperway.com](http://www.thecooperway.com). The foundation welcomes applications all year round.

## Westcotts supports King's College Taunton's equestrian team

Westcotts has announced its sponsorship of the King's College Taunton Equestrian Team, in the latest contribution in support of the communities in which the Westcotts team works and lives.



King's College Taunton is an independent day and boarding school for those aged 2-18. The equestrian team, comprised of over forty pupils and headed by Victoria Selway, is offered to pupils of all ages, from complete beginners to experienced riders.

The team competes regularly in national competitions and recently qualified for Royal Windsor for the third year running, an amazing achievement given there are only 20 places available within the whole country.



Westcotts has a long history of links with the school with Partner Sheldon Cole sitting on the Alumni Association Committee. Across 16 offices, the Westcotts teams also serve a number of agricultural and equestrian-based businesses.

This sponsorship marks the latest in a host of support given to organisations local to Westcotts' network of 16 offices, including Plymouth Argyle and Devon Classic Motorcycle Club.

Last year, they also sponsored the school's summer term prize giving awards at King's College Prep and King's College. At both schools, the Westcotts prize was awarded for attitude to learning.

Sheldon Cole, Partner at Westcotts, said: "I'm so pleased that Westcotts have supported those pupils who are part of the equestrian team to ride, train and compete. King's College Taunton is a vital part of the Taunton community and we hope to continue this relationship in future years."

Westcotts Chartered Accountants and Business Advisers has a team of experienced and talented experts with a wealth of knowledge offering a wide range of specialisms and services. The firm has supported individuals and businesses across diverse sectors operating in local, national, and international markets for over 30 years.

Pictured are members of the equestrian team, with coach Victoria Selway, alongside Sheldon Cole and Tara Bell, both Partners at Westcotts.





## Gravity welcomes Agratas gigafactory as first smart campus occupier

Plans to build Britain's biggest electric vehicle battery manufacturing facility in Somerset have been announced.

Agratas – Tata Group's global battery business – has confirmed that the Gravity Smart Campus located near Bridgwater has been chosen as the location of its new UK gigafactory.

This is the first time Somerset has been formally confirmed as the location for the UK's new gigafactory. It represents a £4 billion investment in Somerset, which will directly create 4,000 new jobs and thousands more in the wider supply chain.

And it is hugely significant for the UK as a whole. By the early 2030s it will contribute almost half of the projected battery manufacturing capacity required for the UK automotive sector.

Local people will be kept informed at all stages of the development. People living near the site – previously known as the Royal Ordnance Factory 37 – will soon be receiving an introductory leaflet from Agratas.

As owner of 50% of the remaining land holdings, This is Gravity Limited will continue to liaise with local community and stakeholders and collaborate with Agratas.

Martin Bellamy (pictured), Chairman, and Tom Curtis, Co – Founders of Gravity said: "It's impossible to overstate how important this is for the UK. It is the catalyst to kick-start the electric vehicle revolution in the UK.

"As the biggest battery gigafactory in the UK, and one of the largest in Europe, its transformational impact will be enormous.

"We look forward to working closely with Agratas, Somerset Council, Bridgwater & Taunton College and wider stakeholders to deliver this gigafactory as part of the Gravity Smart Campus."

This development will enable the South West to 'take charge' and accelerate the UK's clean and inclusive growth revolution, creating new job and business opportunities in future-facing sectors.

# Gravity

Councillor Bill Revans, Leader of Somerset Council, said: "This is momentous for the county, its economy and for future generations. It's about seizing an incredible opportunity to be at the heart of the UK's green energy industry that will create thousands of highly-skilled, well-paid, green jobs."

Andy Berry, Principal and CEO of Bridgwater and Taunton College, welcomed the news. He said: "I'm delighted by this announcement and what it means for our community and the wider region. We've got a great deal of experience in workforce development - big infrastructure projects like Hinkley Point C.

"We can draw on that experience. We've been here and we've done this and Agratas can be tremendously confident in our community and in our workforce."



## Exmoor-based blacksmiths complete bespoke project at Crystal Palace Subway

West Country Blacksmiths based at Allerford Forge, near Minehead, have completed a large-scale bespoke metalwork project at the Grade 2\* listed Crystal Palace subway as part of a 2.8-million-pound restoration completed in partnership between the Historic England.

Opened in 1865, Crystal Palace Subway is a beautifully designed and crafted relic of Victorian construction. Hidden under the Crystal Palace Parade it was built to provide access to the Crystal Palace.

The craftsmen from West Country Blacksmiths were tasked to design and make nearly 200 meters of handrails, four double entrance gates and seven electrical cupboard door hatches.

Over a period of three months, the blacksmith travelled to London to install the metalwork which was all produce



WEST COUNTRY  
BLACKSMITHS

from their quaint picturesque National Trust owned forge.

Kieren Roberts, director of West Country Blacksmiths, said: "It was a pleasure to work at this amazing place, a really hidden masterpiece. We are really pleased to have played our part in its restoration.

"This project allowed us to show the diverse skills we have within our talented team include 3D site surveying, CAD designing, forge and fabrication work in both steel and stainless steel and our onsite capabilities.

"I would like to take the opportunity to thank our dedicated and hardworking team for all their efforts on this project."

While continuing to produce works for the local community, the team is also building a growing reputation nationally adding Crystal Palace to a portfolio of projects which includes Kensington Palace, The Palace Theatre, The Wellcome Trust, Pencarrow House and many other national landmarks.

The craftsmen continue to be busy with their current projects including a staircase for a property on the Isle of Silly, The Royal History Museum, Mawley Hall and three pairs of gates being made for a property in Australia

Kieren added: "We are proud to have the opportunity to work on some large projects, we need this to keep our 10-strong team of local craftsmen busy, but our heart and the majority of our work continue to be for, and will always be for the local community."

## Taunton School hosts charity swim as it makes its return for 2024

A Taunton charity swimming competition has made its return after a four-year hiatus caused by COVID-19 restrictions.

The event, a joint venture between Taunton Soroptimists, Taunton 41 Club, and Taunton Round Table, was hosted by Taunton School in one of its on-site swimming pools and was attended by Mayor Cllr Nick O'Donnell and more than 130 swimmers.

Taunton School was the main sponsor of the event together with support from Milsted Langdon, Alpha Trophies, Rockwell Printers and Timpson.

Originally founded by Taunton Soroptimists in 1988, the Taunton Swimathon has taken place at Taunton School every year, apart from 2020 to 2023 during the event's hiatus, and has raised more than £680,000 for 78 local charities.

This year's event raised money for



Somerset Counselling Centre, Young Somerset, and Ups and Downs Southwest, with the current figure sitting at more than £7,000 with more donations to come throughout the month.

Val Lambert, Swim School and Sports Club Manager at Taunton School, said: "Taunton School is delighted to have hosted the Taunton Swimathon again this year. It is a great charity event which invites keen swimmers in the local community to challenge themselves in the pool.

"We are very happy that the event has already raised lots of money and, as always, has helped to raise the profile of swimming as a fabulous way to exercise and have fun. Well done to all swimmers who took part over the weekend!"

The Taunton Swimathon is just one of many events hosted by Taunton School, with its swimming pools, sports pitches, theatre, hall, and more all regularly used by local companies, sports teams, and schools.

Christine Biggs, organiser of the Taunton Swimathon, said: "It was great to return to Taunton School this year and I'm thrilled that everyone enjoyed themselves and we were able to raise a good amount of money for local charities.

"Thank you to everyone at Taunton School for their generosity and help with the event. We can't wait to return next year!"



## ADPR announces new hire and two promotions

Marine specialist communications agency, ADPR, has appointed a new PR professional to its award-winning consultancy and made two promotions within the team.

Beki Sharman, a seasoned PR professional, has been promoted from the role of Account Director to Client Services Director, demonstrating her exceptional skills in client relations and strategic leadership.

Beki's dedication and expertise have been instrumental in fostering strong client partnerships, and her elevated role will contribute to the agency's continued success.

Leah Rosewell, who has been an invaluable member of the ADPR team since 2011, has been promoted from Office and Account Manager to Account Director.

Leah has played a pivotal role in the agency's achievements, making her promotion a well-deserved recognition of her contributions. As Account Director, Leah will move into a more client focused role, fostering client satisfaction and overseeing the seamless execution of campaigns.

ADPR's Joint Managing Director, Jenny Walford, expressed her excitement about these developments, highlighting the agency's commitment



to fostering talent and providing opportunities for career progression.

Jenny said: "We are thrilled to see Beki and Leah take on elevated roles within the agency. Their promotions are a testament to their hard work, dedication, and the impact they have made on our clients and the team."

In addition to these promotions, ADPR has welcomed Charlie Lilley to the team as its newest Account Manager. Charlie brings a wealth of experience and fresh perspective to the agency, further enhancing its capabilities to deliver outstanding communication strategies for clients.

Charlie joins ADPR from Global, where she worked as an Account Manager in the commercial team for five years. During her time at Global, she supported businesses in Somerset, Wiltshire, and Dorset with multichannel marketing and

advertising solutions.

Prior to her role at Global, Charlie spent a decade working within the commercial teams of media businesses with press and news functions in both B2B and B2C sectors. Her diverse background includes experience in generalist and vertical markets, providing her with commercial specialisms in leisure, tourism, hospitality and professional services.

Jenny added: "Charlie's addition to the team comes at an exciting time for ADPR, as we continue to grow and evolve. We look forward to seeing Charlie's contributions helping our clients to succeed."

These advancements underscore ADPR's commitment to maintaining a dynamic and progressive work environment, where team members are encouraged to excel and grow within the agency.

## Pardoes Solicitors unveils exciting new chapter

Pardoes Solicitors has announced two significant appointments, marking a new chapter of excellence and expertise at the firm.

Sarah Gratton has been appointed as Head of Agriculture and Farming and Michael Sewell is the new Head of Commercial Property.

A company spokesman said Sarah's passion for agricultural law and her commitment to supporting farmers and agricultural businesses made her a tremendous asset to the company, while Michael had a wealth of experience and profound knowledge in commercial real estate make him an invaluable addition to the team.

"These appointments signify an exciting period of growth and progression for Pardoes Solicitors," the spokesman said.

More information is available at [www.pardoes.co.uk](http://www.pardoes.co.uk).



## Big month ahead for It's In The Bag Cancer Support

It's all go for It's in the Bag Cancer Support as the charity gears up for a busy month of awareness during April, the official testicular cancer awareness month.



It's Match Fit campaign, originally launched in 2018 with seven ball sports and the catchphrase "are your balls match-fit?", will be targeting clubs and teams in Somerset to push the awareness message.

Recently, Exeter Chiefs star Henry Slade started the ball rolling by taking part in an awareness video and the charity is also working with tennis clubs, hockey teams, Bath FC, golf clubs and has even managed to contact Bristol-born Rob Milkins, who is at the snooker world championships.

Testicular cancer is the most common cancer of 15 to 49-year-old men, but it also affects younger and older men. It's in the Bag offers support to men across the South West who have been diagnosed with testicular cancer.

It also raises awareness of testicular cancer and the importance of regular self-checking. Visit [www.itsinthebag.org.uk](http://www.itsinthebag.org.uk) to find out more.

## New top team in place to take Yeovil-based CETSAT forward

The founder of IT company, CETSAT, Durgan Cooper, is moving into a new role as Chairman and will be replaced in the day-to-day management of the company by Alan Watkins, who was previously an integral part of Durgan's team as Head of IT and Cyber.

Alan will also be joined by a Sales Director, Paul Rowe, who has been recruited to the company in a new role which will bring CETSAT's vision to previously untouched areas and industries - alongside Michelle Dymond as Commercial Director and Tao Ball as Software Director.

CETSAT was formed in 2001, with the mantra to 'do things different, do things better.' That has been diligently applied to the company's work for over two decades, resulting in a record number projects, staff and clients. With over 500 years of combined experience across the team, CETSAT is well placed to continue its development.

Durgan Cooper, CETSAT Chairman, said: "I'm embarking on a new journey, passing the baton of leadership to the capable hands of Alan Watkins, Michelle Dymond, Tao Ball, and Paul Rowe. Their vision and drive assure me



that CETSAT's future is brighter than ever.

"Throughout these years, we've navigated the ebbs and flows inherent in any business. It's been a journey made richer by the dedication and talent of our past and present staff. Their collective efforts have sculpted CETSAT into the remarkable entity it is today.

"I also wish to express my deepest gratitude to our clients, some of whom have been our steadfast companions since our inception in 2001. Witnessing your evolution and successes has been nothing short of inspiring. It's been an honour to partner with such a diverse



and dynamic group of business leaders and innovators."

Alan Watkins, Managing Director, added: "Taking on the role of Managing Director is an exciting challenge, especially with how CETSAT is so tantalisingly poised to continue its impressive growth. We're expanding into new industries, with new services, so it's a real pleasure for me to be able to help guide this positive development.

"Technology is developing at a rapid pace, which brings both challenges and opportunities. We are blessed with an incredibly capable team who are taking full advantage of the fast-moving landscape, delivering an evolving portfolio of ever-improving services for our clients.

"From cyber security to software development, digital transformation to support services, CETSAT's unique offering is one that will continue to grow - we're all looking forward to contributing to its progress."

## Cognique welcomes new team member and unveils new brand

As a website design and digital marketing agency, Cognique decided it was high time for their own branding to have an upgrade. They have been in business since 2003, and a lot has changed since then.

David Rice, Creative Director, said: "With this ambition in mind, we set about rebranding and creating a new website, a huge in-house project that has been months in the making - but the results were well worth it.

"Our rebrand embodies where we're going as a business. It's confident and engaging, and was created through a collaborative effort that involved the skills of everyone in the Cognique team."

Cognique MD, Nigel Reece, said: "Our modern rebrand aligns with our vision



and values, and reflects our plans for growth.

"It's a subtle shift of our position in the marketplace as we continue to evolve into a confident, results-driven agency.

"I believe the rebrand embodies our goals and collaborative spirit. I hope it will attract dynamic, new talent - as well as more business."

The team has also welcomed Matt Park as a new SEO Executive. Matt brings over 12 years of experience to Cognique and has worked in digital marketing companies of all shapes and sizes - from start-ups, to the



prestigious Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra.

Outside of the office, Matt is a family man and passionate musician, having gigged in numerous bands all over the country.



## Mark One Consultants - supporting the rise of Yeovil Town FC

Mark One Consultants is proud to announce its partnership with Yeovil Town Football Club, a beacon of community and sporting passion in National League South.

Following a challenging period, the club, under the leadership of Chairman, Martin Hellier, has embarked on a remarkable journey towards success, now leading the league with high hopes for promotion.

The Mark One team, led by Rowan Turner, is providing top-tier IT support, playing a part in the club's resurgence and operational excellence.

Rowan said: "Working closely with Keith

Weston, Head of Stadium Operations, our focus has been on ensuring the highest levels of IT service, essential for the club's day-to-day operations and long-term ambitions.

"This collaboration is more than just a service agreement; it's a partnership built on mutual respect, shared goals, and a commitment to excellence, both on and off the field."

He said as Yeovil Town Football Club continued to grow and achieve, Mark One Consultants was looking forward to being a part of its exciting journey, supporting the club's aspirations and celebrating its successes.



## Stone King's Tag wins national intern award

An apprentice from Bath law firm Stone King has won a national award for the most outstanding intern.

Tag Rowe, an apprentice solicitor currently working in the law firm's Employment Team, scooped the Alexander Paul Award at an event held by the 10,000 Interns Foundation.

Tag started at the firm last year through the 10,000 Black Interns scheme, before going on to successfully apply for an apprenticeship.

The event at Arsenal's Emirates Stadium saw 25 longlisted candidates who had achieved places in the Foundation's 10,000 Black Interns scheme shortlisted to five, with Tag emerging as the winner for his work at Stone King.

The Alexander Paul Award honours a gifted young man who died from a brain tumour before he could achieve his ambition of becoming a lawyer.

"I am delighted to have won the Alexander Paul Award and take inspiration from Alexander's drive, determination and vision," said Tag.



## Bristol Airport sees record passengers in 2023



Bristol Airport experienced a record number of passengers with nearly 9.8 million people using the South West's gateway in 2023, making it the busiest year in the airport's history.

Bristol Airport recovered faster from the pandemic than any other major UK airport, seeing huge pent-up demand for holidays and travel to reunite with family and friends. Passenger numbers have continued to grow and are now higher than they were before COVID hit.

The number of travellers to and from Bristol Airport was up over 10% in 2023 compared to pre-pandemic levels in 2019. The busiest day was in late August 2023, when over 40,000 people travelled through the airport over a 24-hour period.

This year will see major investment at Bristol Airport, with construction underway on a £60m public transport interchange and multi-storey car park. When complete in summer 2025, a glazed bridge will link the new public transport and car drop-off area with the terminal, providing step-free access and transforming the customer experience.

The project is the airport's largest since the terminal was built over 20 years ago and is part of a wider multi-million-pound upgrade of facilities to improve services for passengers.

Graeme Gamble, Chief Operating Officer, Bristol Airport, said: "Last year saw fantastic results as more people than ever saw the benefits of flying from our region's gateway airport and we welcomed in visitors from all over the UK and Europe.

"Our business partners, airlines and Bristol Airport have been able to create new jobs, building up our position as the area's largest private sector employer.

Over eight million people a year drive out of our region to fly from London airports. Our plan for growth in 2024 and beyond is to give as many of those people as possible the chance to fly local and reach their destination through Bristol Airport."

Over 115 destinations will be served from Bristol Airport in 2024. Major investment to upgrade the airport this year will deliver new airport lounges and more retail space as it moves towards serving 12 million passengers a year.

## Bank of England summary - falling inflation and an up-tick in optimism are driving expectations of recovery

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



@BoESouthWest



Even though Q1 is likely to be weak, rising real incomes, falling energy prices and expectations that monetary policy will loosen are contributing to cautious optimism among contacts that the volume of sales of goods and services will return to growth this year.

Retailers expect demand beyond Q1 to improve for both goods and services. This is reflected in food, drink, and consumer goods producers' anticipation of some recovery in demand from around the summer. Exporters expect growth in services exports to continue and for goods exports growth to turn positive later in 2024.

Investment intentions are slightly more positive than in recent months. Capital and intermediate goods producers expect some pickup in demand later in the year.

An expected increase in business transactions should result in a modest increase in demand for discretionary business services. Although recovery in commercial real estate activity (and supporting services) and construction is expected to come later than most other areas, likely late 2024/early 2025.

The period of relative weakness in demand we have seen is leading to a mild loosening in the labour market, although it is still tight by historical standards. Recruitment continues to get easier for most. Some businesses have started to move away from labour hoarding due to a loosening in the labour market.

Consumer price inflation continues to moderate, with services inflation moderating more slowly than for goods, reflecting the high labour content in services prices. Indications are that Red Sea disruption is having only a limited impact on retail prices so far.

Investment intentions for the year ahead are a little more positive than in recent rounds. Contacts seem more optimistic about the economic outlook owing to inflation falling and a sense that interest rates and the cost of funding will follow.

Transport and logistics contacts continue to increase investment in trucks, ships, warehouses, and infrastructure. Production contacts are expanding investment plans, focusing on automation, robotics, energy, and other efficiency measures to offset labour constraints and cost pressures. Business services investment is stabilising, reverting to more regular cycles of IT and office upgrade.



## BANK OF ENGLAND

Contacts continue to prefer to fund investment out of cash and are reluctant to take on borrowing. For those having to borrow, the higher cost of finance, along with higher material/input costs, pushes out payback periods and is leading to deferral of some capital expenditure.

The volume of exported goods continues to fall compared to this time last year. Contacts expect it to turn modestly positive later in 2024 as customers finish destocking and reduced costs make exporters more competitive.

Demand for UK goods from the EU and China continues to weaken. Demand from the US remains resilient. Weaker demand for consumer goods and previous overstocking by overseas customers continues to reduce exports in areas such as electronics.

Business services revenue growth is picking up slightly on a year ago and contacts expect it to strengthen modestly during 2024. The price of business services continues to increase and volumes, until very recently a drag on revenue growth, have stopped falling compared to a year ago.

The story is not entirely positive across the business services sector. Continued constraints on discretionary spending means weak growth in advertising, marketing, and consultancy, while a slightly looser labour market means lower demand for recruitment consultants. Spending on IT services is also subdued though cyber and artificial intelligence remains strong.

Manufacturing output continues to fall slightly compared to a year ago as enquiries fail to become orders. But contacts are budgeting for a slow recovery during 2024.

Output growth remains strong in the aerospace and defence sectors supported by demand from the US and to a lesser extent Asia (excluding China). Growth in nuclear and renewables-driven production remains solid, as does that for oil and gas-related activities, though to a lesser extent.



## Self-employment approaching a ten-year low

Analysis of the UK's employment landscape has revealed a fall in the number self-employed people since the beginning of the pandemic. Self-employment is approaching a ten-year low, and the share of the UK workforce that is currently self-employed is the lowest in almost two decades.

**Read more about the analysis at:**

<https://markets.businessinsider.com/news/stocks/uk-self-employment-is-approaching-a-10-year-low-new-analysis-by-business-coach-academy-reveals-1033146998>

## Over 50s awarded £140m in Start Up Loans

Since 2012, more than £140 million of Start Up Loans have been awarded to people aged over 50. In total 13,422 loans have been awarded, at an average of £10,427. Almost half of the funding (£64 million) has been provided since the first lockdown in 2020.

**Read more about the loans awarded at:**

<https://www.startuploans.co.uk/media-centre/ageless-ambition-post-pandemic-surge-in-50-entrepreneurship-brings-up-140m-start-up-loans-milestone/>

## Over half of councils face bankruptcy

More than half (51%) of senior council leaders have warned that their local authority is likely to face bankruptcy in the next parliament unless local government funding is reformed. Around a third are planning to cut business support with 9% likely to declare effective bankruptcy in 2024/25.

**Read more about the statistics at:**

<https://lgiu.org/press-release/over-half-of-councils-face-bankruptcy-within-next-parliament/>

## Investigation into use of personal guarantees

Following a 'super complaint' from the FSB, the Financial Conduct Authority has committed to investigating the use of personal guarantees by lenders to support small business loans. The FSB has raised concerns that growing demand for personal guarantees has a detrimental impact on small businesses, which they believe dissuades them from borrowing to grow.

**Read more about the super complaint at:**

<https://www.fca.org.uk/news/press-releases/fca-investigate-use-personal-guarantees-certain-small-business-lending>

## Less than 20% of regeneration projects completed in England

The Government has confirmed that less than a fifth of projects to improve towns across England have been completed. Less than 20% of projects funded by the Towns Fund were due to be finished by the end of February 2024. Many local authorities have stalled or reduced their plans as a result of higher costs.

**Read more about the delays at:**

<https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2024/mar/03/fewer-than-20-levelling-up-projects-completed-england-figures>

## Plan to boost skills

The British Chambers of Commerce has published a ten-point plan to boost workforce skills. The plan includes the creation of an industrial strategy, better skills planning and more investment in careers information, education and guidance.

**Read more about the plan at:**

<https://www.britishchambers.org.uk/news/2024/02/new-framework-to-boost-access-to-skills-and-jobs>

Source: BAD News (Business Advisers News)




Life support for  
your business is at the  
heart of what we do...

PHOTOCOPIERS, PRINTERS & SCANNERS  
SUPPLY, MAINTENANCE & SUPPORT  
PRINT MANAGEMENT

www.sdsLtd.uk.com

Call the SDS team on 01278 723784 today  
and book your **FREE** SDS Print Health Check

SDS Limited  
Unit 3-4 Suprema Industrial Estate,  
Edington, Somerset TA7 9LF

T: 01278 723784 F: 01278 723785  
E: info@sdsLtd.uk.com [www.sdsLtd.uk.com](http://www.sdsLtd.uk.com)





KONICA MINOLTA  
MANUFACTURER  
APPROVED

★ ★ ★ ★ ★  
5 STAR  
SERVICE ACCREDITATION  
SOUTHWEST DIGITAL  
SYSTEMS LTD.



# SOMERSET BUSINESS AWARDS

2024

# CONGRATULATIONS AND THANK YOU

TO EVERYONE WHO SUPPORTED #SBA2024

MAIN SPONSOR



Albert  
Goodman

Somerset's heartbeat since 1834  
County Gazette



GATHER  
TECHNOLOGY



\*clarke  
willmott

Blossom  
CONSULTANCY

Stephens  
Scown

HinkleyPointC  
EDF CGN

LEONARDO

Teapot.

Gravity

PORTER  
DODSON

Higos  
INSURANCE

WESTCOTTS  
CHARTERED ACCOUNTANTS  
& BUSINESS ADVISERS



Somerset  
Chamber of  
Commerce

@Somerset\_Awards

@sombizawards

Somerset Business Awards

[somersetbusinessawards.org.uk](http://somersetbusinessawards.org.uk)