

# Somerset Voice

The Official Magazine of  
Somerset Chamber of Commerce

**August /  
September  
2025**

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BUSINESS COMMUNITY  
**CONNECT  
INFLUENCE  
& GROW**



"I thought it was a great event with  
an excellent speaker and I was  
thrilled to represent Church House  
Investment Management as  
sponsors."

Andrea Steel  
Head of Private Clients (South West),  
Church House Investment Management





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*Front page: The first steel frames taking shape at the Agratas site near Bridgwater.  
Photo: Agratas*

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**Printers:** Carly Press, Somerset  
**Design by:** Thoroughbred Marketing, Somerset



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## We are social



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## FIRST WORD



The Chamber network is only too aware of the pressures our business community is continuing to face following the Government's increase in National Insurance contributions and minimum wage levels.

We will continue to lobby on our members' behalf through the British Chambers of Commerce to ensure Government consults with business on this and other important issues.

We are also continuing our work with the Devon and Somerset Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) which puts employers at the heart of the skills agenda.

The newly published summer 2025 progress report gives a detailed account of how employers, educators and regional leaders are transforming the skills system to meet the future head-on by creating an employer-led skills system.

As part of our commitment to the LSIP, we will be hosting a half day Somerset skills summit on September 30, from 8.30am to 1.30pm at The Canalside Conference Centre, in Bridgwater.

The event will gather Somerset's business and education leaders together to reflect on the progress made since the formation of the LSIP in 2023 and help shape the future skills plan for Somerset for 2026 and beyond. There is no charge to attend.

As ever, we have a busy calendar of events for our members, including the launch of the Somerset Business Awards 2026 at Hestercombe House on September 10. I'm excited to be able to tell you that we have a new venue for the final of this year's awards - the Bath & West Showground which will enable us to offer more tickets to members, entrants and finalists.

The final will take place on Thursday, March 26 and, also new for this year, tickets will go on sale as soon as the awards open in September to give everyone a chance to be part of this exceptional awards night.

*David Crew*

MANAGING DIRECTOR  
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## OUR BUSINESS PARTNERS

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

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# SOMERSET CHAMBER 30TH ANNIVERSARY DINNER



**AT RNAS YEOVILTON**  
**with the Lord-Lieutenant of Somerset,**  
**Mohammed Saddiq**



**THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 27**  
**6pm - 11pm**





BRITISH CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE

# QUARTERLY ECONOMIC SURVEY Q2 2025

**Business sentiment remains subdued following April's NICs increase.** The BCC's Quarterly Economic Survey (QES) for Q2 2025 - the UK's largest independent survey of business sentiment, made up of 93% SMEs - shows business confidence remains weak, despite some slight improvements in key indicators.

**Taxation remains the top concern, cited by 56% of respondents**

**The proportion of businesses expecting to put up prices eases to 44%**

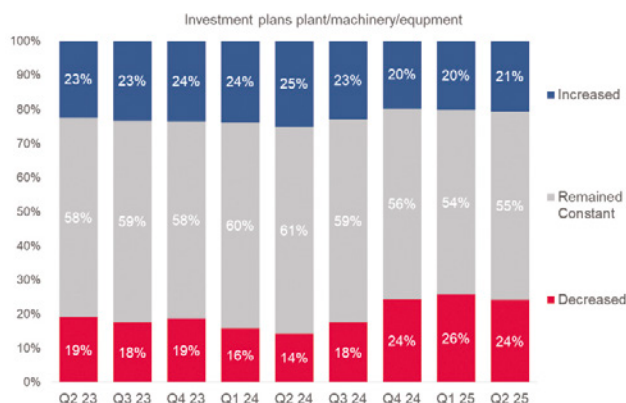
**Fewer firms report increased sales, investment and confidence**

## AT A GLANCE

### Investment

**Overall, 24% of businesses say they have cut back on investment plans. 55% of firms say their investment strategy has remained the same, while only 21% have increased their plans.**

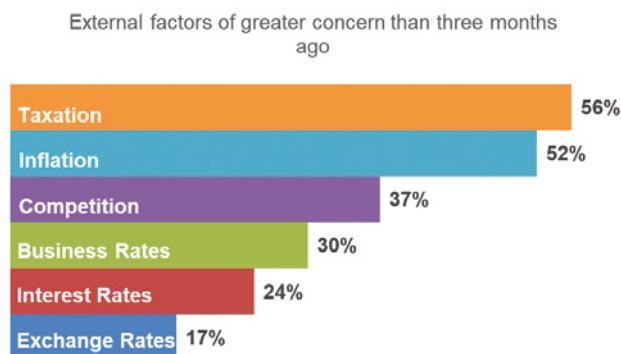
Wide sectoral disparities remain, with 39% of hospitality firms and 32% of transport firms reporting a scaling back of investment plans.



### External factors

**Overall concern has fallen slightly, but taxation remains the top concern for businesses. 56% cite it as a worry, down from 59% in Q1.**

Concern about inflation remains high among businesses - 52% compared with 53% in the previous quarter. Worries about interest rates have fallen with 24% citing it in Q2, down from 28% in Q1.



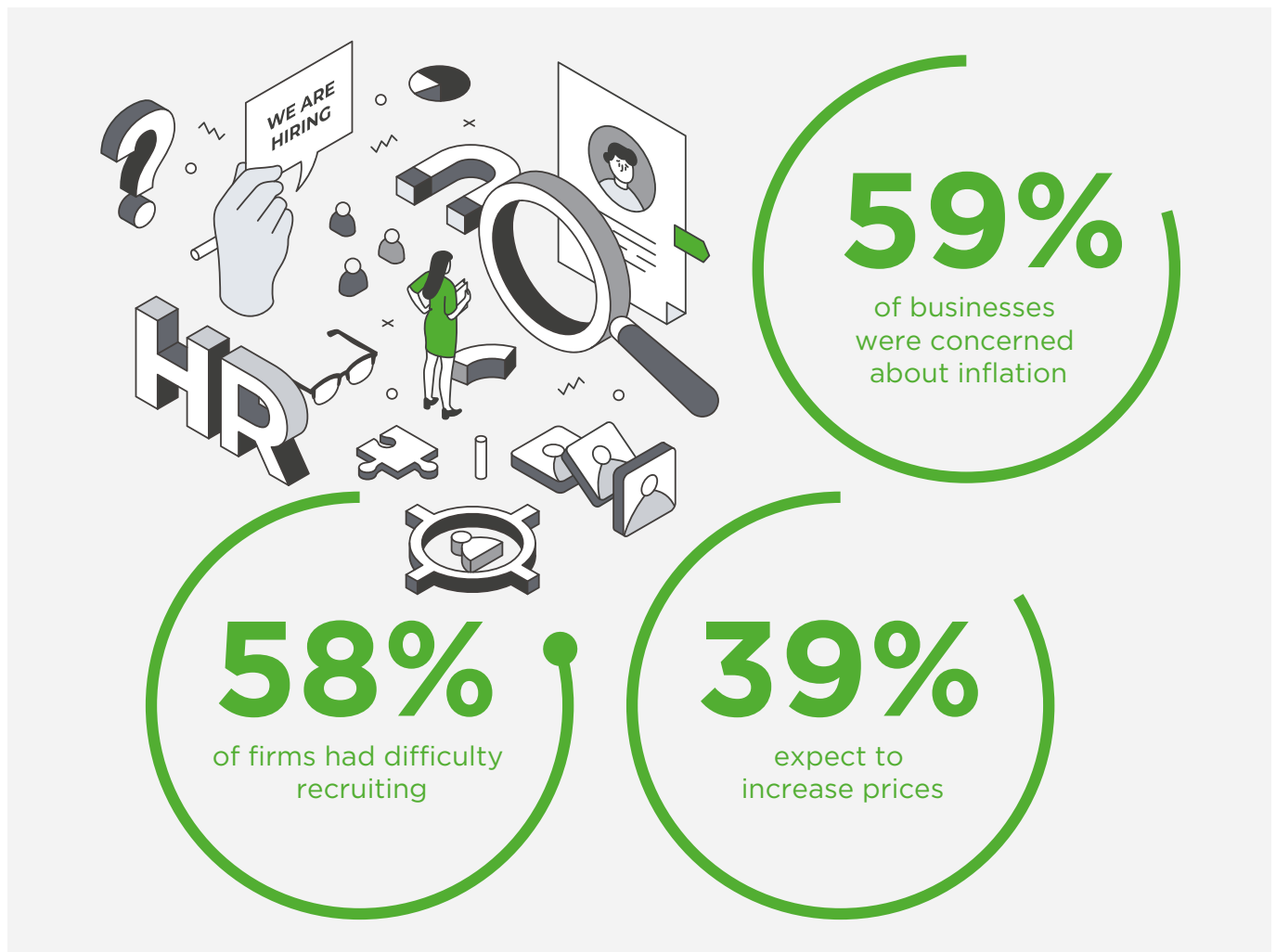




SOMERSET CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

## QUARTERLY ECONOMIC SURVEY Q2 2025

Somerset businesses continued to follow the national trend and again cited taxation as the biggest cause for concern in Q2 of the QES, although the percentage was significantly lower than the previous quarter. Some 81% of respondents said tax was more of a concern than it was three months ago in Q1, this time, that figure dropped to 64% but concerns about inflation increased to 59% in Q2. Business confidence remained low but showed an improvement on Q1, with 48% of firms expecting a drop in profits, down from 56% in the previous quarter. The percentage of companies expecting to increase prices in the next three months also improved with 39% planning to levy price rises compared to 66% in Q1. Labour costs were the overriding financial pressure for most respondents, with 84% saying the cost of employing staff was the main factor in deciding whether to increase prices, with the price of utilities and raw materials coming in around 40% and 35% respectively. Only 38% of businesses said they were currently operating at capacity, while 58% of respondents reported having difficulty recruiting suitable staff, largely in the skilled and technical sectors and for professional and managerial roles.



## Brown & Brown SW steps out in aid of charity partner

Fundraisers from Brown & Brown SW were joined by Cardiff teammates, insurer partners, friends and families for a 10km or 13 km hike around the Mendip Hills in aid of the company's chosen charity MOSAIC.

The charity provides young people and their families with care and support following the death of a loved one and was chosen as Brown & Brown's (B&B) official two-year charity partner.

Alan Clarke, Brown & Brown South West Regional MD, said: "At B&B SW we have a long-standing commitment to



supporting local charities and causes across the South West.

"I am very proud of my teammates. Two teams took on the challenging half hike with gruelling climbs and less than ideal weather conditions.

"The total raised for our incredible charity partner, Mosaic Supporting Bereaved Children, is now at an amazing £5,319 (including Gift Aid) so far! Thank you to all those who donated."

Jo Revill, Mosaic Chief Executive, thanked everyone who supported the fundraising venture and added: "The amount raised by B&B will pay for up to five sessions of professional counselling, working with their families and schools to support them through the loss of someone close to them.

"The amount will also cover the cost of running three bereavement cafes in schools, where we invite children who've recently suffered a loss to come in, do some artwork, and meet fellow students who've also experienced grief and who can share that experience with them."

## Weston College Business Awards shine a spotlight on learner and employer success

Weston-super-Mare's prestigious Winter Gardens was the venue for the highly anticipated Weston College Business Awards.

The event brought together 200 distinguished guests for an inspiring celebration of learners and local employers who have worked closely with the college to offer work-placed opportunities to people taking their first steps in their career.

The event celebrated the strong partnerships between Weston College and local businesses, recognising both learners and employers who have collaborated to provide meaningful work-based opportunities.

Awards were presented across a range of categories, highlighting excellence in apprenticeships, adult training, industry placements and community projects.

This year's winners exemplified innovation, dedication, and shared success, with each award spotlighting both the learner and their employer:

Apprenticeship Partnership Award Winner – George Evans and The Bristol Port Company



University Centre Weston Higher and Degree Apprenticeship Partnership Award Winner – Immanuel Oyetunde and Airbus

Pathways for Young People Partnership Award Winner – Nikita Heeley and University Hospitals Bristol and Weston NHS Foundation Trust

Career Excellence Hub Partnership Award Winner – DoubleTree by Hilton Bristol South – Cadbury House

Adult Training Partnership Award Winner – Geerthana Anantharajah and ICTS UK

Industry Placement Partnership Award Winner – Will McKillop-Duffy and William Haley Engineering

Into Work Partnership Award Winner – Harry Bessant and Bakers Dolphin

Community Project Award Winner – Media Charity Showcase Project

Principal and CEO, Pat Jones said: "The Weston College Business Awards was a truly memorable evening – a celebration of the talent, dedication, and ambition that make our community so special.

It was an honour to recognise the hard work of our incredible learners, whose determination continues to inspire us. We were also delighted to share the evening with our valued employer partners – your ongoing support and collaboration play such a vital role in our learners' success.

The number of nominations we received this year speaks volumes about the high standards and commitment shown across the board. Every finalist and nominee should feel incredibly proud – your passion and drive shone through.

The college thanked sponsors Mendip Activity Centre, Mindful Education, Image Sign and Pace Agency.





## MP visits the final phase of Taunton's Killams Park development

Gideon Amos, MP for Taunton and Wellington and Lib Dem spokesperson on housing and planning, recently visited the third and final phase of Summerfield Homes' Killams Park development.

Mr Amos, a qualified architect and former head of the Town and Country Planning Association (TCPA), was accompanied by three local councillors for a tour of the development at the invitation of the Somerset based house builder Summerfield Homes.

Summerfield began work on Killams Park nearly 10 years ago and has since completed on 297 properties, planted more than 1180 trees and has funded over £2,890,000 to date in off-site contributions to benefit the local area.

Joining the MP on the visit were Somerset Councillors Hazel Prior-Sankey and Fran Smith as well as Connor Sollé of Taunton Town Council. They were shown a variety of properties ranging from two to five-bedroom homes with the latest energy efficient features.

The visit also included a look at the four homes under construction that will soon be handed over to Abri Housing Association at the end of the year.

Ed Khodabandehloo, Managing Director at Summerfield Homes, said: "It was a pleasure to welcome Gideon and the team of councillors to Killams Park. With his professional



background being in urban planning, it was particularly interesting to have our MP's perspective on new housing and place making. Killams Park reflects our long-term commitment to building well designed sustainable homes in the South West."

Gideon Amos, MP for Taunton and Wellington, said: "I was pleased to meet with local residents and with the developers of this estate. I was impressed with the quality of workmanship and the green spaces the development provides and it's good to see a local Taunton company achieving so much."

## Bristol Airport develops new Supply Chain Sustainability Charter

Bristol Airport has announced the launch of a new Supply Chain Sustainability Charter, designed to inspire and support more sustainable practices across its business supply chain.

The charter sets out a clear framework that encourages suppliers and business partners to support with Bristol Airport's environmental values and to encourage and to adopt the airport's sustainable practices.

In particular, it focuses on areas such as carbon reduction, responsible sourcing, waste reduction, energy efficiency, as well as supporting skills and employment in the region and maximising its wider social impact on the local community.

The initiative forms part of the airport's sustainability strategy, which aims to achieve net zero airport operations by 2030 and work with its value chain to achieve net zero by 2050.

The new Supply Chain Sustainability Charter marks a milestone for Bristol Airport as it becomes the first regional airport outside of London to track and score the performance of organisations it works with to enhance efforts to reduce emissions and waste.

Bristol Airport will not only measure the direct emissions, those directly attributable to Bristol Airport, but also capture data under its indirect emissions, known as Scope 3 emissions.



The airport has made the commitment in its Sustainability Strategy 2023-2028 to develop a supplier code of conduct and scorecard to actively track and encourage suppliers and business partners to adopt more sustainable practices.

All suppliers to Bristol Airport will be expected to uphold and advocate the expectations across each sustainability focus area and the metrics identified in this Charter will apply across the airport's supply chain through a defined roll-out process.

Hannah Pollard, Head of Sustainability, Bristol Airport, said: "We recognise that reducing our environmental impact is not something we can do alone.

"This Supply Chain Sustainability Charter is a powerful step forwards in working collaboratively with our suppliers and business partners to create a more resilient airport environment.

"Bristol Airport is embracing the approach to achieve net zero operations by 2030 and we are proud to lead by example and help drive collective progress across the business to support a more sustainable practice."

More information about the Supply Chain Sustainability Charter is available in the procurement section of the airport's website.



## Further growth for Albert Goodman as accounting firm reports record year

Leading South West accountancy firm Albert Goodman has reported another strong year of growth, with the business celebrating a record-breaking FY25.

The Taunton-headquartered firm, which started the year with the opening of its new premises in Yeovil, has achieved 11% revenue growth in the last 12 months. Albert Goodman has also received an uptick in new clients, with a 25% increase in new business, equating to £4.5 million in acquired revenue.

Elsewhere, the firm has seen additional growth in its financial planning team – which advises both individuals and businesses on tax reforms, estate planning, pensions and investment opportunities – with revenue increasing by 22%, as more clients seek expert advice amid turbulent economic times.

Internally, Albert Goodman has further bolstered its expertise, with a number of senior hires brought in across its audit, business development, forensic accounting and corporate finance divisions.

Most recently, the firm announced the promotions of three of its home-grown directors – Robin Clempson, Tom Stone and Kelly Pinder – to Partner, each having contributed to Albert Goodman's success for over a decade.

Iain McVicar, managing partner at Albert Goodman, said: "The last 12 months have been a particularly strong period for the firm, and one that reflects the skill, passion and dedication of each and every person at Albert Goodman.

"Our expertise as accountants and financial planners is becoming all the more important, and as a proudly independent firm, I'm proud of the positive and lasting impact Albert Goodman continues to have on both new and existing clients."

Alongside its commercial success, Albert Goodman continues to play a key role in supporting its local community. The firm this year announced a headline, multi-year partnership with iconic the Bristol International Balloon Fiesta. Albert Goodman's financial commitment will be crucial in securing the future of the much-loved event for years to come.

Iain McVicar added: "Having been in business for over 150 years, we truly know the importance and value of supporting what matters to our local communities. Whether that's partnering with iconic events in the region or providing employment and development opportunities for the next generation."



## Events showcase Somerset's business opportunities

Somerset's economy will be in the spotlight in September when the Invest Somerset Showcase 2025 takes place, highlighting the county as a dynamic and thriving place for business and investment.

Taking place over three weeks in September, the showcase puts the spotlight on the key growth and innovation opportunities within the new Somerset Economic Prosperity Strategy 2025-45, highlighting the county's key growth sectors, investment activities, as well as business support and innovation opportunities.

The Somerset Economic Growth Board, a partnership between business, business representative organisations, colleges, and Somerset Council, has helped shape the Strategy. The Board provides the 'business voice' into the Council and helps inform economic development plans and activities.

The series of events are open to

all businesses and stakeholders in Somerset's future economic growth.

Councillor Mike Rigby, Lead Member for Economic Development, Planning and Assets, said: "The events are a must for any Somerset business, offering the chance to meet with like-minded people, learn more about growth and innovation and discover the range of business support available from Somerset Council."

Harry Singer, of Chamber member Singer Instruments who chairs the Somerset Economic Growth Board that has helped shape the strategy, said: "I'm excited - Somerset has a real opportunity to lead the UK in low-carbon energy, while also leaning into our strengths in aerospace, defence, high-value manufacturing and digital.

"These events will showcase our capabilities and bring together businesses, investors, and stakeholders to elevate Somerset's economic trajectory."



Those planning to attend need to book a place. Only one event is by invitation only.

The showcase sessions are:

September 2: Low Carbon Energy, at Somerset County Cricket Club Taunton

September 10: Upskilling, Reskilling and Recruitment, at Victoria Park community centre, Bridgwater.

September 11: Boosting SMEs and VCSEs, at Council Offices, Shepton Mallet.

September 16: Aerospace and High-Value Manufacturing (invitation only), iAero, Yeovil.

September 24: Digital and Data, at Firepool Centre for Digital Innovation, Taunton.

More is available on the dedicated webpage at [www.somerset.gov.uk/business-economy-and-licences/invest-somerset](http://www.somerset.gov.uk/business-economy-and-licences/invest-somerset).





## Your Eco: powering Somerset's sustainable future

When Somerset-based businesses need clean energy solutions that deliver real results, they turn to Your Eco – the Certified B Corp™ that's transforming the UK's renewable energy landscape.

Since 2016, Your Eco has grown into a multi-million-pound enterprise, projecting £7 million turnover for FY 24/25 with a remarkable 130% growth trajectory. But it's not just about the numbers – it's about impact.

### Major developments shaping the future

Your Eco is currently delivering one of the UK's most ambitious renewable energy projects in partnership with YTL Construction at Brabazon, Bristol – installing solar PV and battery storage across 6,500 new energy-efficient homes, plus arena, purpose-built student accommodation, and train stations. This 10MW development showcases how large-scale renewable integration can power entire communities.

### Award-winning UK projects

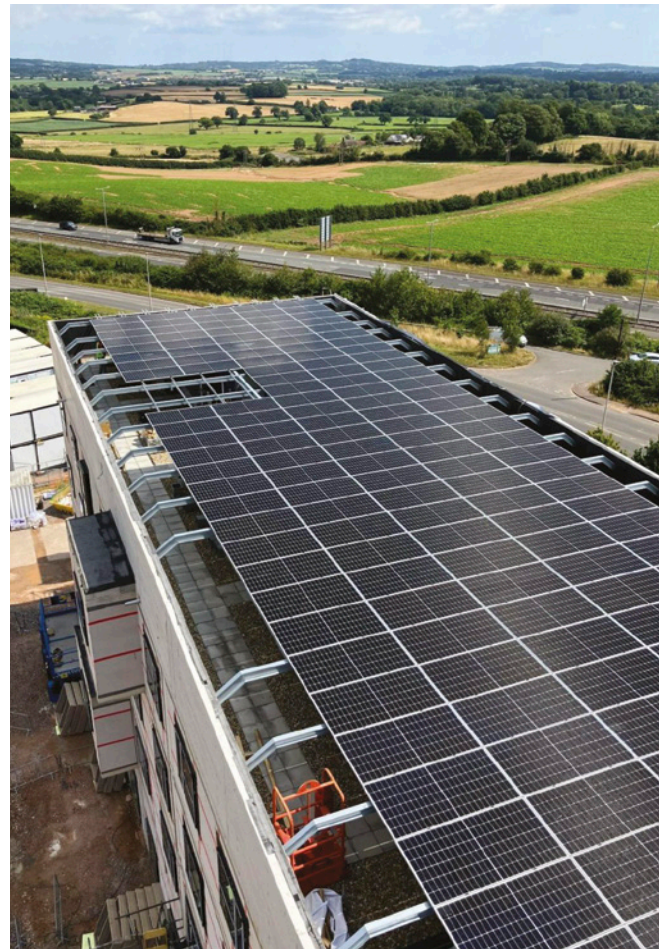
Your Eco's impressive portfolio includes groundbreaking achievements:

- Zeals Hotel, Exeter Science Park: the UK's first carbon-neutral hotel featuring innovative solar cladding with vertical panels on three walls plus rooftop array, generating 300kWh annually
- Virgin Unite's off-grid media centre: opened by Sir Richard Branson in the British Virgin Islands after Hurricane Irma
- State-of-the-art Tesla Powerwall installations: certified Tesla installers providing cutting-edge battery technology to clients nationwide

### Global impact, local expertise

Your Eco's international portfolio demonstrates their capability to deliver in the most challenging environments:

- Nepal Solar Schools: working alongside Prince Harry and charitable organisations, they installed solar-powered schools and refurbished hydro turbines in the Himalayan mountains post-earthquake
- Virunga National Park: electrified orphanage facilities in the Democratic Republic of Congo, bringing sustainable power to vulnerable communities
- BVI STEP Programme: delivered the British Virgin Islands' largest MW-scale rooftop solar project



### Your partnership starts here

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Working with you towards an energy independent, low carbon future.





## Construction



### Weston College

With the UK construction sector facing a critical skills shortage, with 251,500 additional workers needed by 2028; Weston College is committed to developing a future-ready workforce by equipping learners with the skills and qualifications employers need.

From future construction professionals in management, architecture and surveying to trade training in bricklaying, carpentry, electrical, and plumbing; we're aligning education with industry to support national growth.

Partnering with local trades in bricklaying, carpentry, electrical, and plumbing is essential to shaping a curriculum that meets industry need. These partnerships help build a pipeline of skilled workers ready to meet demand.

Competitions also boost learner skills and confidence; like the SPARKS Female Skills Competition, recently won by Weston College learner Gracie. The event tested her technical ability under pressure. Reflecting on it, she said: "It gives you a chance to meet others on the same journey and to push yourself to see what you can achieve under time constraints."

To assist employers with recruitment, we embed learner engagement and industry enrichment into all college courses through guest lectures, site visits, career talks, site experience, and interview days.

The annual Construction T Level Day takes place on October 1 during UK Construction Week, with learners aiming to secure their mandatory 45-day industry placement via speed interviews with employer partners.

T Level learners often move into paid employment after completing their placement. If you're from the construction or trade sector looking to find talent, we want to hear from you: contact [employers@weston.ac.uk](mailto:employers@weston.ac.uk)



### Agratas

The first steel frames on the Agratas site near Bridgwater, Somerset are now in place, marking a major milestone in the construction of the UK's flagship battery manufacturing facility.

It marks the start of the next phase of construction, the vertical build, and is a visible step forward in the delivery of the facility. The steel structure will be erected in phases, with the build beginning at the north of the site at the end of June.



Agratas is proud to confirm that 100% of the steel used for the build is sourced from British suppliers, supporting UK manufacturing and demonstrating the company's commitment to

national supply chains.

It follows significant progress on site in recent weeks: approximately 17,000 piles are now in the ground, forming the solid foundations required to support the scale and ambition of the project.

Piling for Building One, which will form the first phase of the facility, is in the final stages and ground clearance for the wider Agratas development area is ongoing. As activity on site continues to ramp up, additional cabins have also been delivered to accommodate the growing Sir Robert McAlpine construction team and others working to bring the facility to life.

The Agratas Somerset facility is a transformational and nationally significant project that will supply almost half of the batteries needed by the UK's automotive industry by the early 2030s, creating thousands of jobs and educational opportunities, supporting local businesses both within the construction industry and in its broader supply chain, and delivering significant long-term investment to the region.

### AGRATAS



## Kaiasm

We're Kaiasm, we specialise in helping people get their data and institutional knowledge ready to be interoperable across silos within their business, or between organisations in a value chain. An example would be allowing different transport network operators to exchange data easily - National Highways roads data and Transport for West Midlands bus data, for example. It's also getting that data and institutional knowledge ready for AI - we're working with the Turing Institute on that and have just published our first Turing Institute Case Study.

We deliver all this with our software platform: OntoKai. It's a "knowledge orchestration" platform that helps organisations structure and manage their strategies, policies, regulations, operating models, org charts, data schemas, ontologies, taxonomies, reference data and business rules.

At National Highways, it handles their taxonomy and ontology services, helping them to ensure common meanings across their many different IT systems and organisational processes, and we hope that this will be the case across the 5-year roads investment scheme (RIS3) - we are a key part of the consortium (led by engineering firm GHD) that has been awarded the contract to do so.

OntoKai isn't just breaking down the walls between internal organisational silos, it's breaking down the walls between organisations too. For the Department for Transport, OntoKai provides the visualisation and stakeholder engagement interface for their developing "multimodal transport ontology" - a map of all the common concepts used by different transport infrastructure and operators that anyone can join their data to.



## Assistance Technique International (ATI) Ltd

Somerset is seeing a notable uptick in construction and development activity. Whether it's commercial investments, residential housing expansions or infrastructure improvements, there's a lot of momentum building in the area.

Assistance Technique International (ATI) Ltd has been supporting construction projects across the UK for over 17 years. We are proud advocates of apprenticeships in the construction sector and firmly believe in developing future talent.

At the same time, we recognise the depth of experience

and specialist knowledge required for certain key roles. Our strength lies in our focus on sector-specific expertise — it's at the heart of everything we do.

At Hinkley Point C, we are currently providing highly skilled personnel including Welding Inspectors and Supervisors, Site Supervisors, QA/QC Managers, and Project Engineers. We've also been invited to support sub-contractors on the exciting new Agratas project in Somerset with MEP Package Managers, Senior Appointed Electrical and Health & Safety Managers.

We're proud to be supporting local, Somerset-based construction projects and contributing to their success. [www.ati-uk.co.uk](http://www.ati-uk.co.uk)



## Springboard

Helping construction-related businesses streamline operations, maximise safety and productivity whilst reducing admin headaches is what team Springboard thrive on. From surveyors and landscapers to logistics and trades, we join-up systems so teams can focus on delivering projects - not paperwork.

We've our easy-to-use platform to simplify quote, invoice and timesheet processes working in multiple industries.

Syncing teams on the road with the office job management system, enables real-time scheduling, material tracking and timesheet capture, for accurate invoicing and timely project oversight. Teams no longer arrive to find a job already completed. We've developed risk assessment logging tools and lone worker apps

- vital for rural, hazardous environments or areas with no signal - the designated responsible person is immediately alerted if lone workers miss check-ins.

We support fleet tracking - but not just route optimisation - we can map, link time clocking, vehicle and training record compliance to keep services, MOT's, qualifications like CPC's and welding certification, up-to-date with automated reminders.

Whether it's job management, logistics, or compliance, at Springboard we've focused on making essential business systems work harder for nearly 20 years - to help keep staff safe and effective, no matter where they are, or the signal availability.

Intrigued? Visit [SpringboardIT.co.uk](http://SpringboardIT.co.uk) to find out more.



## British Chambers' team visits Somerset

Somerset Chamber hosted a delegation from the British Chambers of Commerce to discuss a wide range of issues – everything from the impact of Government policy on local businesses to how the Chamber network can offer members the best possible value.

Somerset Chamber is one of just 52 Chambers of Commerce in the country which are officially accredited to the British Chambers of Commerce (BCC).

BCC Director of Membership UK and International, Anne-Marie Martin, Head of Corporate Governance & Business Environment Policy, Jonny Haseldine and Senior Membership Executive, Hannah Kelleher, spent the day with the

Somerset Chamber team and Managing Director, David Crew.

As well as finding out more about the key issues affecting Somerset businesses, the BCC team joined David for the Chamber's Business Partner lunch at The Railway Inn at Sandford, which also included a tour of Thatchers Cider and a brief meeting with owner Martin Thatcher.

The lunch was attended by representatives from WPA, Weston College, the HR Dept, Pro Apprenticeships, Bristol Airport, Your Eco, Clarke Willmott, Brown & Brown, the former Bridgwater & Taunton College, The Restore Trust,



▲ From left, BCC Senior Membership Executive, Hannah Kelleher, BCC Director of Membership UK and International, Anne-Marie Martin, Somerset Chamber Managing Director David Crew and BCC Head of Corporate Governance & Business Environment Policy, Jonny Haseldine.

National Highways, Thatchers Cider, Summerfield Developments, Yeovil College and Leonardo.

## Somerset Chamber Business Partners unite to launch UCS College Group

A bold new chapter in Somerset's education landscape began this August, as our Business Partners Bridgwater & Taunton College (BTC) and Strode College came together to form the University Centre Somerset College Group (UCS College Group.)

BTC campuses became colleges - Bridgwater College, Cannington College, and Taunton College, while Strode College retains its name. University Centre Somerset, the group's well-established higher education arm, remains a core part of this new, ambitious group.

Its mission? To transform lives and communities through learning and partnerships.

Andy Berry (pictured) CBE, CEO UCS College Group, said: "This merger is a strategic response to the evolving educational and economic needs of Somerset. By combining our strengths, we can provide more comprehensive support to our employer partners, students and staff; further contributing to the regional and national economy. It's about providing our communities with the opportunities, tools and support to thrive in an ever-changing world."

Partners will benefit from the group's ability to leverage resources and initiatives that align education with local economic and skills needs.

For more information visit [ucscollegegroup.ac.uk](http://ucscollegegroup.ac.uk).

## Devon and Somerset LSIP summer 2025 progress report published

The Devon and Somerset Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) has published its summer 2025 progress report – a detailed account of how employers, educators and regional leaders are transforming the skills system to meet the future head-on.

This latest report captures what has already been achieved, where progress is accelerating, and what comes next as the region prepares to split into two locally focused LSIPs for Greater Devon and Somerset in Autumn 2025.

The Devon & Somerset Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) has been jointly delivered by Somerset Chamber of Commerce and Devon Chamber of Commerce.

Working with employers and education providers to help produce a skilled workforce better matched to the needs of business, the LSIP provides an agreed set of actionable priorities that employers, providers and other stakeholders in a local area can get behind to drive change.

The aim is to put employers at the heart of the skills agenda

to ensure the future workforce has the knowledge and skills needed to bridge future skills gaps.

- As part of Somerset Chamber's ongoing commitment to the LSIP, we are gathering Somerset's business and education leaders for the Somerset Skills Summit on Tuesday, September 30, to help shape the future skills plan in the county.

The summit will look at the progress made on the current Local Skills Improvement Plan and will feature key note speakers as we work towards creating a refreshed plan for Somerset in 2026.

Kindly sponsored by Stone King, there is no charge to attend the summit, which will include a buffet lunch and refreshments. It will be held at The Canalside, Bridgwater, from 8.30am to 1.30pm.





## Big Carl lifts dome onto Hinkley Point C's second reactor



"Big Carl", the world's largest crane, has successfully placed the 245-tonne dome onto Hinkley Point C's second reactor building, marking a major step forward for the power station's identical second unit.

The 14-metre-tall dome closes the 44-metre-high reactor building, allowing its fit-out to accelerate.

Although the second dome was lifted 18 months after the first, Unit 2 is further ahead, compared to the same moment for Unit 1.

Prefabrication in factories on and off-site is driving gains in productivity, safety and quality, with giant steel structures and complete rooms now being lifted in, making Hinkley Point C a "Large Modular Reactor".

On Unit 2's civil construction, 30% fewer people achieved 40% more work than on Unit 1 with prefabrication of structures now approaching 60%, while more equipment has been fitted and 300 tonnes of internal steel installed, versus just 10 at the same stage for Unit 1.

Hinkley Point C is the first nuclear plant to be built in Britain for 30 years, restarting a supply chain and industry after a long pause.

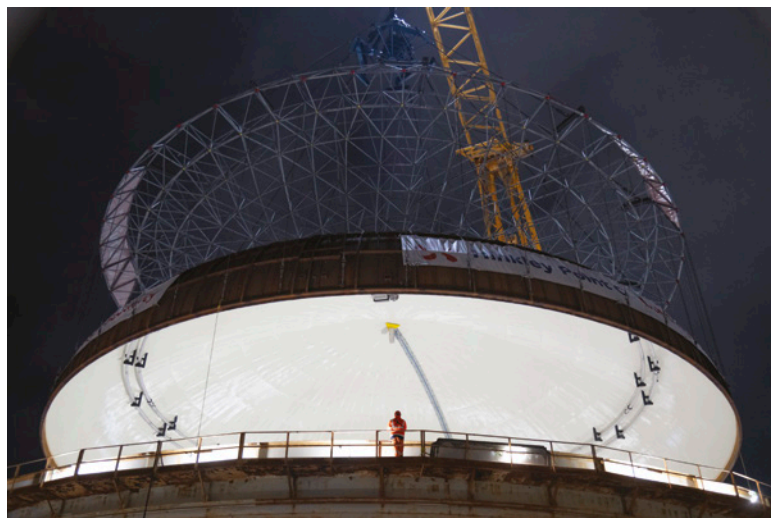
The figures highlight the benefits of building a series of identical plants. Innovation and experience gained at Hinkley Point C will benefit Sizewell C from the start.

Stuart Crooks, CEO of Hinkley Point C, said: "Restarting the industry has been hard, but the second of our two identical units shows the big benefits of repeating an identical design.

"It is the best way to build new nuclear with time savings already at 20-30%. All our experience and innovation will benefit Sizewell C from the start."

Energy Minister, Michael Shanks, said: "Hinkley Point C will deliver the next generation of clean, homegrown nuclear power, creating high quality jobs and growth in Somerset and across its supply chains.

"The Government is ending years of delays to usher in a golden age of new nuclear, with funding for Sizewell C and SMRs, protecting family finances and boosting our energy security."







## Charity, not-for-profit

### It's in the Bag Cancer Support

It's in the Bag Cancer Support is stepping up to the crease again, partnering with Somerset County Cricket Club to raise vital awareness about testicular cancer. The South West-based charity will be present at matches, bringing their signature blend of humour and health messaging to cricket fans.

Testicular cancer is the most common cancer affecting men aged 15 to 49, though it can impact younger and older men as well. The encouraging news is that early detection leads to excellent outcomes, with more than



96% of men diagnosed with testicular cancer surviving when detected early. It's in the Bag encourages men aged 15 and older to perform monthly self-checks and seek immediate medical attention if they discover anything unusual.

It's in the Bag supports men from Cornwall to Worcestershire. Their focused efforts in Somerset and Devon have yielded impressive results, building awareness and saving lives through early detection.

Chamber Members can support this vital cause by:

- Sharing health awareness messages with employees
- Sponsoring awareness campaigns or events
- Encouraging workplace wellness programs that include men's health education

The charity's approachable messaging style makes it easy for employers to address men's health without creating workplace discomfort.

For more information about It's in the Bag Cancer Support and their Match Fit campaign, visit their website or connect with them at upcoming Somerset County Cricket Club matches.

[www.itsinthebag.org.uk](http://www.itsinthebag.org.uk)



### WB Design & Construction

Following a Somerset Chamber session featuring Spark Somerset and the work that it does in our community, we have engaged with The Space in Cheddar to see what it is that we can do for them to enrich the experience that they provide to the children and young people located in the Cheddar Valley.

The Space is local, independent and offers professional free of charge one-to-one counselling services and other facilities developed to build relationships, establish trust and confidence to engage and support young people.

They have been donated the use of a community garden which is a wonderful springboard from which to create a functional and creative space for the children and young people to exist, experience, live and thrive in.

We will be engaging with the kids, not only developing the space ourselves, but for those that show an interest, involving them in what we do and how we do it. Herb and vegetable areas will be created and assigned to children or groups of children to look after and with a bit of luck, judgment and our guidance, harvest the fruits (and herbs and vegetables) of their labour.

We are committed to doing everything that we can to assist in creating and maintaining a peaceful and functional environment for all to make use of and enjoy.

Our next project is the creation of a wildlife dam in the community garden. While relatively small it will definitely be a feature of the garden and will attract birds and wildlife to enhance the experience of being there.



## ARK at Egwood

Acts of Random Kindness (ARK) at Egwood is a land-based, intergenerational project in Somerset that supports people of all ages and needs to improve their mental and physical wellbeing.

Through meaningful engagement with nature, animals, horticulture, rural crafts, and outdoor cooking, ARK helps individuals build confidence, develop social connections, and regain a sense of purpose.

Set in a safe, welcoming outdoor environment, ARK offers a variety of hands-on activities—from growing vegetables and caring for animals to participating in workshops and creative sessions. This therapeutic approach gives people choice, control, and the opportunity to look forward to their future with renewed hope.

The past year has been especially exciting for ARK.

The organisation was honoured with The King's Award for Voluntary Service—the MBE for voluntary groups—as well as Small Business of the Year at the Somerset Business Awards. These prestigious recognitions are a testament to the hard work of ARK's staff, volunteers, and the community they support.

ARK is now inviting businesses to get involved through corporate partnerships. Team volunteering days offer a rewarding opportunity for companies to give back, support community wellbeing, and engage in team-building activities. ARK also welcomes support in areas such as website development, legal advice, fundraising, or contributing raffle prizes and is open to suggestions.

To find out more or get involved, contact:  
Email - [office@arkategwood.com](mailto:office@arkategwood.com); telephone - 01460 391974; website - [www.arkategwood.com](http://www.arkategwood.com)



## Ferne Animal Sanctuary

Ferne Animal Sanctuary (Charity No. 1164350) has been rescuing, rehabilitating, and rehoming animals for over 85 years. Founded during the Second World War by Nina, Duchess of Hamilton and Brandon, Ferne began as a refuge for the pets of servicemen and women. Many never returned and their animals remained - marking the beginning of Ferne's enduring mission.

Today, the Sanctuary continues to provide a safe haven for animals of all kinds across Somerset and beyond. With no government funding, Ferne relies entirely on the

generosity of individuals, grants, and corporate sponsors to carry out its vital work.

This October, Ferne invites you to a very special evening. On Friday, October 3, the sanctuary will host its first-ever charity gala at the Shrubbery Hotel in Ilminster. Guests will enjoy a welcome drink, a delicious two-course meal, and an inspiring after-dinner talk by Pen Farthing, founder of the Nowzad charity.

The evening will also feature live music from Guilty Pleasure and a silent auction with luxury prizes, including:

- Champagne afternoon tea at The Ritz
- Weekend getaways to Cornwall
- Exeter Chiefs tickets
- A round of golf for four
- And lots more!

Tickets are just £45, with all proceeds supporting Ferne's work. Sponsorship packages, including a table for ten and brand exposure, are also available.

To book tickets or become a sponsor, visit [ferneanimalsanctuary.org](http://ferneanimalsanctuary.org) or contact the team directly on [frm@ferneanimalsanctuary.org](mailto:frm@ferneanimalsanctuary.org). Join us for a night to remember and help make a difference for animals in need.





## Somerset Activity & Sports Partnership (SASP)

Over the past six months, Somerset Activity & Sports Partnership (SASP) has led innovative, community-first health and wellbeing initiatives across the county.

A major development is the designation of Somerset's coastal strip from Porlock to Burnham-on-Sea, including Bridgwater, as a Sport England Place Partnership. This recognition brings significant investment to tackle inactivity and deep-rooted inequalities through localised, collaborative approaches. Guided by the Somerset Moves strategy (2022-2030), the focus is on long-term, sustainable change to empower communities and reduce health pressures.

In alignment with the NHS's newly announced Fit for the Future 10-year plan, SASP welcomes the national shift toward prevention and looks forward to deeper collaboration with health partners at local and neighbourhood levels.

A strong example of this preventative approach is our Move 2 Independence programme. Now in its second

year, it supports people after hospital discharge with tailored in-home and community-based movement sessions, promoting confidence, wellbeing, and falls prevention. One individual, 77-year-old Theresa, regained mobility and independence following knee surgery.

SASP is also piloting the Thrive Time toolkit to support enrichment and physical activity for children and young people. Developed from insights in our Holiday Activities and Food programme, it provides low-prep, inclusive after-school resources that promote movement and social connection.

Additionally, our trauma-informed Jump Start mentoring continues to support unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, helping them rebuild confidence and community through sport.

In June, we celebrated Volunteers Week, honouring the dedicated individuals who lead health walks and community groups across Somerset.

To learn more, visit: [www.sasp.co.uk](http://www.sasp.co.uk)



## SWALLOW Charity

SWALLOW Charity enables local teenagers and adults with learning disabilities to live life to the full. Building connections with local businesses is a growing aspect of the charity's work, which not only provides financial support, but also enriching opportunities for its members.



The charity launched its Corporate Friends scheme in late 2023 and is now proud to have 12 local businesses supporting its work in various ways. The Somerset Toiletry Company, who won Family Business of the Year at the Somerset Business Awards 2025, has been a key supporter.

The company created a charity soap for

SWALLOW, with packaging designed by a SWALLOW member. It has since employed a SWALLOW member in the Soap Bar Café, which is fantastic - he said: "A big thank you for having me and to the team for being so kind and supportive. Couldn't have any better people to work with - with everyone there." His advice to other businesses thinking of employing someone with a learning disability is "Have understanding & patience".

SWALLOW Charity is also pleased to welcome The Oakhill Inn and The Holcombe as its most recent Corporate Friends. Last year, The Oakhill Inn donated their monthly quiz night takings to SWALLOW Charity, which totalled a fantastic £3850.

The Holcombe has recently created an opportunity for SWALLOW's Horticulture Group members to work in its kitchen-garden on a monthly basis, which the team is very excited about as a work experience opportunity for this high-end local employer.

If you would like to learn more about how SWALLOW makes a difference in the lives of local people go to <https://www.swallowcharity.org>





## Arc

Arc is a Somerset-based charity dedicated to supporting single adults experiencing homelessness. With a mission to provide supported accommodation where individuals are inspired and empowered by their own strengths, Arc helps people take steps toward lasting independence and a better future.

The charity operates 16 properties across Somerset, currently housing 170 people and supporting over 350 individuals every year. In addition to supported accommodation, Arc offers a wide range of services tailored to different needs, including an armed forces hub, outreach programs, a wellbeing centre and a social enterprise initiative, all aimed at rebuilding lives with dignity and purpose.

As part of its ongoing commitment to raise awareness

around the issue of homelessness locally, Arc is hosting "No Place to Call Home" on October 6th at the Brewhouse Theatre, Taunton. This special event, held in recognition of World Homeless Day and World Mental Health Day, will feature a screening of the powerful film I, Daniel Blake followed by a thought-provoking panel discussion and stories from people with lived experience.

Looking ahead, Arc is excited to celebrate its 50th anniversary in 2026, marking half a century of transforming lives. A series of special events and fundraising activities will take place throughout the year, and Arc is currently seeking corporate partners to join them in this milestone celebration and support their vital work.

For more information or to get involved please contact Sam or Rosie at 01823 271326 or [info@arcinspire.co.uk](mailto:info@arcinspire.co.uk)



## St Margaret's Hospice Care

2025 marks the 45th anniversary of St Margaret's Hospice Care. For over four decades we have championed a simple but important belief – that people facing a life-limiting illness deserve the best possible care and compassion, so they can live well and die well.

In that time, we have become a household name, firmly rooted in local communities throughout Somerset delivering free, expert end-of-life and palliative care for adults and their families.

Each year we help over 4,800 people and positively impact the lives of many thousands more who come together to fundraise in memory of loved ones, shop with us, attend our events and volunteer.

Today it costs the charity in the region of £15m per year to run our full range of services and income generation activities, and this is delivered by a team of 350 staff who are supported by over 900 committed volunteers, alongside a number of local businesses.

There are a number of ways your business can support the hospice, naming us as your Charity of the Year, Employee Fundraising, sponsoring one of our events or campaigns, matched funding, payroll giving, volunteering staff for a corporate volunteer day or making a company donation.

For more information on how your team could get involved contact Michelle Long, Corporate Partnerships Fundraiser on 01823 345910 or via email to [michelle.long@st-margarets-hospice.org.uk](mailto:michelle.long@st-margarets-hospice.org.uk).



## Somerset Counselling Centre

Somerset Counselling Centre is a local charity offering professional, affordable counselling to adults across Somerset. We've been part of the community for over 30 years, providing a safe, confidential space where people can talk through life's challenges with trained, compassionate therapists.

We're now pleased to offer a new service for young people aged 11 and over. This much-needed addition responds to the growing number of families looking for support for teenagers and pre-teens facing anxiety, low mood, family difficulties, or the pressures of school and social life. Our trained therapists work in age-appropriate ways to help young people feel heard, build resilience and find healthier ways of coping.

We believe mental health support should be available to everyone who needs it – especially young people. But we also know that cost can be a barrier. As a charity, we're actively seeking local sponsors, donors, and funders to help us keep this vital service affordable for families in our community.

If you're a local business, organisation or individual who wants to support young people's wellbeing, we'd love to talk. Your help could make a real and lasting difference.

To find out more, make a referral, or explore ways to get involved, visit [www.scctaunton.org.uk](http://www.scctaunton.org.uk) or email our Operations Director at [info@scctaunton.org.uk](mailto:info@scctaunton.org.uk).

Let's work together to build a stronger, healthier Somerset.



## Brainwave

At Brainwave, we know that charity partnerships go far beyond generating vital funds—they are a powerful way to create lasting, meaningful impact across our communities.

By working with local businesses, we can combine resources, share expertise, and reach wider networks to promote the life-changing support we provide for children with disabilities and additional needs, both in



Somerset and across the UK.

These collaborations help us extend our reach, allowing us to connect with and support even more families who need our life-changing support. In return, businesses benefit from stronger community ties, improved team morale, and enhanced brand reputation through their support of a trusted and impactful charity.

A standout example is our partnership with Evo Agency, an e-commerce and digital agency based in Taunton. Evo has supported Brainwave in many ways—filming at events and in our shops, creating a virtual tour of our centre, sponsoring our annual golf event, and offering one-to-one support to our team.

James Shakespeare, Founder and CEO of Evo, said: “Supporting children who face extra challenges, like those Brainwave helps every day, is central to our mission and we’re proud to stand with such an incredible charity doing truly life-changing work.”

Whether you’re a small business or a larger enterprise, there are many ways to get involved—from event sponsorship and volunteering to sharing your skills or making Brainwave your Charity of the Year.

To explore a partnership, email us at [hayleyscurr@brainwave.org.uk](mailto:hayleyscurr@brainwave.org.uk). Together, we can make a bigger difference.



## Tech West England Advocates

Tech West England Advocates is a non profit community that champions regional tech ecosystems from across the South West, West of England and West Midlands. As one of 48 Global Tech Advocates networks around the world, Tech West England Advocates is dedicated to connecting tech start ups and scale ups by forging meaningful global connections, fostering collaboration, and unlocking new trade and investment opportunities.

One such opportunity is their third UK Tech Mission to Hong Kong and Shenzhen this coming 3rd to 7th November 2025, organised by Somerset Chamber of Commerce Member, Richard Lowe, Managing Director of Hewlett Rand, supported by the British Chambers of Commerce in Southern China and Hong Kong, UK Department for Business & Trade and KPMG.

The mission is a valuable opportunity to explore these

markets for expansion and growth, connect with local customers, partners and investors and to gain vital insights and practical support UK techs to scale internationally.

So, whether you are an AI, clean tech, health tech, fintech or advanced manufacturer looking to scale across the Asia-Pacific markets, this tailored mission is a perfect opportunity to network with prospects, investors and partners, manufacturing partners and global traction to accelerate your export journey, attract funding, and establish a local foothold.

To find out more, tech founders can join one of two hybrid roundtables hosted by KPMG at 9am on Thursday 14th or Friday, August 15. To register your place, simply email with your preferred date. For the mission programme outline, visit [www.techwestenglandadvocates.co.uk](http://www.techwestenglandadvocates.co.uk) to learn more.





## Amarin Rubber & Plastics

Over the nearly 22 years we have been in business in Weston-super-Mare we have supported many great, local, causes.

For many years we have donated product to the local Children's Scrapstore. This wonderful charity describe themselves as: "We are a reuse charity dedicated to helping businesses divert reusable waste away from landfill/energy recovery to help improve art and play opportunities for children, young people and adults."

As coincidence would have it, they now also operate out of our former premises! Our

materials are used as part of arts and crafts sets offered to families. This forms part of the work The Amarin community does as well as reducing the waste we send to landfill.



## Weston Hospicecare

For more than 35 years, Weston Hospicecare has been a cornerstone of support for local people with life-limiting illnesses across parts of North Somerset and Somerset.

Covering a population of over 170,000 people ranging from Clevedon to Burnham-on-Sea to Cheddar and everything in between. The hospice delivers care from its base in Uphill, where there is a ten-bedroom inpatient unit, along with a day hospice and wellbeing centre. Complementing the in-house services are the community nursing specialists, who deliver care to patients in their homes as well as a specially trained family support team who provide social, emotional and spiritual support to both patients and their families.

The team understands that everyone's needs are unique, so our care is person-centred, offering a holistic approach that aims to meet the physical, emotional, spiritual and

practical aspects of their care.

In addition to our direct care, we are proud to work alongside local business through initiatives such as our Business for Care Collective. This network provides local businesses with opportunities to actively get involved in supporting our mission, whether through fundraising, volunteering or other collaborative efforts.

With only around 20% of our funding coming from the Government, it's thanks to the generosity of local businesses and our wider community that we can continue to offer expert compassionate care, for free, to those who need it most, bringing comfort and support to local people during some of the most challenging moments of their lives.

For more information about getting involved, please email: [Kirsty.Simmons@westonhospicecare.org.uk](mailto:Kirsty.Simmons@westonhospicecare.org.uk)







## Somerset Chamber 30th anniversary summer barbecue at The Monks Yard, near Ilminster

Main images: Darren Honeywill – Digital Content Creation



- ▲ Thomas Jepson-Lay (left) of event sponsor Thomas Jepson-Lay Leadership and Coaching and Consultancy and Somerset Chamber Managing Director, David Crew.



- ▲ Tracey Santo (left) of Occuteach Ltd and Kate Tyndall of Aardvark Occupational Health.



- ▲ Lizzie Tottle of Teapot Creative (centre) with Ben Trickey (left) of Summerfield Developments and Nick Porter of Barclays Bank.



**Blueloop Ltd, Julie Grant**

*Member for 21 years*

"I enjoy the networking and building a collaboration, not only of business contacts, but also of friends. I feel privileged that I am a member and it really does add value. I met someone 15 or 20 years ago and they came back to me about 10 years later after coming to a networking event so it's definitely something you need to experience and enjoy."



**Thomas Jepson-Lay Leadership and Coaching Consultancy, Thomas Jepson-Lay**

*Member for four months*

"The Chamber is a network and offered an entry point into the Somerset eco-system of businesses both from a learning point of view but also to help me get out and show people who I am and what I can offer and I can drum up business that way, too. The Chamber offers something for everybody and you can cherry pick what it is that you want and what you need from it."





**Wessex Commercial Solutions, Graham Potts**

*Member for 14 years*

"The main thing for me is the networking and meeting like-minded people. It's all about building that network, that community because people tend to recommend you and it may not be the people you think you're going to get either; there's no hard sell, it's just general chat, it's like a family."



**Pardoes Solicitors, Tansy Hanson**

*Rejoined member for 18 months*

"The word that is used by most members is community. We are a Somerset firm and we have four offices across Somerset and, for us, it's networking within our county and that could be clients, it could be suppliers, it's the sense of community and doing good for Somerset - for the people of and with the people of. It's the connections. It's a support network that is vital."



## Business and VCSE leaders' forum in partnership with Spark Somerset at Long Sutton Golf Club



▲ Stacy Walker of Hinkley Point C (left) and Caroline King of The Waffle Hub.



▲ Mark Robinson (left) and Emma Bissett of Jones Building Group and Peter Woodhouse of Stone King.



▲ From left, Mark Helyar of Take Art, Louise Lappin-Cook of Make the Sunshine, Nigel Bell of ARK at Egwood and Lizzie Tottle of Teapot Creative.



▲ Jo Gale (left) of Weston College with Thomas Jepson-Lay of Thomas Jepson-Lay Leadership and Coaching Consultancy and Abby Young of the Art Bank Café.



▲ From left, George Wilson of Marston Foods, Michelle Payne of Heads Up Somerset and Sarah Cummins of In Charley's Memory.



▲ Peter Woodhouse (left) of event sponsor Stone King and Somerset Chamber Managing Director, David Crew.





## Future of Somerset in partnership with the Great South West at Haynes Motor Museum



- ▲ Hosted by Chamber Managing Director David Crew (left), the event heard from a panel of industry and economic experts, from left, Sarah Green of Marston Foods, Sam Harper of Stantec, Becky Bevins of Numatic, Cllr Mike Rigby of Somerset Council and Clive Higgins of Leonardo.



- ▲ Mike Cahill of Albert Goodman (left) with Chris Loach of Lloyds Bank (centre) and Dale Edwards of Browne Jacobson LLP.



- ▲ From left, Sam Harper of event sponsor Stantec, Karl Tucker of the Great South West and Somerset Chamber Managing Director, David Crew.



- ▲ From left, Becky Bevins and Sarah Tucker of Numatic with Rose Sellman-Leava of Inclusive Futures.



- ▲ Katie Lowe (left) and Matthew Hayes of Fairhurst with Kerry Lane of Montel Civil Engineering.



## Future of Yeovil at Yeovil Town Football Club



▲ From left, Rebecca Pennington of Vista Health, Natasha Rand of Yeovil Art Space and Katie Howard of Albert Goodman.



▲ Mark Thomas of Acorn Land (SW) Ltd (left) and Alan Watkins of CETSAT.



▲ Corinne Matthews and Cllr David Woan of Somerset Council.



▲ Steve Farnham of Porter Dodson with Lyndsay Blackshaw (centre) of Albert Goodman and Tansy Hanson of Pardoes Solicitors.



▲ Michelle Robinson of Prime Plc and Harrison Pittard of the former Bridgwater & Taunton College, now UCS College Group.



▲ Darren Robinson and Harry Turner of event sponsor Jones Building Group with Somerset Chamber Managing Director, David Crew (centre).



## Meet the Neighbours – Devon at Exeter Golf and Country Club

PORTER  
DODSON



▲ Somerset Chamber Managing Director, David Crew (left) and Devon Chamber interim CEO, Richard Marsh.



▲ From left, Jane Finch of Time for Inclusion, Antonia Power of Porter Dodson and Clare Maher of CETSAT.



▲ From left, Craig Smith of Wollens, Darren Graydon of SPS Marketing and Rob Cadwallader of Milsted Langdon.

## Somerset directors' forum at Battens Solicitors, Yeovil

  
**Battens**  
SOLICITORS



▲ Ceri Stephens of event host and sponsor Battens Solicitors with Somerset Chamber Managing Director, David Crew and Chamber Board Chair, Emma Warren, of Elite Staffing Solutions.

## Somer Valley business brunch at Bath College's Somer Valley Campus

 Bath College



▲ From left, Somerset Chamber Managing Director, David Crew, Bath College CEO and Principal, Kevin Hamblin and Nicki Martin and Ebner Healey, also of Bath College.



## Let's network over breakfast

Wednesday  
**27 Aug**

Book yourself a welcome breakfast break as the summer holidays draw to a close and enjoy a cooked breakfast while making professional connections! It's the perfect opportunity to raise the profile of your business while meeting old and new acquaintances.

**Time:** 8.30am – 10.30am at Brean Country Club, Red Road, Berrow, Burnham-on-Sea, Somerset, TA8 2FG

**Cost:** £24.99 plus VAT members  
£34.99 plus VAT non-members

## Skills for business – SEO, the stuff that makes a difference

Wednesday  
**10 Sep**

Let us take the mystery out of the dark art of SEO – search engine optimisation – with our specialist workshop with expert Pam Knight of White Knight Marketing. Aimed at businesses which want to gain a greater knowledge and understanding of SEO, it will help to improve those all-important digital marketing skills in this ever-changing and unpredictable economic climate.

Hosted by:

WHITE KNIGHT  
MARKETING

**Time:** 9.30am – 1.30pm at Equity House, Blackbrook, Blackbrook Business Park, Taunton, TA1 2PX

**Cost:** £49.50 plus VAT members  
£65 plus VAT non-members

## Annual Bank of England breakfast update

Tuesday  
**9 Sep**

Malindi Myers, the Bank of England's South West Agent, will give an update on the Bank's economic overview and forecasts, covering output and activity (GDP), the labour market, inflation and the monetary policy stance. Malindi will present the main messages and then take questions.

Sponsored by:

Handelsbanken

**Time:** 8am – 10am at Taunton Racecourse, Orchard Portman, Taunton, Somerset, TA3 7BL

**Cost:** £28.50 plus VAT members

## Somerset Business Awards 2026 launch

Wednesday  
**10 Sep**

This is a great opportunity to meet this year's sponsors and judges and to find out more about the 2026 Somerset Business Awards. Members of the Chamber team will also be on hand and there will be the chance to network with other local businesses. So, if you are a past entrant wanting to enjoy some informal networking or a business thinking of entering, please join us!

Headline sponsor:



**Time:** 2.30pm – 4pm at Bampfylde Hall, Hestercombe House, Cheddon Fitzpaine, near Taunton, TA2 8LG

**Cost:** No charge to attend but pre-booking essential

## Jumpstart your AI Journey – Microsoft Copilot bitesize webinar

Tuesday  
**9 Sep**

Join us to discover how this powerful AI tool can transform your business operations by transforming mundane tasks into automated processes, saving your team time and effort. Delivered by Gather Technology's William Vaughan, Solutions Architect and Nick Banks, Partner Development Manager at Ingram Micro, the webinar will offer valuable insights to participants at all skill levels and business sizes.

Hosted by:



**Time:** 1pm – 2pm online

**Cost:** No charge but pre-booking essential

## Meet the neighbours – Dorset

Thursday  
**11 Sep**

Our second meet the neighbours this year is in partnership with Dorset Chamber of Commerce. The networking lunch is kindly sponsored by Alastair Warren and Anna Russell of Somerset and Dorset WPA Healthcare Practice and Frome-based IT experts Netitude. It offers great opportunities as we welcome businesses from both sides of the border to network and make new connections outside the area.

Sponsored by:



**Time:** 12.30pm – 2.30pm at Haynes Motor Museum, Sparkford, Yeovil, BA22 7LH

**Cost:** £36.99 plus VAT members  
£46.99 plus VAT non-members



## Somerset Chamber 30th anniversary golf day

Friday  
**12 Sep**

Grab your clubs and business cards for our special Somerset Chamber 30th anniversary golf day. We're inviting members and non-members who fancy a tee to join us for a round of golf plus bacon rolls, a carvery lunch and a spot of networking! Golfers will be split in to random teams for the day which will culminate in a carvery lunch in the clubhouse around 2pm, with the day ending at 4pm.

**Time:** 8.30am – 4pm at Enmore Park Golf Club, Enmore Road, Enmore, Bridgwater, TA5 2AN  
**Cost:** £65 plus VAT members  
£75 plus VAT non-members

## Somerset speed networking

Tuesday  
**30 Sep**

There's working the room and then there's Somerset speed networking! It's the perfect opportunity to make one-to-one connections with scores of local businesses. The event offers informal networking before the main speed networking begins, giving attendees the chance to raise their profile with other like-minded professionals.

**Time:** 6pm – 8pm at The Grand Pier, Marine Parade, Weston-super-Mare, BS23 1AL  
**Cost:** £24.99 plus VAT members  
£34.99 plus VAT non-members

## Construction Connections

Thursday  
**25 Sep**

Join us for our popular construction specific networking group for construction and property industry professionals. We will be joined by Jim Gorrod and Kate Evans of our event sponsor Stephens Scown, who will give attendees some top tips for negotiating construction contracts and subcontracts on largescale projects.

Sponsored by:



**Time:** 12noon – 2pm at Stephens Scown, Portland House, Blackbrook Park, Taunton, TA1 2UH  
**Cost:** £25 plus VAT members  
£30 plus VAT non-members

## Let's network over breakfast

Wednesday  
**7 Oct**

Set yourself up for a great day in the office by enjoying a cooked breakfast in fantastic company at our ever-popular let's network over breakfast event! Join like-minded business professionals at Oake Manor Golf Club for the opportunity to make new connections and raise the profile of your business.

**Time:** 8.30am – 10.30am at Oake Manor Golf Club, Oake, Bradford-on-Tone, nr Taunton, TA4 1BA  
**Cost:** £24.99 plus VAT members  
£34.99 plus VAT non-members

## Somerset skills summit

Tuesday  
**30 Sep**

Join us as we gather Somerset's business and education leaders for the Somerset Skills Summit to help shape the future skills plan in the county. The summit will look at the progress made on the current Local Skills Improvement Plan and will feature key note speakers as we work towards creating a refreshed plan for Somerset in 2026. The event includes a buffet lunch and refreshments.

Sponsored by:



**Time:** 12 noon – 2pm at The Canalside Conference Centre, Marsh Lane, Bridgwater, TA6 6LQ  
**Cost:** No charge to attend but pre-booking essential

## Somerset entrepreneurs' circle

Tuesday  
**14 Oct**

Join us for our new networking event just for the owners of small and medium-sized businesses! This event will give all attendees the opportunity to introduce themselves to the room, highlighting their company and giving delegates more information about themselves and what they do. It's the perfect opportunity to put your company centre stage!

Headline sponsor:



**Time:** 9.30am – 11am at Ferne Animal Sanctuary, Wambrook, Chard, TA20 3DH.  
**Cost:** £15 plus VAT members  
£20 plus VAT non-members

\*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.



Welcome to our newest members of Somerset Chamber.

#### Argent Partnership

##### Utilities consultant

Argent Partnership is a utilities consultancy purchasing contracts for around 3,500 gas and electricity meters. We aren't brokers so no hidden commissions as we are fee based. Smallest contract c.£300 Largest over £3.5m. As our clients say: Utilities. Made simple.

**Graham Monk 01491 526000**  
**graham@argentpartnership.com**  
**www.argentpartnership.com**

#### ARK at Egwood CIC

##### Voluntary community social enterprise sector

Acts of Random Kindness (ARK) at Egwood is an intergenerational land-based provision, supporting people of all ages and varying needs to improve their social connections, confidence and overall mental and physical health.

**Nigel Bell 01460 391974**  
**ceo@arkategwood.com**  
**www.arkategwood.com**

#### Blackdown Hearing

##### Health and wellbeing

Trusted across Somerset, Blackdown Hearing offers expert hearing tests, advanced hearing aids, and professional earwax removal - all delivered with personal care, 20+ years' experience, and hundreds of five-star reviews from our calm, countryside clinic near Taunton.

**Duncan Jury 01823 586777**  
**hear@blackdownhearing.co.uk**  
**www.blackdownhearing.co.uk**

#### Business Fest South West

##### Events

Business Fest South West is an annual celebration of innovation, entrepreneurship and collaboration across the South West, bringing together ambitious businesses, industry leaders and forward-thinking organisations for a day of networking, inspiration and commercial opportunity- April 1, 2026, Westpoint Arena, Exeter.

**Gavin Harris 01726 982197**  
**gavin.harris@fourfrontevents.co.uk**  
**www.businessfestsw.co.uk**

#### Chrysalis Not for Profit Ltd

##### Training and wellbeing

Chrysalis is the UK's largest training provider specialising in training people to become counsellors and hypnotherapists. Established in 1998, we have over 25 years' experience of counselling training and now offer courses across the UK in 30 venues.

**Georgia Howard 01278 726983**  
**ghoward@chrysaliscourses.ac.uk**  
**www.chrysaliscourses.ac.uk**

#### Community Counselling CIC

##### Health and wellbeing

Community Counselling CIC offers compassionate, professional and affordable counselling to adults, children and families across Somerset and surrounding areas. Providing affordable counselling that is available when and where it is needed, makes wellness possible for everyone, wherever they are.

**Anna Disney Practice Manager 01823 765144**  
**admin@communitycounsellingcic.co.uk**  
**www.communitycounsellingcic.co.uk**

#### Dogs for Health

##### Wellbeing and social inclusion visits

Dogs for Health brings therapy dogs to local businesses, creating positive workplace environments with stress relief, boosted morale and enhanced team connections, all while promoting mental well-being and creating a supportive, joyful atmosphere.

**James Lewis 07946 619934**  
**Info@dogsforhealth.org.uk**  
**www.dogsforhealth.org.uk**

#### Edge Coaching

##### Leadership development; professional development

Sam Farmer is a highly qualified Chartered Coaching Psychologist and Registered Coaching Supervisor who works with senior leaders and their teams, particularly in the not-for-profit, professional services, emergency, humanitarian, tech, and health sectors. He specialises in coaching professionals in high emotional impact contexts.

**Sam Farmer 07497 663516**  
**sam@edgecoaching.uk**  
**www.linkedin.com/in/sam-farmer-62293414/**

#### Exmoor Trim Ltd

##### Manufacturing

Exmoor Trim is an employee-owned manufacturing company that supplies both exterior and interior products for Land Rover vehicles and the overlanding community. We employ 48 people and supply our products all over the world.

**Andrew Horton 01984 635060**  
**andrewhorton@exmoortrim.co.uk**  
**www.exmoortrim.co.uk**



**Halse Coaching****Executive leadership and strengths coaching**

Austin Blair and Jerry Naish, founders of Halse Coaching are both senior executives, who benefited greatly from coaching in our careers. We have many years of accredited experience in Executive Leadership Coaching and Clifton Strengths analysis with individuals and teams.

**Austin Blair 07494 963782**  
[austin@halsecoaching.com](mailto:austin@halsecoaching.com)  
[www.halsecoaching.com](http://www.halsecoaching.com)

**The Quiz Hosts****Entertainment**

The Quiz Hosts deliver interactive smartphone quizzes and music bingo across Somerset. Ideal for pubs, parties, fundraisers, and corporate events, our tech-driven format ensures fair play, no cheating, and a fun, memorable experience for all teams and guests.

**Nick Burrett 01823 240840**  
[quiz@thequizhosts.com](mailto:quiz@thequizhosts.com)  
[www.hitmixbingo.com](http://www.hitmixbingo.com)

**Harry's Cider Ltd****Food and drink**

Harry's Cider are South Somerset Craft Cidermakers, producing a range of traditional still, sparkling and still fruit ciders using family orchard grown apples. We offer cider tours, live music events and welcome you to visit us and our new cider shop and taproom.

**Alison Chapman 07860 216992**  
[ali@harryscidercompany.co.uk](mailto:ali@harryscidercompany.co.uk)  
[www.harryscidercompany.co.uk](http://www.harryscidercompany.co.uk)

**Three Cherries****Managed IT Services**

We're Three Cherries, a passionate and experienced IT and telephony support company based in Bristol. For over 25 years, we've made IT Support simple, helping businesses stay ahead. At Three Cherries, we take the gamble out of business technology.

**Richard Birkett 0117 9300333**  
[info@threecherries.co.uk](mailto:info@threecherries.co.uk)  
[www.threecherries.co.uk](http://www.threecherries.co.uk)

**Looking after me****Health and wellbeing**

Looking After Me is a proactive wellbeing service supporting workplaces to help employees thrive. We provide monthly 1:1 health coaching, on-demand access to professionals, and wellbeing insights—boosting happiness, focus, productivity, and long-term employee engagement and retention.

**Ruth Tuthill 07808 061214**  
[ruth@lookingafterme.co.uk](mailto:ruth@lookingafterme.co.uk)  
[www.lookingafterme.co.uk](http://www.lookingafterme.co.uk)

**University of Plymouth****Education and research**

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**Dr David Newman 08000 525600**  
[enterprisesolutions@plymouth.ac.uk](mailto:enterprisesolutions@plymouth.ac.uk)  
[www.essupport.com](http://www.essupport.com)

**mannucom recruitment Ltd****Recruitment services**

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**Ben Ruffell 07808 093114**  
[ben@manucomm.co.uk](mailto:ben@manucomm.co.uk)  
[www.manucommrecruitment.co.uk](http://www.manucommrecruitment.co.uk)

**Vista Health****Healthcare**

Vista Health is the UK's largest independent provider of specialist diagnostic services, offering a wide range of affordable scans and health screening. With nationwide locations and appointments available seven days a week, we deliver fast access to high-quality, patient-focused diagnostic care.

**Rebecca Pennington 03332 426862**  
[support@Vista-Health.co.uk](mailto:support@Vista-Health.co.uk)  
[www.vista-health.co.uk](http://www.vista-health.co.uk)

**Red Latitude****Consultancy**

Red Latitude is a consultancy providing risk, resilience, and governance advisory services. We help organisations improve continuity, manage risk and strengthen compliance through structured, standards-aligned support across crisis planning, operational assurance and security risk management in complex or sensitive environments.

**David Sparks 01823 421355**  
[david@red-latitude.com](mailto:david@red-latitude.com)  
[www.redlatitude.com](http://www.redlatitude.com)

**WB Design & Construction****Landscaping, outdoor works, winter services (gritting) and construction**

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**Kevin Parker 01278 553999**  
[kevin@wbdesignandconstruction.co.uk](mailto:kevin@wbdesignandconstruction.co.uk)  
[www.wbdesignandconstruction.co.za](http://www.wbdesignandconstruction.co.za)



## Latest member-to-member offers

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

### Pro Apprenticeships

Free apprenticeship and professional development (CPD) exploratory session for businesses

**FREE**  
SESSION

**10%**  
DISCOUNT

**FREE**  
AUDIT

### Bates Product Design

10% off all prototyping costs for product development projects

### Sungift Solar

Free solar potential audit

### ADM Project Consultants

One-hour free consultation

**FREE**  
CONSULTATION

**FREE**  
ONE-TO-ONE

### Heart of the South West Growth Hub

Free one-to-one digital business review

### Bright Fox

50% Off one day workshop: Foundations of Wellbeing – worth £1,200

**50%**  
DISCOUNT

**FREE**  
SESSION

### Stobbs Intangible Asset Management

Intellectual property drop-in sessions

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



## FOUR SERVICES

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### How To Access

For expert guidance on protecting your business, contact the advice line on **01455 852 037**

To access our document libraries, please visit your chamber website at **[chamberhr.co.uk](http://chamberhr.co.uk)**

To save money or check your compliance, book a 1-2-1 with a Business Support Team at **[www.questcover.com/121](http://www.questcover.com/121)**



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## RK Bell Group expands Bridgwater headquarters and launches new highways division

Bridgwater-based infrastructure services company, RK Bell Group, has announced the launch of a new dedicated division, RK Bell Highways, alongside a significant expansion of its Bridgwater headquarters.

The strategic move follows the group's continued growth, including the acquisition of Gworks Surfacing Ltd in 2023.

The new highways division has been created to meet rising demand for highways infrastructure delivery across Somerset, Wiltshire and the wider South West.

It enhances the group's capacity to support public sector frameworks and Tier 1 contractors with both planned and reactive highways services including drainage, patching, carriageway surfacing and public realm improvements.

To accommodate this expansion, the company has invested in a brand-new mezzanine office floor at its Bridgwater HQ, creating space for new staff and project teams.

The expansion expects to create around 50 new roles, spanning both site operatives and support functions in the coming months.

Nick Bell MCIOB, the Group Managing Director, said: "The launch of RK Bell Highways marks an exciting step forward in the Group's long-term growth.

"It allows us to scale delivery while staying grounded in the local communities that we serve. Our growth reflects both long-term client trust and the capability of our specialist teams."

The new division is led by Andy Emmett FIHE, a highways professional with over 25 years of experience



delivering both reactive works and larger highways schemes for local authorities and major contractors.

The highways division is currently already active on live projects across Somerset and Wiltshire.

As part of a wider integrated offering, RK Bell Highways works alongside the group's established surfacing, civil engineering, plant hire, transport and waste/recycling operations, enabling fully integrated infrastructure delivery from one regional base.

Founded over 80 years ago, the RK Bell Group has grown into a multi-disciplinary contractor supporting public sector delivery, local authority frameworks and commercial infrastructure works across the South West.

The business remains family-owned and firmly rooted in the Bridgwater area, with a strong commitment to local employment, long-term investment and sustainable growth.

## The FSE Group's new regional appointment in Somerset and industry award win

The FSE Group is proud to announce its sustained presence in Somerset, marked by the appointment of Amanda Sheppard as Investment Manager for the region. Amanda will continue the Group's commitment to supporting small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) across the South West.

In her new role, Amanda will be working directly with Somerset-based businesses to help them access the growth finance they need, whether through loans or equity funding.

Amanda brings extensive experience in SME finance, having previously held roles at SWIG Finance and Lloyds Banking Group. She has a deep understanding of the challenges and opportunities faced by businesses in the South West and a proven track record of helping them navigate the funding landscape.

"I'm delighted to join The FSE Group at such an exciting time," said Amanda.

"There is huge potential in Somerset, and I'm looking forward to working with local businesses to help them realise their ambitions through access to the right kind of funding and support."

The FSE Group's commitment to regional investment was recently acknowledged on a national stage. Last week, the Group was named Funder of the Year at the South West Dealmakers Awards, in recognition of its impactful approach to SME finance and its ongoing support for job creation and economic growth.

This accolade reinforces The FSE Group's reputation as a trusted funding partner that places social and economic impact at the heart of its operations.

A spokesperson said the FSE Group wanted to encourage local businesses to explore new funding opportunities. With Amanda leading the Somerset initiative, The FSE Group was well-positioned to help unlock business

growth, drive innovation, and contribute meaningfully to the region's economic development.

Businesses in Somerset interested in exploring funding options are encouraged to contact Amanda directly at [amanda.sheppard@thefsegroupp.com](mailto:amanda.sheppard@thefsegroupp.com) or visit [www.thefsegroupp.com](http://www.thefsegroupp.com) to find out more.





## Amicus Law scoops double at industry awards

Amicus Law is celebrating a landmark win after taking home Employer of the Year and Paralegal of the Year, at the prestigious Devon & Somerset Law Society (DASLS) Legal Awards 2025, held at the University of Exeter.

The Employer of the Year category is one of the most hotly contested awards of the evening, with many of the region's most respected firms in the running. Amicus Law's win is a strong endorsement of its commitment to staff wellbeing, workplace culture and the professional development of its people.

Claire Lovett, Managing Partner, said: "Winning Employer of the Year is hugely significant for us - not just because of the calibre of firms we were up against, but because it validates the values we've worked hard to embed across every part of the business.

"The legal sector can be demanding and our people give so much. To be recognised as a standout employer is something we're incredibly proud of.

"I want to pay particular tribute to our Head of HR, Leanne Cornock Stark, whose work has been transformational since she joined us three years ago."



She said the award underlined Amicus Law's growing reputation not only as a legal service provider but as an employer of choice in the South-West, attracting talent across the region and setting the standard for what a modern legal workplace should look like.

The firm also took home Paralegal of the Year, awarded to JoJo Ziauberyte, in recognition of her outstanding professionalism, dedication and contribution to clients and colleagues.

JoJo said: "I'm truly honoured and deeply grateful to have been named Paralegal of the Year. This recognition is more than just an award - it's a reminder of the journey, the challenges, the growth and the passion that brought me here.

"There have been long days and moments of doubt - but through it

all, I've been lucky to work alongside some of the most dedicated, compassionate and brilliant legal professionals and friends.

"This award is not just mine - it belongs to every person who believed in me, challenged me and reminded me why I chose this path."

Claire added: "To see our wonderful Paralegal of the Year, JoJo, pick up the first award of the evening was really wonderful. I am so proud of all the team at Amicus and the way they respond so positively to the day-to-day challenges of our work, so it's great to see them recognised for their achievements by the judges."

Just days after the wins, Amicus Law brought its team and their families together for a company-wide family day - a free, summer fayre-style celebration featuring food, drink and a variety of activities for all ages. Held as a thank-you to staff and a fundraiser for the firm's charity partner, Mind, the event reflected the inclusive, people-first culture that helped secure the Employer of the Year title.

For more information about Amicus Law and its services, please visit [www.amicuslaw.co.uk](http://www.amicuslaw.co.uk).

## Dorset and Somerset Air Ambulance Twilight Shift success

Dorset and Somerset Air Ambulance (DSAA) hosted its fourth annual 5K Twilight Shift, bringing together supporters from across the region for a wonderful evening of fun and fitness.

This year's 5K Twilight Shift held extra significance as DSAA celebrated 25 years of service, providing critical care to people across Dorset and Somerset. The charity event saw families, friends, colleagues and solo challengers take



on the 5K route around Henstridge Airfield, the charity's operational base.

Many participants took part for personal reasons, in memory of loved ones, or even as a personal challenge for a good cause. DSAA's critical care

doctor, Ian Mew, even took to the track dressed as the charity mascot, Dasher!

Alana Hardy DSAA's Event Officer, said: "This year's 5K Twilight Shift felt truly special, it was amazing to see so many people coming together, not just to raise funds, but to be part of something meaningful in our 25th Anniversary year. From first timers to seasoned fundraisers, everyone played a part in making it a night to remember, and we are so grateful to all those who joined us."

DSAA thanked everyone who made the evening a success, from those who registered and fundraised, to the volunteers and supporters at the event.

The charity also thanked event partners and sponsors, including Henstridge Airfield Clubhouse Café, HK Law, Events Crew, Life Support CPR and DocBike.



## Old Mill announces three new partners

South West financial experts Old Mill have announced three new Partners as part of its commitment to investing in future leaders. Financial planner Stuart Coombe, audit specialist David Jones and rural accountancy specialist Phil Kirkpatrick will all become Partners, bringing the total number within the firm to 22.

Stuart, who comes from an East Devon dairy farming family, is a rural specialist within the wealth management team. He joined Old Mill in 2008 as a paraplanner and during his 17 years at the firm, has become chartered and worked his way up to Director.

Stuart said: "I joined Old Mill on their reputation for excellence, and a personal desire to learn more and build my career, and it has not let me down. As a progressive company, opportunities have always presented themselves and with this promotion I am delighted to be recognised and to have the ability to help continue to push Old Mill forward."

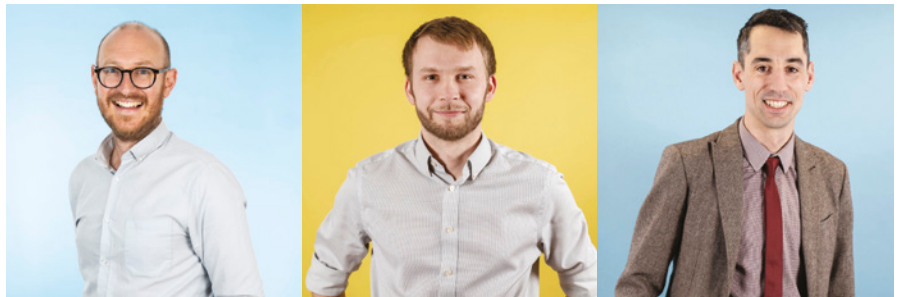
David Jones, who is an audit specialist in the corporate team joined Old Mill in September 2016. Having gained broad experience as both a financial controller and auditor, David, who is a chartered accountant, said he was "completely elated to have been promoted to the position of Partner at Old Mill".

He added: "I have a clear vision and commitment to help make Old Mill's audit offering in the South West truly exceptional, by focusing on risk, quality and the client experience at a time when both regulation and stakeholder demands are evolving."

Phil Kirkpatrick joined Old Mill straight

out of university back in 2008 because he wanted to specialise in rural accountancy. He says he was instantly drawn to Old Mill due to its rural specialism and support of the farming community.

"From the outset of that journey, I have worked with truly inspirational colleagues and clients within the sector, who have helped shape me into the partner I am today," said Phil. "I will now continue to champion and support the farming community during what is an increasingly difficult period, while at the same time keeping an eye out for those budding partners of the future!"



## S Roberts Group receives Fleet Operator Recognition Scheme (FORS) accreditation

A leading Somerset waste removal firm has been awarded a prestigious Bronze Fleet Operator Recognition Scheme (FORS) accreditation in praise of its high standards (July 2025).

S Roberts Group, in Bridgwater, Somerset has been presented with the award for its fleet operations, which cover safety, efficiency and environmental protection.

Director of Waste Management at S Roberts Group, which celebrates its 95th anniversary this year, Beccy Roberts, said: "As part of our ongoing commitment to road safety, we are delighted to announce the achievement of our FORS Bronze.



"A special thank you goes to our Office Manager, Natasha Butcher and Transport Manager, Paul Callow for putting in all the hard work that has led to this achievement.

"This wonderful accreditation will help us move forward in setting higher standards for safety, efficiency, environmental protection and overall excellence in fleet operations. It will provide support to the team and improve our training development too."

FORS is the UK's leading accreditation scheme and since it was launched in 2008 nearly 5,000 businesses nationwide have achieved its standards. More than just an accreditation, it ensures fleet operations are legally compliant, safe and efficient.

S Roberts Group's wealth of experience spans more than 95 years. It's also one of the South West's leading waste management companies. It provides specialist industry and geographical knowledge to advise commercial and domestic clients on the best possible waste solutions.



Based in Bridgwater, Somerset, the third-generation firm is run by the founder, Sammy Roberts' granddaughters, Beccy and her sister Vicky Owens, who took over the business from their father, Terry, in 2004.

S Roberts Group holds its environmental considerations and solutions at the core of its business and adheres to these when advising and making decisions on the management of waste, resources, emissions and transport.

It also offers skip, tipper and plant hire, bulk earth moving, grab hire, recycled aggregates and demolition services for domestic and commercial clients across the South West, as well as professional asbestos sampling, surveys, removal and encapsulation.

For further details, please call 01278 422521 or visit [www.srobertsandson.co.uk](http://www.srobertsandson.co.uk).



# Stephens Scown expands in Somerset



Recognised as one of the Sunday Times's Best Places to Work in 2025, Stephens Scown LLP is driving forward with its strategic growth plans thanks to investment across the South West. The latest move for the employee-owned and B Corp™ Certified law firm with offices in Truro, Exeter and Taunton establishes a more permanent home for its growing Somerset team and plans for a brand-new base in Bournemouth.

Following the major refurbishment and investment in purchasing the leasehold of Curzon House, the firm's headquarters in Exeter, and having taken on the leasehold of Falcon House in Truro city centre, Stephens Scown is strengthening its roots in Somerset with a 10-year lease at Portland House on Taunton's Blackbrook Estate.

With a move-in date set for early September, Stephen Wray, who leads the firm's Commercial Dispute Resolution and Somerset team, says of the move: *"We are delighted with the progress we have made since moving onto the Blackbrook Estate in 2023, galvanising our links with the local business community and developing relationships with clients across the region, while supporting the wider community with everything from sponsored swims to gardening and reading in schools. Now is the time to establish our new long-term home in Portland House and we can't wait to move in."* He continues, *"We are a growing and fun-loving team, and we'd love to hear from talented individuals who are looking for their next challenge in a firm with an outstanding workplace culture that balances support for its people, the planet and profit."*

Managing Partner, Richard Baker states: *"This is an important step in our development as a leading South West law firm. It shows we are committed to our region and our communities, while also being able to deliver outstanding legal services to clients regionally and nationally. Our people are specialists in their respective legal fields, enabling our clients to navigate life's personal and business challenges, to grasp opportunities and to thrive."* *"With key new hires over the last year including Matt Huggett, Helen Williams, Nick Smith and Georgina Carter, we are recruiting for a number of new roles, from trainees and apprentices to senior associates and partners, bringing further employment opportunities to Somerset."*

Achieving its best financial results in its long history, with '24/'25 revenue set to top the £30 million mark, the Firm's ground-breaking employee-ownership scheme, Scownership, continues to be a success in terms of employee retention and recruitment. In 2024, each eligible employee was paid a record £4,685 profit share regardless of their role, because the Firm values everyone's contribution equally. Meanwhile, Stephens Scown is making sure its financial success is matched by its commitment to delivering above and beyond for its clients, its people and local communities with investment in people and business infrastructure.

As an employee-owned firm, one of the secrets of Stephens Scown's success can be found in the engagement it has been able to build with its people. Highlighting this, earlier in the year, the Firm celebrated being listed as one of the Sunday Times Best Places to Work for 2025. Based on positive employee feedback, the nationwide survey celebrates the best employers across industries of all sectors and sizes.

Building on the firm's successful growth in Somerset and following the appointment of commercial property specialist Chris Twaits as a Partner, the firm has also announced it is to open a new office in Bournemouth by the end of the year. Watch this space for news of more key appointments in the coming months.



## THE LEADING SOUTH WEST LAW FIRM WHERE DOING THINGS DIFFERENTLY MATTERS

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THE SUNDAY TIMES  
**Best Places  
to Work 2025**

## Showcase your vehicle at Haynes Motor Museum's inaugural John Haynes Classic Motor Show

Haynes Motor Museum is offering the opportunity to be part of the spectacular display line-up at the inaugural John Haynes Classic Motor Show, taking place on Sunday, September 7.

Marking 40 years since John Haynes OBE founded Haynes Motor Museum in July 1985, the event will celebrate his legacy and passion for the motor vehicle.

Spread across five outdoor zones surrounding the museum, the show will feature a full programme of displays, demonstrations, talks and interactive activities.



At the heart of the show will be the Haynes Manual Display, showcasing a specially curated selection of vehicles that have each been immortalised in a corresponding world-famous Haynes Workshop Manual.

John Haynes' unique ability to explain the complex engineering of cars and motorcycles in a logical and accessible way in the Haynes Manuals will be recognised and celebrated.

Vehicles already confirmed for the line-up include a DeLorean DMC-12, Austin Healey Frogeye Sprite Mk1, Series 1 E-Type and a Grey Ferguson tractor, along with three iconic vehicles from the Museum's own collection.

The museum is inviting the public to get involved and showcase their own vehicles that have a connection to a Haynes Manual.

Whether it's a personal connection to the vehicle manual, a mechanical challenge overcome by a manual or a particular journey had in a car with a corresponding Haynes Manual, Haynes Motor Museum would love for you to share your story.



These personal connection stories will be displayed alongside the vehicles, offering visitors to the show a glimpse into the powerful and inspiring memories that Haynes Manuals have created and influenced over the decades.

All selected participants in the Haynes Manual Display will receive free entry to the show.

There will also be a dedicated Classics Row Display and Car & Motorcycle Club Arena for those who are part of a group or have a classic car dating pre-1985 and pre-2001.

Applications to take part are open exclusively via the John Haynes Classic website. For more information call 01963 440804 or visit [www.johnhaynesclassic.co.uk](http://www.johnhaynesclassic.co.uk).

## Walker Family Law expands expert team in North Somerset and Bristol

Walker Family Law has significantly strengthened its presence in the North Somerset and area with a series of new appointments to its growing team.

The expansion reflects the firm's continued commitment to providing expert, resolution-focused legal support to families across the region.

The new team members bring a wealth of experience across both private and public law, including complex children matters, care proceedings, domestic abuse, and international child abduction.

Their arrival bolsters Walker Family Law's ability to meet rising demand for specialist family law services in North Somerset, Bristol and surrounding areas.

Fiona Griffin, Head of Legal at Walker Family Law, said: "Expanding our team in North Somerset and Bristol is a reflection of the increasing demand for specialist family law advice in the region.

"We are proud to welcome such experienced and compassionate lawyers who share our commitment to achieving positive, resolution-focused outcomes for our clients. This growth strengthens our ability to support families with empathy, clarity and legal excellence."



The new joiners include highly respected solicitors Emma Wildblood, Daniela Nickols and Kerry Wilkinson. Together, they bring decades of experience acting in complex and sensitive family law matters. The team is further supported by legal

secretaries Naomi and Lorna, who cover the North Somerset area and ensure a smooth client experience.

Walker Family Law's North Somerset and Bristol expansion underscores the firm's ongoing focus on growth, quality and community-led service - with 'Resolution at Heart' at the core of everything they do.

For enquiries or to schedule an initial consultation, please contact the client services team on [clientservices@walkerfamilylaw.co.uk](mailto:clientservices@walkerfamilylaw.co.uk) 01392 248113.





## Bank of England summary – fragile demand, trade developments, Government tax and labour policies all squeeze profitability

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



@BoESouthWest

Sentiment regarding demand continues to wane across retail, manufacturing, construction and business services, with contacts now not expecting to see a material recovery in demand until 2026.

Investment intentions remain subdued but are not quite at the lows seen in previous months. Contacts' expectations for export sales have weakened as tariffs, shifts in global trade flows and ongoing uncertainty all reduce demand. Tariff uncertainty continues to worry contacts with many still in 'wait and see' mode.

Employment intentions remain mildly negative, unchanged from the last round. There is more evidence that recruitment difficulties are easing to towards more normal levels. There is little news on pay settlements. Recent company visits continue to suggest average pay settlements for 2025 of 3.5%–4%.

As anticipated, the combination of cost pressures that came in on April 1 – labour regulations including National Insurance Contributions (NIC) and Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) regulations – has put pressure on firms to recover them via price increases, but success is mixed.

Although pass through of the increased costs to prices is underway, it is more advanced in goods than in consumer services.

As well as price increases, contacts continue to report using a combination of measures to mitigate the increased costs including reducing headcount, hours, wage settlements and margins. Inflation in raw materials and imported finished goods is slightly positive, and there is no evidence yet of tariffs impacting supply chain pricing.

Contacts generally report that consumer confidence remains weak and given this, most expect another weak year with low volume growth.

Eating out remains subdued following a weaker than expected Q1 as consumers continue to visit restaurants less often and spend less when they do.

Investment intentions seem subdued but broadly stable and not quite at the lows seen in previous months. There are fewer references to significant cuts in the year ahead.

Several uncertainties are weighing on the confidence needed to commit to future investment plans, raising the bar for return on investment and leading to increased scrutiny of capital expenditure plans.



## BANK OF ENGLAND

Contacts cite fragile demand, trade developments, Government tax and labour policies, squeezed profitability and costs of capital goods as factors. One bright spot is that the cost and availability of credit features less in conversations with contacts.

Capacity, automation and artificial intelligence (AI) are mentioned to some extent as a motivation for investment. This is more so in manufacturing and professional services, but also in some consumer-facing businesses. There are considerably fewer major IT infrastructure programmes underway now, although investment in AI, cybersecurity and moves to the cloud, remain.

Expectations for export sales have softened as tariffs, shifts in global trade flows and ongoing uncertainty impact demand.

Business services contacts report that their clients are managing budgets more closely and delaying spending decisions because of cost pressures and greater uncertainty.

Price inflation for business services is slowing as is annual growth in the volume of business, owing to domestic and global uncertainty. Demand for audit, advisory and tax services remains strong, supporting professional services revenue growth, and financial market volatility has boosted revenue for investment banks.

Restructuring and insolvency activity continues to edge up on the same period last year, particularly in consumer services.

Contacts report that increased uncertainty is causing manufacturing output to contract more quickly, compared to the same period last year, than described in previous rounds.

Construction output remains modestly down on the same period last year.

Credit supply continues to improve gently, despite recent heightened financial market volatility. Credit demand remains weak due to low capital expenditure but has risen for working capital. Demand for credit remains weak.

Bad debts remain low. However, contacts worry about the risk of higher business failures given the weak growth outlook, high-cost inflation and increased trade uncertainty. The cost increases that took effect on April 1 have created additional squeeze on margins.



## Policies to improve high street growth

A report by the Centre for Cities has recommended a number of policies that the Government and local policymakers should adopt to encourage high street growth. These include making city centres better places to do business, changing catchment area sizes of town centres, reforming the business rates system and making better use of the visitor economy.

**Read more about the policies at:**

<https://www.centreforcities.org/publication/checking-out-the-varying-performance-of-high-streets-across-the-country/>

## Fall in exports by smaller firms

A survey by the British Chambers of Commerce has revealed that in Q2 2025, around 24% of SME exporters reported an increase in export sales and 26% reported a decrease when compared to the previous quarter. By contrast, only 20% of micro exporters reported an increase. The survey also revealed that 29% of micro exporters reported a fall in export orders compared with 27% of SME exporters.

**Read more about the survey at:**

<https://www.britishchambers.org.uk/news/2025/07/trade-strategy-must-support-smaller-exporters/>

## Devolution bill to increase regional power

The English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill has been introduced to Parliament. The bill includes measures to make community ownership of pubs, shops and social hubs easier, a ban on Upward Only Rent Reviews clauses in commercial leases and the development of Local Growth Plans to kickstart local economies.

**Read more about the bill at:**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/landmark-devolution-bill-brings-new-dawn-of-regional-power>

## Digital divide widens as SMEs lack access to support

Research from eResidency revealed that 67% of London-based SMEs are actively using digital support programmes, such as mentoring and accelerator initiatives to help run their business. This is compared to 74% of SMEs outside of London which reported no involvement in digital initiatives. The research also found that 96% of SMEs in London are aware of national digital adoption initiatives, compared with 60% of SMEs outside of London.

**Read more about the research at:**

<https://uktechnews.co.uk/2025/07/08/digital-divide-grows-as-74-of-regional-smes-lack-support-access/>

Source: BAD News (Business Advisers News)

## Government scraps new Companies House rules

The Government is set to scrap the introduction of new Companies House rules for small and micro businesses. From April 2027, the new rules would have required small and micro companies to disclose their profit and loss statements by removing current exemptions. Small and micro businesses would also have had to use external software to file their accounts.

**Read more about the decision at:**

<https://uk.finance.yahoo.com/news/relief-startups-government-u-turns-082522234.html>

## UKEF announces new finance products

UK Export Finance has announced two new finance products that will provide support and security for smaller businesses when trading internationally. The Small Export Builder will provide improved export insurance for smaller businesses. A 'Repeat Order Guarantee' will also be introduced, which will enable international buyers to easily access goods and services from UK suppliers without the need for repeated applications.

**Read more about the finance products at:**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/ukef-announces-enhanced-business-support-to-supercharge-international-trade>



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