

# Somerset Voice

The Official Magazine of  
Somerset Chamber of Commerce

June / July  
2026



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 Somerset  
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*Front page: The launch of Elevate Somerset at Somerset County Cricket Club was attended by more than 150 business leaders. From left, Chamber MD David Crew, the Lord Lieutenant of Somerset Mohammed Saddiq and event sponsor and Somerset Growth Board co-Chair Emma Warren of Elite Staffing Solutions.*

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## FIRST WORD



As Managing Director of Somerset Chamber of Commerce, I'm delighted to welcome you to this latest edition, which highlights the strength, ambition and collaboration that continue to define our business community.

A key milestone for the Chamber has been the launch of Elevate Somerset, a new strategic leadership network bringing together senior decision-makers from across business, the public sector and regional bodies.

This initiative reflects our commitment to ensuring Somerset has a strong, unified voice and a clear long-term vision. Alongside this, we have set out our 2026–2029 strategy, focused on driving innovation, developing skills, improving productivity and delivering inclusive growth for our county.

Supporting business growth in practical ways remains at the heart of what we do. I am particularly pleased that we have been appointed by North Somerset Council to deliver a targeted programme helping construction businesses access opportunities linked to the Epic Systems development.

Through initiatives like our Somerset Supply Chain portal, we are working to ensure that local firms—especially SMEs and microbusinesses—are visible, prepared and able to benefit from major regional investments, strengthening our local economy from within.

Partnership is another vital theme running throughout this issue. We are proud to welcome CETSAT as a new Business Partner and to continue our valued relationship with Somerset County Cricket Club.

These partnerships, along with our ongoing engagement visits and events, enable us to better understand and support the diverse needs of our members while building meaningful, long-term connections.

Together, these stories demonstrate the momentum we are building—through leadership, opportunity and collaboration—to ensure Somerset remains a thriving and resilient place to do business.

*David Crew*

MANAGING DIRECTOR  
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## OUR BUSINESS PARTNERS

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## Stephens Scown scores record success

Stephens Scown has closed its financial year with revenues of £34m – up 10% on last year – continuing a strong four-year compound annual growth rate of 11% and underlining the firm's sustained, upward trajectory.

The past year has focused on investment, laying foundations for future strategic growth. Recruitment into key roles, upgrades to systems and processes, and expansion into Somerset and Dorset position the firm to deliver its five-year plan.

Stephens Scown continues to achieve market-leading returns, with net profit margins above 35% prior to members' remuneration. These results reflect ongoing investment in people, client relationships and experience, alongside operational efficiency and a disciplined approach to growth.

Behind this performance is a significant volume of work, with over 170,000 hours delivered by the firm's teams in support of clients.

Looking ahead to the new financial year, Managing Partner Richard Baker thanked colleagues for another record-breaking year and clients for their continued support.

Richard added: *"My role is to deliver strong results while creating a great place to work and do business. These figures show we're achieving both. We continue to provide outstanding client service across the South West and nationally, making a difference as trusted advisors."*



Richard Baker, Managing Partner

### Celebrations and Jubilations

Alongside its financial performance, Stephens Scown has also received significant recognition:

#### Managing IP Awards

Awarded UK Impact Case of the Year for its work on a landmark trade mark case for long-standing Somerset client Thatchers Cider.

#### LexisNexis Legal Awards 2026

Recognised for the impact of its work, the strength of its teams and its commitment to supporting its people – highlighting its position as a regional heavyweight with national reach.

#### Sunday Times Best Places to Work 2026

Stephens Scown yet again features as one of the best in the big organisation category of the Sunday Times Best Places to Work 2026.

#### Devon and Somerset Law Society Awards

Shortlisted in seven categories, including Law Firm of the Year, Employer of the Year, Client Experience, Sustainability, Family Team of the Year, Solicitor of the Year (Benitia Knowles-Wright) and Paralegal of the Year (Ed Bidder), demonstrating the depth and breadth of its work.

#### South West Dealmakers Awards

Also recognised for its strength in the M&A market, with shortlistings for Law Firm of the Year, Small Deal of the Year and ESG Deal of the Year.

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BRITISH CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE

# QUARTERLY ECONOMIC SURVEY Q1 2026

**Business confidence remains fragile at the start of 2026.** The BCC's Quarterly Economic Survey (QES) for Q1 2026 - the UK's largest independent survey of business sentiment, made up of 4,560 respondents - shows that confidence among firms remained fragile, heading into the Iran conflict, with labour and energy costs weighing on investment.

**Labour costs remain the top cost pressure, cited by 73% of respondents**

**49% of firms expect to raise prices over the next three months**

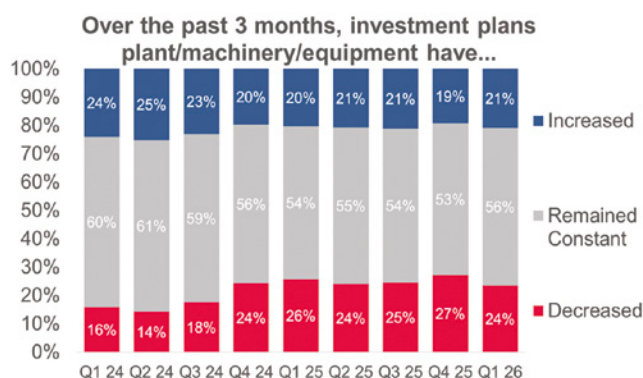
**Confidence and investment levels remain low**

## AT A GLANCE

### Investment

**A quarter (24%) of businesses say they have cut back on investment plans, while 56% say they have remained unchanged, and just 21% of firms increased their plans.**

The issue is more marked in certain sectors. A third of hospitality firms (33%) and retail businesses (32%) reported they'd scaled back investment plans.

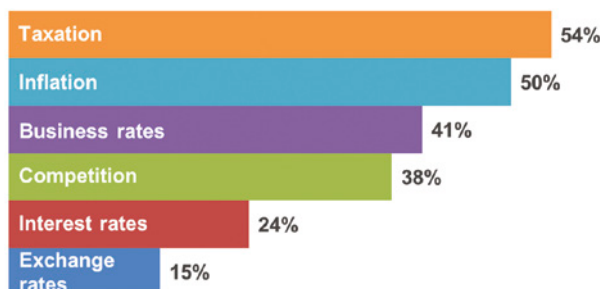


### External factors

**Tax remains the biggest concern for business, cited by 54% of firms (down from 63% in Q4). Half of firms (50%) remain concerned about inflation.**

Levels of concern about business rates rose in the first few months of the year, ahead of revaluation. 41% of responding firms cited business rates as a concern, up from 34% in Q4.

External factors of greater concern than three months ago





SOMERSET CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

# QUARTERLY ECONOMIC SURVEY Q1 2026

Business confidence across Somerset remained subdued at the start of 2026, closely reflecting the national picture where sentiment is described as “fragile” and stuck in a low-growth phase. The latest Somerset data shows a mixed outlook for turnover over the next 12 months, with an even split: 32% of businesses expect conditions to worsen, 32% anticipate improvement and 36% expect no change. This balance suggests a local economy lacking clear momentum, with firms divided on the direction of travel. However, the picture is more negative when it comes to profitability. Almost half of Somerset businesses (48%) expect profits to decline over the next year, compared with just 27% who anticipate improvement. This reflects ongoing pressure on margins, even where activity levels may stabilise. While domestic sales have shown some modest improvement across the UK, overall sentiment remains cautious and constrained. Taken together, the data suggests Somerset is broadly aligned with national trends but continues to face significant headwinds, particularly around profitability, where cost pressures are expected to weigh heavily in the months ahead.



## Elevate Somerset launch brings county leaders together

Business leaders and senior decision-makers from across Somerset gathered at Somerset County Cricket Club, in Taunton, for the official launch of Elevate Somerset, a new strategic leadership network developed by Somerset Chamber of Commerce.

Hosted on behalf of His Majesty's Lord-Lieutenant of Somerset, Mohammed Saddiq, the invitation-only event marked the beginning of a collaborative initiative designed to shape the county's long-term economic future.

Attendees included influential figures from across business, public sector organisations, and regional leadership bodies, all brought together with a shared focus on strengthening Somerset's economy.

David Crew, Managing Director of the Somerset Chamber of Commerce, introduced Elevate Somerset, setting out its role as a high-level forum for collaboration, insight-sharing and advocacy. He also presented the Chamber's new 2026-2029 strategy, outlining priorities around innovation, skills development, productivity and inclusive growth.

Speakers included Jamie Cox, Chief Executive of Somerset County Cricket Club, Taunton and Wellington MP Gideon Amos, Mr Saddiq and Deputy Lord Lieutenant Nigel Beacom.

The launch event provided an opportunity for attendees to connect, exchange ideas and begin shaping a collective approach to strengthening Somerset's voice both regionally and nationally.

Elevate Somerset is set to play a key role in bringing together leadership across sectors to drive meaningful progress for the county in the years ahead - details of the autumn event can be found in upcoming events on pages 31-32.



▲ Barry and Lizzie Tottle of Teapot Creative.



▲ Andrew Cockcroft (left) of EDF's Hinkley Point C and Charlie MacEwan of WPA.



▲ Nick Porter of Barclays and Durgan Cooper of CETSAT.



▲ Over 150 business leaders attended the launch event.

## Somerset Chamber of Commerce to lead supplier support programme for new Epic Systems campus

Somerset Chamber of Commerce has been appointed by North Somerset Council to deliver a new 12-month programme designed to support local construction businesses



to access opportunities linked to the Epic Systems campus development in Long Ashton.

The programme will map construction capability across North Somerset, identify local suppliers with the potential to bid for upcoming work packages and provide targeted support to help businesses become contract ready.

It will also ensure that hyper local firms in and around Long Ashton are at the forefront from the outset of the project.

Somerset Chamber will begin engagement immediately, working with construction SMEs, micros and sole traders across the district. Businesses will be encouraged to register on the Chamber's Somerset Supply Chain portal.

The portal is a free platform that connects suppliers with Tier 1 and Tier 2 contractors and provides updates on

opportunities, workshops and readiness support. The scope of the portal will widen as more local projects are confirmed.

For the Epic contract, a focused supplier group will be set up to help shape the early stages of the programme. The group will bring together representatives from local construction businesses to provide insight and ensure the programme reflects real experiences and challenges within the sector.

David Crew, Managing Director of Somerset Chamber of Commerce, said: "The Epic Systems development represents a major opportunity for local businesses. This programme will help ensure that North Somerset's construction sector is visible, informed and ready to benefit from the work ahead.

"It's also the first step for Somerset Chamber to establish the Somerset Supply Chain portal as the region's most valuable tool to link local businesses with contract opportunities on other, future schemes helping them to grow while boosting local economic growth."

Businesses interested in taking part or learning more can register, free-of-charge online at [www.somersetsupplychain.co.uk](http://www.somersetsupplychain.co.uk), or for further information, contact Sam Orchard, Supply Chain Engagement Lead, by emailing [supplychain@somerset-chamber.co.uk](mailto:supplychain@somerset-chamber.co.uk).

## New Business Partner, a welcome return and a visit to Agratas

Somerset Chamber is delighted to welcome CETSAT as its latest Business Partner and the ongoing support of Somerset County Cricket Club which has renewed its partnership with the Chamber for another year.

Technical experts CETSAT have over 20 years of experience providing IT support, cybersecurity and software development.

Their aim is to help clients grow, innovate and stay secure, ranging from ambitious SMEs to international enterprises, all of which benefit from robust, scalable and secure IT platforms hosted on-premises or in the cloud.

They pride themselves on becoming part of a client's team rather than just an IT support service. Somerset County Cricket Club was founded in 1875 and is based at the Cooper Associates County Ground in Taunton. Over the years, the club has produced and attracted some of the game's most celebrated players, including Sir Ian Botham, Marcus Trescothick, and Jack Leach.

### CETSAT



All our Business Partners share our ambition to develop and support a vibrant local economy. One such recent visit was to the Agratas new battery facility near Bridgwater, which was hosted by Chamber MD, David Crew (picture).

## Former Chamber Board Chair rubs shoulders with royalty



Former Chair of Somerset Chamber's Board of Directors, Emma Warren, was invited to a very special afternoon tea in recognition of her commitment and dedication to supporting the county's business community.

Emma, the Managing Director and founder of recruitment company Elite Staffing Solutions, in Taunton, was joined by husband Alastair Warren, who is a Healthcare Partner at WPA Healthcare Solutions, at a garden party at Buckingham Palace.

They were joined by the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge, Prince William and Princess Katherine, Zara Tindall and Sophie and Edward Wessex, the Duke and Duchess of Edinburgh.

Emma said: "It was an honour and a privilege to have been invited to attend the Royal Garden Party and we had a wonderful day. Around 8,000 people were in attendance, enjoying a lovely afternoon tea, strolls around the gardens and the sun even made an appearance! It's a day we will always remember."

Emma was nominated to attend for her work with Somerset Chamber and her wider support of Somerset's businesses - she is the Co-Chair of Somerset Council's Economic Growth Board, Chair of the Somerset Work, Health and Skills Partnership and a member of the Exeter Institute of Insurance.

Both Emma and husband Alastair remain active members and supporters of Somerset Chamber.

## Richard Huish College Dragons' Den 2026 showcases the future of entrepreneurship

Richard Huish College, in Taunton, joined forces with Taunton Chamber of Commerce to host its largest ever Dragons' Den competition.

The 2026 event saw 24 ambitious teams of A Level Business students competing to present the most innovative business idea or product, with a focus on developing a unique selling point (USP), identifying target markets, conducting market research, analysing competitors, developing a marketing campaign and planning detailed costings.

The competition highlighted the exceptional talent and creativity of the students, impressing the panel of dragons with the high quality of pitches.

The event was launched by Bethan Turner, Membership and Events Manager at Taunton Chamber of Commerce, who offered insightful advice on how to develop entrepreneurial skills and deliver a strong business pitch, providing initial inspiration for the students.

Dragons, composed of business representatives and industry specialists, provided invaluable advice, posed challenging questions, and offered constructive feedback to the teams.

Four teams of students went through to the final and demonstrated an impressive range of innovative ideas tackling social, environmental and health-related challenges:

- Side Quest presented an app designed to encourage young people to spend more time outdoors and socialise through engaging real-world challenges
- Shelter Spin showcased a sustainable, solar-powered washing line system featuring a slow-spinning mechanism that protects clothes from rain while still allowing them to dry outdoors
- Grip Stick, who took second place overall, introduced a practical mobility aid combining a walking stick with an integrated pick-up tool, designed to support individuals with mobility issues and promote greater independence

The overall winning business idea, Exhale, presented by Julian Barnes, impressed the Dragons with its smart vape-reduction device that supports users in gradually cutting down and eventually quitting vaping by monitoring nicotine concentration and tracking puff usage through intelligent technology.



▲ Bethan Turner of Taunton Chamber of Commerce with winner Julian Barnes.



▲ The Taunton Chamber of Commerce panel included Vickie Robbins of Taunton Brewhouse; Karen Gascoigne of Solace Business Management; Lisa Palmer of Imprints; Paul Pimlott of OEDDA; Gareth Davies of GD Media; Kate Shawcross of Porter Dodson; Sharon Grant and Livvi Grant of Daffodil PR & Communications; Helen Franklin of Free to Lead; Stuart Martin of Ethical Sales Pro; Emma Keene of Talking Stick Digital; Jodie Farkas of Lentells Accountants and Brian Stoneman of Academy ICT.

## Summerfield records landmark achievements across residential and commercial projects

Somerset developer Summerfield has achieved a series of landmark achievements in the last few months across both its commercial and residential operations, highlighting the company's continued commitment to sustainability and community living.

In Taunton, Summerfield Homes completed the final handover of Housing Association properties on its flagship development, Killams Park, to not-for-profit housing association, Abri Homes.

Sixty of the 320 homes Summerfield has delivered in three phases at Killams Park have been made available under either shared ownership or for social or affordable rent. A further 26 homes have been sold under Summerfield's MyHomes scheme at 30% less than their market value.

Killams Park has a mix of bungalows

and one-, two-, three-, four- and five-bedroom properties with a range of energy efficient features such as counterflow heat exchangers and EV charging points. Summerfield has planted 1,180 trees and created wildflower meadows and footpaths.

At Middlezoy, Summerfield is progressing work on its first net zero housing development. Each of the 26 homes has been designed to generate as much renewable energy as it is targeted to consume. They come complete with solar PV panels, air source heat pumps, shower saves and thermally efficient external features.

Summerfield Commercial has completed the steel frame for a terrace of eight new industrial units at its Westpark 26 Business Park in Wellington. The development is a 16-unit scheme aimed at



▲ The construction of the steel frame for eight of 16 planned industrial units at Westpark 26 Business Park in Wellington.

distribution, warehousing, logistics and manufacturing businesses.

The units are designed to provide flexible, energy efficient commercial spaces, with sustainable features including solar panels, glazed entrance canopies and EV charging points. Half of the units have already pre-sold with good interest in the remainder.

Summerfield also marked 40 years of ownership of the former Van Heusen shirt factory in Taunton by welcoming two new tenants to Viney Court.

## Albert Goodman launches competition to win a ride in firm's new hot air balloon

After months of keeping their secret project 'under wraps', Albert Goodman's new hot air balloon is taking to the skies this summer.

"As headline sponsor of the Bristol International Balloon Fiesta, it only felt right that we had our own balloon. We are really looking forward to bringing our new, pink AG balloon to the skies of the South West this summer.

"It has a jam-packed summer of appearances ahead, so if you spot it, grab a photo. We would love to see your photos and you could win flights," said Stacey Jabbitt, Marketing Manager at Albert Goodman.

To mark the occasion, Albert Goodman is giving away two hot air balloon

ride tickets to one lucky winner. The rides will take place at the Bristol International Balloon Fiesta from August 7-9.

But would-be flyers will need to keep an eye out for the balloon soaring through the skies!

To enter the competition, participants need to:

- Capture a photo of the new AG hot air balloon in all its glory
- Upload the photo to social media and tag in Albert Goodman

Entries close on July 1 at midday, with the winner announced and notified via social media. Ts&Cs apply.



## Mentoring in action: Clarke Willmott Taunton lawyers shape future talent

An office mentoring chain between women lawyers at national law firm Clarke Willmott in Taunton is paying dividends for the next generation of legal talent.

Solicitor Paige Skudder is the latest to benefit from the chain where one woman passes on her experience to another and is now encouraging others to do the same.

Paige praises her "wonderful and collaborative relationship" with partner Laura Mackain-Bremner, who in turn has been supported by fellow partner Esther Woolford since she was a newcomer.

"When I first joined Clarke Willmott, Laura, who was my supervisor, kindly offered me weekly one to ones," says Paige, who qualified as a solicitor in March 2025.

"Those sessions often involved talking through my workload or exploring the many questions that naturally come with finding your feet.

"I've benefited enormously from Laura's time, her investment in my development, and her willingness to share her

knowledge, experience, and support.

"In return, I've had the chance to learn from her supportive leadership style, the way she works with clients, and her approach to business development."

In her own case, Laura, a partner in the commercial and private client litigation team, says she was "extremely lucky" to have had her own mentor, in the form of partner and solicitor advocate Esther Woolford.

"During my career I have seen a year-on-year rise in the number of female solicitors, and it is so wonderful to see more equality generally in the industry," said Laura.

"I had a wonderful female mentor in Esther, who showed me the difference a strong role model can make, particularly one who lifts you up and encourages you to be better.

"As my own career has developed, I've found myself increasingly invested in supporting junior colleagues and sharing whatever guidance or insight might help them.

"I believe in championing everyone in the workplace, but there is something special about women lifting each other up. It's a pleasure to play even a small part in someone's career journey."

Esther, who also heads Clarke Willmott's agriculture team, says good mentoring makes every kind of sense.

"Investing time in junior colleagues not only helps them grow; it strengthens the whole team and the work we deliver to clients, whilst also building a happy and productive team" says Esther, who joined Clarke Willmott in 2013.

"I'm delighted that the guidance I was able to offer Laura has gone on to inspire Paige, creating a chain of support that is helping shape the next generation of women lawyers at the firm."



## Workplace health is increasingly supporting the NHS – but rising costs and demand are creating a headache for employers

Corporate healthcare will not replace the NHS – but it is increasingly picking up the slack for our National Health Service.

This was the conclusion of a recent high-level thought leadership event ‘Applying long-term thinking to short-term decision-making’ held in London by health insurer, WPA.

Stephen Collier, previously CEO of BMI Healthcare and Chair of the Healthcare Purchasing Alliance, outlined how healthcare delivered through the workplace is becoming an increasingly expected part of working life.

“Employer-funded private medical insurance has moved from being a nice-to-have perk to a critical, essential need for employees,” he told the audience of corporate clients and intermediaries.

“The problem is that it is easy to give it to staff but very difficult to withdraw; it becomes part of what they see as their ‘entitlement’. As new benefits are introduced, whether it’s primary care, gender dysphoria, fertility or neurodiversity, and as the working age of staff steadily increases, we are creating a bit of a treadmill for ourselves because we have to continue to fund something that we decided to make available in very different times.

“The longer-term impact of some of that is just becoming clear. What we see year-on-year is that there has been a 4% annual growth in the insured population. If you extrapolate that even for 10 years, it is a massive shift,” he added.



This means employers need to rethink their purpose and what they want from health benefits, argued organisational health psychologist Professor Sir Cary Cooper, Chair of the National Forum for Health and Wellbeing at Work.

Companies need to focus on creating and supporting healthier, more productive workforces rather than simply adding more benefits. They also need to be prioritising more preventative healthcare approaches. Alongside this, Professor Sir Cary warned that stress, burnout and mental ill health are all increasing.

“Do proper wellbeing, not just the wellbeing day, not just the mental health first aid, all the low-hanging fruit,” he said, making the case for more board-level, strategic



Health Insurance

approaches, ideally led by a director of health and wellbeing and a nominated board director.

Professor Sir Cary Cooper – who coined the term ‘presenteeism’ (or continuing to struggle into work while unwell) – also identified ‘underload’ as becoming a growing problem alongside job ‘overload’.

“What we’re seeing now in job-insecure times is underload. People not having enough to do and being worried their employer knows that they don’t have enough to do, and their employer is trying to save money by getting rid of people,” he said, urging employers to take a more strategic, preventative approach to healthcare provision.

Professor Sir Cary will be unveiling his latest report ‘Practical Approaches for Measuring Workplace Health and Wellbeing’ at the House of Commons next month.

Ellis Turley, WPA’s Head of Corporate, added: “Benefit design is a major part of our take-on and renewal conversations so that corporate customers can truly understand the shorter and longer-term implications to, and the sustainability of, their corporate healthcare strategies.”

## West of England residents back Bristol Airport expansion

A YouGov poll of people in the West of England has found that twice as many support the expansion of Bristol Airport’s capacity than oppose.

The polling of people in the region found that 44% expressed support for the airport to increase its capacity to serve 15 million passengers a year. Just 24% opposed the proposals, with the remainder either neutral or unsure.

Proposals have been submitted to



North Somerset Council which would enable the airport to provide more destinations, including world cities within Europe and beyond with a limited number of new longer-haul flights to North America, Middle East, with connections to Asia and beyond.

The plans would see around £500 million invested in improvements at the airport and local infrastructure. These include extending the runway to accommodate larger aircraft and increasing capacity of the terminal that includes improvements to enhance the customer experience, including more space, a wider choice of retail and restaurants and the ability to walk onto aircraft without getting on a bus.





## Events, conferences, tourism and leisure

Many of our members provide exceptional spaces and experiences – not only for events and conferences, but also across the tourism and leisure sector, too. Whether you're planning a corporate gathering, a private celebration, a team away day or a festive party, you'll find inspiring venues and expert support within our network. From modern hotels and unique museums to historic landmarks, cultural attractions and even venues with some four-legged residents, our members offer something for every occasion. Beyond the event itself, they also deliver memorable visitor experiences, helping to showcase the very best our region has to offer – making it an ideal destination to meet, explore and unwind.

### Ferne Animal Sanctuary

As businesses continue to embrace more flexible ways of working, the demand for adaptable meeting and conference spaces is growing. Set within the peaceful surroundings of Ferne Animal Sanctuary, Hive@TheHub

offers a practical and affordable venue for meetings, training sessions, workshops, and collaborative working.

Designed to provide a relaxed alternative to traditional corporate venues, Hive@TheHub combines functionality with an inspiring rural setting. Surrounded by the natural beauty of the



Blackdown Hills, the space gives businesses the opportunity to step away from the usual office environment and focus on productive conversation, creative thinking, and team connection.

Facilities include free Wi-Fi, ample on-site parking, and unlimited tea and coffee, with lunches, takeaway options, and catered buffets available from the on-site café. The venue is available for private hire and can be adapted to suit a variety of business needs, from informal team catch-ups to structured training events.

For freelancers and remote workers, Hive@TheHub also offers the option of solo workspace use, ideal for those looking for an occasional change of scene away from home distractions. And for those who prefer not to leave their four-legged companions behind, well-behaved dogs are welcome, making it a workspace that is as accommodating as it is inspiring.

With prices starting from £10, every booking directly supports the sanctuary and the animals in its care, enabling businesses and individuals to contribute to a wider social purpose while enjoying a workspace that combines practicality, flexibility, and community impact.



### Halo Protection

We are delighted to be supporting fellow Chamber member It's in the Bag cancer charity at its annual Test Fest music festival at Taunton Rugby ground on Saturday, June 20.

This a great day/evening event, plenty of live music and cider, with plenty to do for the whole family.

We will be there offering advice and support to anyone that has suffered from or are concerned about testicular cancer, as we have experienced the lows and highs of this form of cancer.

Tickets are available at: [www.tickets.testfest.org.uk](http://www.tickets.testfest.org.uk)



## Lanier South West

Lanier, a Cheddar-based office solutions provider, will be exhibiting at the upcoming Somerset Businesses Expo on June 12, showcasing solutions designed to help organisations improve efficiency and reduce administrative workloads.

We work closely with businesses across the South West, providing managed print solutions, document

management software, VoIP phone systems and AI voice solutions.

As businesses continue to face pressure to do more with less, there is increasing demand for automation and smarter workflows that save time and reduce operational costs.

At the expo, our team will demonstrate how organisations can streamline everyday processes and improve productivity through practical solutions.



## Walpole Dunn

Walpole Dunn is celebrating a major milestone this September: a full decade in business! We're marking the occasion in true WD style with an unforgettable Casino Night at the stunning Waterside Country Barn in Taunton.

Guests can expect an evening of glamour and entertainment, complete with classic casino tables, sharp tuxedos, elegant cocktails, and a lively disco brought to life by a live saxophonist.

Add in wood fired pizza, indulgent treats from Dough Bros and a buzzing party atmosphere, and you've got the recipe for a standout anniversary celebration.

This year's event also carries a special purpose. Instead of

choosing a single Charity of the Year for 2026, we're dedicating the night to all six charities we've proudly supported over the past decade.

Proceeds from ticket sales, themed drinks, and food will be shared between them, helping to continue the impact they make within our community.

Guests will also have the chance to bid in our silent auction, featuring exciting prizes, including a luxury overnight stay in the beautiful on-site shepherd hut at Waterside Country Barn.

Join us for an evening of games, great food, music, and celebration. To secure your tickets, email [enquiries@walpoledunn.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@walpoledunn.co.uk).



## Sedgemoor Chamber of Commerce

At Sedgemoor Chamber of Commerce, we believe the value of business events is not only in what happens on the day, but in what they help build over time.

While events like the Somerset Business Expo 2026 bring energy, ideas and new conversations into one space, their real impact often comes afterwards. A brief introduction can turn into a lasting connection. A conversation can lead to a new opportunity. Sometimes, simply being in the room helps businesses feel more connected to the wider community around them.

That is why these shared spaces matter. Whether through

an expo, an awards evening, a workshop or a breakfast event, they give businesses the chance to step outside the day to day, meet others and be reminded that they are part of a wider business community across Sedgemoor and Somerset.

The same thinking sits behind the Sedgemoor Business Awards. While the expo offers a space to showcase and connect, the awards give us a chance to recognise achievement, celebrate progress and shine a light on the businesses helping shape our local economy.

For those who would like to keep in touch with what is coming next, updates for this year's Sedgemoor Business Awards can be found at [sedgemoorchamber.co.uk](http://sedgemoorchamber.co.uk).



## Teals Farm Shop and Restaurant

Teals is more than just a pit stop on the journey South West; it's a destination worth weaving into your summer plans.



Ideally located on the A303 in Somerset, Teals invites travellers to slow down, stretch their legs and ease into staycation mode a little earlier.

Stop for lunch in the light-filled restaurant, where seasonal dishes showcase the very best of Somerset produce, or stock up on holiday essentials in the colourful food market,

lifestyle store and bookshop.

From picnic favourites and pantry staples to rare-breed meats from the butchery and heritage cheeses from the deli, you'll find everything you need to fuel the drive west, and those long, leisurely summer days beyond.

For an easy day out with little ones and four-legged companions, wander around the Dog Jog field, pick up supplies in store and settle beneath the orchard trees with a picnic blanket while children spot the cows, each with their names painted on their ears.

It's a simple, joyful way to spend a summers afternoon. Teals also makes an ideal base for exploring the surrounding countryside. Discover nearby Cadbury Castle, wander stretches of the Monarch's Way, or cycle part of the South Somerset Cycleway before returning for coffee, cake or a long lunch.

Open seven days a week, 8am - 6pm, South Cadbury, BA22 7FS.

## Taunton School Enterprises

Taunton School Enterprises has been proud to host a variety of high-profile charity and corporate events this year, showcasing its versatility as a premium venue for large-scale, luxury celebrations.

In February, the Densham Suite provided an elegant setting for the St Margaret's Hospice Charity Masquerade Ball, a sophisticated black-tie event. Guests enjoyed welcome drinks and a three-course dinner prepared in-house, followed by live entertainment and a silent auction, helping to raise an impressive £29,000.

St Margaret's Hospice said: "Taunton School has once



again been a fantastic venue for our annual Charity Ball. The location is excellent, the catering was wonderful, and the communication from the team throughout the planning process was clear and supportive, which helps make our event run smoothly every time."

Most recently, in April, Taunton School Enterprises welcomed Avon and Somerset Police for its Outstanding Policing Awards, celebrating the dedication and achievements of police officers, staff, and volunteers.

The Densham Suite, Theatre Foyer, and Old Library were transformed into an extravagant event space with a stage, lighting, and decorations, where guests enjoyed drinks, canapés, and a two-course dinner.

Thank you to those who have hosted their special occasions at Taunton School Enterprises. By choosing to hold your event at Taunton School you have helped to support the school's scholarships and bursaries provision and its many community outreach projects.

Taunton School Enterprises offers a range of flexible venues which are perfect for weddings, conferences, corporate and private events. Find out more at [www.tauntonschoolenterprises.co.uk](http://www.tauntonschoolenterprises.co.uk)

## The Royal Bath & West of England Society

Looking for a conference venue that gives your ideas room to breathe?

Set within 240 acres of Somerset countryside, the Bath & West Showground offers a refreshing alternative to city centre meeting spaces. Designed for focus, collaboration and scale, it's a place where meetings feel more productive and conferences feel more energising.

From small boardroom sessions to multi day conferences for hundreds of delegates, the Showground offers a wide



choice of flexible indoor spaces. Modern conference suites, meeting rooms, a purpose built theatre and large pavilions allow you to tailor your event - whether that's keynote led, workshop focused or exhibition integrated.

What sets Bath & West apart is balance. Alongside professional, fully equipped interiors, delegates benefit from open countryside, woodland and lakeside surroundings. Step outside between sessions, host informal networking outdoors or simply give attendees space to reset - supporting wellbeing and clearer thinking.

The infrastructure is already in place. Extensive parking, on site catering, strong connectivity and permanent roadways ensure events run smoothly from arrival to departure. Spaces can accommodate intimate meetings or conferences of up to 800 delegates, with larger halls available for exhibitions or plenary sessions.

Easily accessible yet refreshingly removed from everyday distractions, the Bath & West Showground is ideal for organisations looking to meet with purpose and deliver real outcomes.

If you want a venue that feels practical, flexible and refreshingly straightforward, this is worth a look.

events@bathandwest.co.uk | 01749 822200



## DHA Fire Stopping

With Somerset's calendar of events, conferences and visitor attractions continuing to grow, creating safe and compliant environments has never been more important for businesses welcoming the public.

At DHA Fire Stopping, we work alongside venue operators, event organisers and facilities teams to help ensure buildings and spaces are safe, compliant and ready for use. From conference venues and hotels to leisure facilities and large-scale outdoor events, fire safety is a critical part of operational planning.



Much of our work takes place behind the scenes, carrying out fire stopping, compartmentation

surveys and fire door inspections. These measures help ensure buildings perform as intended in the event of a fire, particularly in high-footfall environments where safety standards must be consistently maintained.

We are proud to support events such as the Weston Beach Race, where we have partnered as Fire Training Partner for the third consecutive year. It's a strong example of how collaboration and forward planning can support safe, well-run events that benefit the wider local economy.

This year, DHA is also supporting Weston Armed Forces Day by supplying firefighting equipment free of charge, further reinforcing its commitment to supporting safe and successful community events.

As more businesses across Somerset invest in their spaces and host events, we are seeing a growing awareness of the importance of fire safety compliance. By working together, we can help ensure that safety underpins every successful event and visitor experience.



## ibis Bridgwater

At ibis Bridgwater, we understand that for many Somerset SMEs, business travel is about far more than simply booking a room for the night. It often means meeting clients, interviewing candidates, running training sessions or bringing teams together.

With budgets under increasing scrutiny, getting more value from every trip has become an important part of smarter business planning.

From our experience working with local businesses, one of the simplest ways to make travel work harder is to

think beyond accommodation alone. Choosing a hotel that can also support daytime meetings can reduce both cost and logistics, while creating a more productive



working day.

At ibis Bridgwater, we are seeing growing demand for this kind of flexibility. Alongside overnight stays, we offer two contemporary meeting rooms suited to board meetings, training events, interviews and one-to-one conversations.

Located at Woodlands Court Business Park with free parking, our meeting spaces offer flexible seating, privacy screening and 54-inch plasma screens, making them practical for focused discussion as well as formal presentations.

Not every business conversation needs a dedicated meeting room. Our lounge also provides a quiet and professional setting for informal client catch-ups or short daytime meetings away from the office.

Flexible booking options matter too. Whether a business needs a room for a few hours, a full day or a series of events, adaptable packages can make planning easier and help control costs.

Contact: Emma Rathbone, Commercial Director [emma.rathbone@accor.com](mailto:emma.rathbone@accor.com)



## Secret World Wildlife Rescue

Businesses and individuals across Somerset are invited to an unforgettable evening at Secret World Wildlife Rescue's Charity Auction & Ball, taking place on Saturday, November 21, at Batch Country House, Lympsham near Weston-super-Mare.

Set in the stunning surroundings of Batch Country House, this much-anticipated annual event promises a night of elegance, entertainment, and fundraising in support of British wildlife.



Guests will enjoy a delicious three-course dinner, live music from The Flings Party Band, a DJ, fun casino tables, and both live and silent auctions featuring exclusive prizes and experiences.

More than just a spectacular evening, the charity ball plays a vital role in funding the rescue, rehabilitation, and release of injured and orphaned wildlife across the region.

The event also offers excellent opportunities for local businesses to get involved. Sponsorship packages are available, providing valuable brand visibility, while prize donations for the auction and raffle are warmly welcomed - a great way to showcase products or services to an engaged audience while supporting a meaningful cause.

Tables are now available to book, making it the perfect opportunity to entertain clients, reward teams, or enjoy a special night out.

To book your place or find out more, visit: <https://events.secretworld.org/event/charityball2026/> or email [fundraising@secretworld.org](mailto:fundraising@secretworld.org).

Join us for a memorable evening where business and community come together to make a real difference.



## Taunton Flower Show

The Taunton Flower Show, held annually in Vivary Park, is one of Somerset's most established events and a key highlight in the town's events calendar.

Founded in 1831, it remains one of the UK's oldest flower shows, blending tradition with modern attractions to draw visitors from across the region.

Alongside competitive horticulture, the show now features artisan stalls, food and drink, and family entertainment, ensuring broad appeal.

Beyond its cultural significance, the flower show delivers clear economic value to Taunton. Each year, it attracts thousands of visitors, boosting footfall across the town.

Hospitality businesses benefit from increased bookings, while retailers and restaurants see a surge in trade. The event also encourages longer stays, supporting Taunton's wider tourism offer and strengthening its profile as a leisure destination.

For local businesses, the flower show presents strong sponsorship and engagement opportunities. From headline sponsorships to supporting individual show categories, businesses can secure valuable brand exposure to a diverse audience.

Exhibitor spaces and hospitality packages further enable networking, promotion, and direct customer engagement.

Importantly, aligning with the flower show allows businesses to associate with a respected community event, enhancing brand reputation and demonstrating local commitment.

As Taunton continues to develop its events and visitor economy, the flower show stands as a proven success – celebrating heritage while delivering measurable commercial benefits and valuable opportunities for business growth.

This year's Taunton Flower Show takes place on Friday and Saturday, August 7-8.



## Cosmic

Tourism and hospitality businesses across Somerset and the wider South West are facing a familiar challenge: rising expectations, tighter margins, and ongoing staffing pressures. In this environment, many businesses are not short of ideas or ambition, but short of time.

Cosmic, a digital skills and consultancy organisation working across the Southwest, has been supporting tourism and hospitality businesses to explore how digital tools and automation can help address this challenge in practical, achievable ways.

For many SMEs, the biggest barrier to growth is

“time poverty”. Time spent responding to booking enquiries, managing cancellations, and handling routine administration takes valuable capacity away from delivering great guest experiences or developing new offers.

Digital tools and automation can help relieve this pressure. Simple changes such as automated booking confirmations, guest messaging and workflow tools can reduce repetitive tasks, freeing up staff to focus on customer experience and service quality. For smaller businesses, this can feel like gaining additional capacity without increasing headcount.

Alongside this, the use of AI is opening up new opportunities. From generating marketing content and guest communications to supporting promotions and seasonal campaigns, these tools are helping businesses stay visible and competitive.

As the visitor economy evolves, building confidence with digital tools will be key to resilience and growth. Cosmic is supporting businesses across the region to access funded/affordable training and practical support, helping teams develop the skills to make the most of digital and AI.



# NEW MEMBERS

## Accountancy Learning

Accountancy

01392 435349

glenn@accountancylearning.ac.uk

accountancylearning.co.uk

## Accurri

Accountancy

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jeremy.wickins@accurri.com

accurri.com/en-gb/

## Alma Freda HR & Recruitment Management

HR services

07438 761623

rebecca@alfreda.co.uk

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## Arcadia Trust Group Limited

Law

01458 258822

c.farnham@arcadiatrustgroup.com

www.arcadiatrustgroup.com

## Blue Wolf Group

Business consultancy

07804 469412

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## Catalyst Business Growth Ltd

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## Coutts & Co

Finance

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## CFO Centre

Business Consultancy

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Leadership and management development

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## Datel Services Ltd

Construction

03335 552062

charlottefoxall@datelservices.co.uk

datelservices.co.uk/

## Deception Detection Lab Ltd

Business consultancy

07757 167751

anna@ddltd.com

www.ddltd.com

## Field Studies Council

Charity

01984 640320

s.reynolds@field-studies-council.org

www.field-studies-council.org

## Future Focused Mortgages & Protection Ltd

Finance

01823 774476

richard@future-focused.co.uk

www.future-focused.co.uk

## Giant Storage Ltd

Transport

01373 780848

info@giantstorage.co.uk

www.giantstorage.co.uk

## Green Machine SW Ltd

Property services

07719 812167

jrellis@greenmachinesw.co.uk

greenmachinesw.co.uk/

## Guildhall Young Artists Taunton

Schools and colleges

07754217993

gyataunton@gsm.ac.uk

www.gsm.ac.uk/taunton

## Honeywell

Manufacturing

07909 438726

James.Hewett@Honeywell.com

www.honeywell.com

## Hooper Services (South West) Ltd

Construction

01392 982835

enquiries@Hooper-Services.co.uk

www.hooper-services.co.uk

## Lanier South West

Office services

01934 742184

info@laniersouthwest.co.uk

www.laniersouthwest.co.uk

## Off Site Solutions (R T) Limited

Construction

01278 780807

info@offsitesolutions.com

www.offsitesolutions.com

## Orca Pods and Payroll

Finance/ accountancy

0800 0903798

info@orcapp.co.uk

www.orcapp.co.uk

## Registered Care Providers Association Ltd (RCPA Ltd)

Associations

01823 351630

admin@rcpa.org.uk

www.rcpa.org.uk

## Silver Moor Business Consulting LLP

Business consultancy

07551 124383

john.baker@silvermoorconsulting.co.uk

www.silvermoorconsulting.co.uk

## Snugs Custom-Fit Ltd

Retail and online

01984 604002

info@snugs.com

snugs.com/

## Tiverton Hotel Lounge & Venue

Hotel and tourism

01884 256120

reservations@tivertonhotel.co.uk

www.tivertonhotel.co.uk

## TopStylista Image Consultancy Ltd

Business consultancy

07971 484882

chantelle@personal-stylist.co.uk

personal-stylist.co.uk

## Utility Warehouse

Energy

07947 057306

wrighthelenc@yahoo.com

uw.partners/helen.wright

## Voluntary Action North Somerset

Charity

07930 736778

mandy.gardner@vansmail.org.uk

www.vansweb.org.uk

## William Murray Financial Planner

Finance

07803 299281

william.murray@quilterfa.com

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adviser-directory/william-murray/

## YAS Solutions Ltd

Accountancy

07356055305

samira@yassolutions.co.uk

www.yassolutions.co.uk

# LATEST MEMBER-TO-MEMBER OFFERS

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

### Emerald First Aid Training

10% off all onsite and open training courses

### 10 Years Ahead

Free 2026 Government policy impact briefing

### Pro Cloud Solutions

10% discount on first year's fees when joining Pro Cloud solutions

### Sungift Solar

Free Solar potential audit

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20% off first consultations

### Tonks & Associates Ltd

Free AI readiness one-to-one with Tristan Tonks

### Imex Consultancy Ltd

One-hour free business health check

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

## New report measures Hinkley Point C's positive impact on people and the environment



The scale of Hinkley Point C's positive impact on people and the economy has been detailed in the Hinkley Point C Socio-economic and Environmental Impact Report 2026.

New figures show the project's three local training centres, operated in partnership with the UCS College Group, have given 19,500 people the skills they need to be part of the nuclear power project.

Almost 70% of the 1,740 apprentices trained at Hinkley Point C are from the South West. Others include youngsters from Suffolk learning skills they can take to Sizewell C, our twin nuclear project in the East of England.

The report also maps grants provided by Hinkley Point C's Community Fund of more than £20 million to 385 community projects. Stretching across Somerset, the benefits have been accessible to over 600,000 people. The fund is administered by the Somerset Community Foundation.

The grants are creating community benefit that will continue well beyond the construction of the new power station. The investment has also unlocked match funding of at least £8.4 million. Around 40% of grants support projects in rural areas of Somerset with the majority from areas of known social and economic deprivation.

£5.4 billion has now been spent with businesses across the South West with case studies highlighting the suppliers growing their capability and winning new work thanks to their experience at Hinkley Point C.

Benefits are also felt across Britain, including a new factory in North Wales which has opened to support



Hinkley Point C and future nuclear projects. This facility alone will employ 200 people.

The project continues to deliver environmental benefits. The report includes examples of the planting of seagrass in the Severn Estuary to benefit the marine environment and the £700 million of fish protection measures being delivered by the power station. Surveys show wildlife around the site is thriving with 92 bird species recorded in newly created landscape areas.

Hinkley Point C's home-grown electricity will provide Britain energy security for decades to come, meeting around 10% of the country's current electricity demand.

Stuart Crooks, Hinkley Point C's Managing Director, said: "While most people living locally say that they feel the benefits of our project, we don't take their support for granted. The Hinkley Point C Community Fund has supported many inspiring initiatives which show the vitality of communities and people around our site.

As I prepare to move on from the project, I am proud to see what we have achieved, and I look forward to the completion of a power station that is helping to build a more secure, more prosperous and more sustainable Britain."

Andy Berry, CEO of University College Somerset said: "Our continued partnership with Hinkley Point C exemplifies the power of collaboration between industry and education, delivering lasting social and economic benefits to the region and the country as a whole.

"Our partnership not only supports the immediate development of skills and infrastructure but also lays the groundwork for a greener, more resilient economy in the future. Looking ahead, the South West stands out as a leader in nuclear and engineering excellence, perfectly poised to deliver future projects."



- £20 million of community grants to 385 local organisations
- 19,500 people trained in local “Centres of Excellence”
- 1,740 apprentices trained – beating a target of 1,000
- £5.4 billion spent with 1,500 businesses across the South West
- New factory opened in North Wales to support the project
- Suffolk youngsters learn skills to take home to Sizewell C
- 65,000 trees planted and 92 bird species identified around the HPC site

Justin Sargent, CEO of Somerset Community Foundation, said: “We know that hosting the construction of Hinkley Point C is a source of great pride for many people in the area and has created many opportunities for local residents and businesses, but a project of this size inevitably also brings many changes in peoples’ everyday lives.

“The Community Fund has provided an incredible boost to hundreds of organisations in local towns, villages and hamlets, building stronger and more resilient communities which, in many cases, will have lasting impact far into the future.”

David Crew, Chief Executive of Somerset Chamber of Commerce, said: “Hinkley Point C is continuing to drive the agenda for investment in both Somerset and the wider South West region.

“Somerset Chamber of Commerce is proud to be playing its part, working in partnership with Hinkley Point C



to give local people and regional businesses the best opportunity to win contracts and benefit from the legacy of the project.”





## Manufacturing, engineering and producing

### Amarin Rubber & Plastics Ltd

As a genuine manufacturer and converter of many materials we are proud to employ Somerset people in a Somerset business.

In-house, here in Weston-Super-Mare, we manufacture bespoke products for a wide range of industries. Rubber gaskets for aerospace, plastic guarding for food and conveyor belts for pharmaceuticals are all made in our workshop.



The business continues to grow as a business and add to our capabilities through new, cutting-edge machinery, and staff training. We can now CNC cut, flame polish and bend our plastics to create whatever our customers need.

Amarin is proud to use a fully UK based supply chain. Our network of suppliers stretches the length and breadth of the country. As a company we are continuing to explore new options in terms of supply and products to bring as full a range of products and services to our customers as possible.

As a business we our proud sponsors of Yeovil Town FC and Somerset CCC in the county. We believe in supporting local infrastructure as a way to raise our, ever-increasing, profile. The Amarin Community Fund has supported nearly 50 local good causes in the last 12 months.

Amarin is a market leader in the manufacture and supply of a comprehensive range of quality rubber and plastic products, offering technical expertise and service to the industry.

We have more than 20 years of experience and pride ourselves on being a customer-driven, family run business.

More information at [www.amarinrubber.co.uk](http://www.amarinrubber.co.uk), by telephoning 01934 622420 or emailing [enquiries@amarinrubber.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@amarinrubber.co.uk).



### Carly Press

Carly Press has recently expanded its production capabilities with the installation of a Canon Colorado M5, marking a significant investment in the future of the family-run print and design business.

The new large-format printer has been installed at the Carly Press site in Wellington and represents a major step forward in both capacity and quality.

With production speeds of up to 159 m<sup>2</sup> per hour, the Canon Colorado M5 enables the team to deliver high-volume projects more efficiently, while maintaining exceptional colour consistency and finish.

For customers across Somerset and the wider South West,



this investment translates into faster turnaround times, greater reliability, and the ability to take on larger, more ambitious print projects with confidence.

It supports Carly Press' ongoing commitment to designing and printing high-quality products, delivered with outstanding customer service, even as demand continues to grow.

With over 40 years as a family-run business, Carly Press continues to evolve alongside its customers. This latest addition reflects a long-term approach to investment, strengthening production capability while enabling the team to handle greater volumes and more complex projects without compromising on quality.

The Canon Colorado M5 further enhances Carly Press' role as a trusted print partner for businesses throughout Somerset, reinforcing its focus on reliability, quality and sustainable growth.

Contact us: telephone 01823 667063, email [printing@carlypress.co.uk](mailto:printing@carlypress.co.uk) website [www.carlypress.co.uk](http://www.carlypress.co.uk).

carlypress

## Engineered Fabrication Solutions (EFS)

Engineered Fabrication Solutions (EFS) has reinforced its position as one of the UK's premier sheet metal engineering specialists through significant investment in both people and technology over the past year.

Based in Somerset, EFS continues to build on its reputation for quality, agility, and precision across a wide range of industries.

A key focus for the business has been strengthening its workforce. By expanding its team with skilled engineers, fabricators, and support staff, EFS has enhanced its capability to deliver complex projects while maintaining the high standards its clients expect.

This investment in talent ensures the company remains



responsive, innovative, and well-equipped to support growing customer demand.

Alongside this, EFS has made substantial capital investment in new, state-of-the-art machinery. These upgrades have increased production capacity, improved efficiency, and enabled even greater accuracy across all aspects of sheet metal fabrication.

From bespoke enclosures and cabinets to large-scale infrastructure components, the business is now better positioned than ever to handle projects of varying scale and complexity.

Operating across multiple sectors—including data centres, infrastructure, manufacturing, and engineering—EFS offers a comprehensive, end-to-end service. Its Somerset base provides a strategic advantage, allowing for strong regional support while serving clients nationwide.

This combination of skilled people, advanced technology, and a commitment to continuous improvement ensures EFS remains a trusted partner for high-quality sheet metal solutions, capable of delivering value across diverse and demanding industries.

More information is available on our website [www.e-fs.co.uk](http://www.e-fs.co.uk), by telephoning 01278 558505 or emailing [sales@e-fs.co.uk](mailto:sales@e-fs.co.uk).



## Crisp Clean Services

In April, Crisp Clean Services Ltd exhibited at InterClean Amsterdam, the leading global trade show for the professional cleaning and hygiene industry, held every two years.

With our own stand, we showcased our manufactured product range, met customers and partners from across the world, and strengthened international relationships.

A key highlight was the launch of our new Medi Mop, a fully recycled mop that reflects our commitment to sustainable manufacturing without compromising performance or quality.

InterClean provided the ideal platform to demonstrate how British manufacturing can respond to growing global demand for environmentally responsible solutions.

The exhibition also offered valuable insight into industry trends and innovation, helping to inform our ongoing product development and future manufacturing strategy.

Crisp Clean is a family-run UK manufacturer based in

Somerset, established in 1991. We specialise in designing and manufacturing high-quality professional cleaning systems, including trolleys, flat mop cleaning systems, and supporting equipment used across commercial, industrial, and controlled-environment settings.

With over three decades of manufacturing expertise, we continue to produce our equipment in-house in Somerset and support local employment. Our heritage is built on reliability, craftsmanship and service - values that continue to guide us as we evolve our brand, modernise our digital presence and expand our product offering.

As we enter the next stage of growth, we look forward to connecting with local organisations, collaborating with fellow Chamber members, and contributing to the strength of Somerset's manufacturing community.

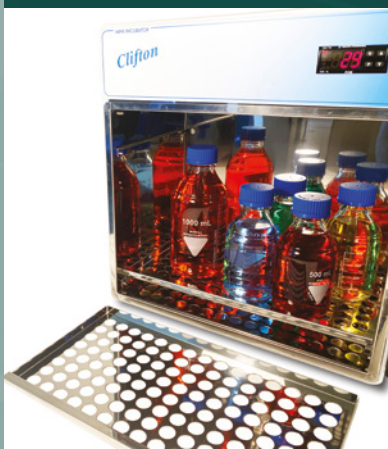
More information can be found on our website [www.crispclean.co.uk](http://www.crispclean.co.uk), by telephoning 01458 250385 or emailing [info@crispclean.co.uk](mailto:info@crispclean.co.uk).



## Nickel-Electro Ltd

Nickel-Electro is a proud, family owned, independent British manufacturer, specialising in temperature control equipment for the pharmaceutical market both in education and industry.

We have recently launched the Clifton Mini Incubator. Designed and manufactured at our factory in Weston-super-Mare, this incubator represents our commitment to precision engineering and high-quality, sustainable, products.



The Mini Incubator was engineered to address the growing demand for space-saving laboratory equipment without compromising on performance. Working with laboratory technicians ensured we were able to manufacture a product that met the customer's demands.

By utilising high quality materials and advanced manufacturing techniques, we have achieved a compact footprint that maintains the exceptional quality control that we are known for.

The Clifton Mini Incubator is a compact, durable model ideal for sample incubation in an education or laboratory setting. The 25-litre chamber is manufactured from high quality stainless steel and features a PID temperature controller secured behind a lockable clear door, that prevents unauthorised adjustments and allows full view of the chamber.

As a business rooted firmly in the manufacturing and engineering sector, we believe in the importance of 'Made in Britain.' The Mini Incubator is not just a new product; it is a testament to our team's technical expertise and our dedication to evolving alongside the scientific community.

We are thrilled to bring this piece of British engineering to the global market, ensuring that compact laboratories have access to the same reliability as their larger counterparts.

Find us online at [www.nickel-electro.com](http://www.nickel-electro.com).



## Rotec Hydraulics

As a market leader in innovative hydraulic-electric turnkey solutions, Rotec Hydraulics, founded in Taunton in 1979, have evolved into a critical partner for industries requiring precision-engineered integrated systems, maintenance, and distribution.

What makes Rotec different? We don't just supply components; we provide full lifecycle support. From initial design and build, to maintenance and repair, kitting and obsolescence support, our team delivers end-to-end service.

Our strategic partnership with global technology giant Parker Hannifin ensures our engineers are trained to the highest standard and we have access to the latest fluid power and smart technologies, allowing us to offer the most efficient, robust and economical solutions available.

With five service centres spanning the South and South West—from Cornwall to Gloucestershire—and our sister company, Ram Reman (specialists in hydraulic cylinders and CNC machining) in Dorset, we are well placed to support Somerset Chamber members.

Our commitment to excellence is backed by a rigorous suite of certifications, including ISO 9001, 14001 and 45001. We also hold JOSCAR, SafeContractor, and Achilles among others.

Whether you are starting a new project or seeking a supplier with market-leading technical expertise, get in touch to discuss. Contact us via 01823 348900 or [sales@rotec.net](mailto:sales@rotec.net). Alternatively visit our website for more info at [www.rotec.net](http://www.rotec.net).



## Total Clean Air

Total Clean Air is a Somerset-based cleanroom engineering specialist supporting some of the UK's most highly regulated industries with the design, build and validation of cleanrooms and controlled environments.

Headquartered in Street, the business works with clients across pharmaceuticals, life sciences, advanced manufacturing, aerospace and scientific research,

delivering bespoke environments where contamination control and regulatory compliance are business critical.

Founded in 2018, the company has quickly established itself as one of the UK's leading specialists in its field, completing more than 200 projects across



the UK and internationally. It is also one of only two UKAS ISO 17025-accredited cleanroom constructors in the UK.

Led by CEO Phillip Godden, recently named Manufacturing Leader of the Year at the South West Business Awards, Total Clean Air continues to invest in innovation, technical excellence and talent as demand grows for specialist-controlled environments across increasingly advanced industries.

Having recently joined Somerset Chamber of Commerce, the team is looking forward to building relationships with fellow members and championing Somerset's growing reputation for engineering, manufacturing and technical excellence.

Phillip Godden said: "Somerset is home to a huge amount of engineering and manufacturing talent, and we are proud to be part of that community."

"Joining Somerset Chamber gives us a great opportunity to connect with like-minded businesses while continuing to showcase the specialist expertise being delivered from right here in the county."

Find us online at [www.totalcleanair.com](http://www.totalcleanair.com), email [info@tca.group](mailto:info@tca.group) or telephone 01737 924 700.



## Vector Fabrications Limited

Vector Fabrications Limited is a Somerset-based specialist in precision metal fabrication, serving customers across the South of England from its purpose-built 15,000 sq ft facility in Somerton.

Combining advanced fibre laser cutting and CNC folding technology with expert craftsmanship, the company delivers high-quality metalwork solutions for businesses across a wide range of industries.

The business offers a complete end-to-end manufacturing service, including design and prototyping using SolidWorks 3D CAD, laser cutting, CNC folding, welding, fabrication, painting and finishing.

Working with materials including stainless steel, aluminium, mild steel, copper and brass, the team produces everything from one-off prototypes to large-scale production runs.

Using advanced automated production technology, the company delivers highly accurate laser-cut components with fast turnaround times and efficient 24/7 manufacturing capabilities. Experienced fabricators ensure every project meets exact customer requirements.

The business supports sectors including automotive, construction, manufacturing, signage, catering and healthcare, offering tailored fabrication solutions backed by responsive customer service and competitive pricing.

Whether clients require precision-cut parts, complex folded assemblies or complete fabricated products, the team prides itself on delivering quality, reliability and flexibility from concept through to finished product.

For more information, visit Vector Fabrications Limited or contact the team on 01458 269000. Find us online at [www.vectorfabrications.co.uk](http://www.vectorfabrications.co.uk).



## County Connections at Minehead and West Somerset Golf Course



▲ Jane Finch (left) of Time for Inclusion and Tracey Mathews of SS&L.



▲ A panel led by sponsors Singer Instruments discussed the skills and training opportunities facing West Somerset employers.



▲ From left, Suzi Koszler-Allen and Morgan Jones of Amicus Law, John Harris of Aspire Commercial Finance and Sam Farmer of Edge Coaching.

## Somerset Entrepreneurs' Group at Firepool Centre for Digital Innovation, Taunton



▲ From left, Imelda Leech of the Somerset Education Business Partnership, Suzi Koszler-Allen of Amicus Law, event sponsors Sally Parish and Katy Lampard of Singer Instruments and Heidi Oliver of SS&L.



▲ Jane Finch of event sponsor Time for Inclusion spoke about her own SME at the start of the entrepreneurs' group.





## Vision 2029: The Somerset Chamber Members' Summit at Taunton Racecourse and Conference Centre



**Brown & Brown**

▲ More than 150 attendees went along to find out more about Somerset Chamber's exciting plans for the next three years.



▲ From left, Tony Pizii of Halo Protection, Ian Colio of Somerset Chamber and John Garland of Growing Vision.



▲ Dan Liddiatt of Ignition Credit and Amanda Sheppard of The FSE Group.



▲ A panel of Somerset Chamber Board Directors answered questions about the Chamber's new three-year strategy, including Chair Joe Routledge, Vice Chair Rosie Wicks and Finance Director Mike Cahill.



▲ Somerset Chamber MD David Crew (centre) with event sponsors Mike Cahill of Albert Goodman and Elaine Street of Brown & Brown.

**Construction Connections at Festival Hall, Glastonbury**



▲ Tony Parrott (left) of SHEQ Services and Chris Tivey of CTA Planning Consultancy.



▲ From left, speaker Gemma Day of Dowlas Property Group, Chloe Sully of Somerset Chamber and Alastair Warren of event sponsor WPA Healthcare Practice.



**Somerset Engineering and Manufacturing Forum at Numatic International, Chard**



**Somerset marketing forum at Yeo Valley HQ, near Blagdon**



▲ From left, forum Chair Robin Clempson of Albert Goodman, Karl Tucker of Yeo Valley and Lizzie Tottle and Alex Mercer of event sponsor Teapot Creative.



## Somerset AI Summit at Firepool Centre for Digital Innovation, Taunton

\* clarke  
willmott



▲ Scotty Quilter of Techosaurus delivered the message that AI was not taking jobs – bad leaders were.



▲ Guest speakers Nicola Dillon of Microsoft and James Seward of Amazon Web Services with Chamber MD David Crew (centre).



▲ From left, Claire Turley and Carina Willis of Pro Apprenticeships with Siobhan Wilson of Sunflower Social Media.



▲ From left, Somerset Chamber MD David Crew, Paula Squire of event sponsor Clarke Willmott and Colin Dart of Exeter University which partnered with the Chamber to deliver the summit.



▲ BBC Somerset reporter Erin Santillo interviews speaker Liam McGee of Kaiasm.



▲ A panel of industry, skills and education experts hosted a Q&A panel session.

## County Connections at Flourish, near Frome



▲ From left, Leslie Redwood of event sponsor Mogers Drewitt Solicitors, Robert Dakin of Somerset Chamber, Peter Quintana of Frome Chamber of Commerce and guest speaker Paul Hargreaves of Flourish.

## Somerset directors' forum at Wells Cathedral

## NextGen networking at Richard Huish College, Taunton



▲ Shelly Mullen, Somerset Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) Business Engagement Manager spoke to attendees about the LSIP.

## County Connections – Cannington

Tuesday  
**23 Jun**

We're excited to be holding our first County Connections networking event in the stunning setting of Cannington Court, near Bridgwater. We will be joined by representatives from EDF's Hinkley Point C so make sure you book early as this one is going to be popular! Stay in touch with existing contacts and meet new ones over a buffet breakfast.

Hosted by:



**Time:** 8.30am – 10.30am at Cannington Court via Cannington Park and Ride, Church Street, TA5 2AH  
**Cost:** £24.99 plus VAT members  
£34.99 plus VAT non-members

## Meet the neighbours – Dorset

Tuesday  
**7 Jul**

Somerset Chamber and Dorset Chamber are teaming up for a very special meet the neighbours networking lunch – and this year we're taking things to new heights . . . literally! Join us at the stunning Compton Abbas Airfield, now owned by film director Guy Ritchie, and experience his exciting new Lore of the Sky smokehouse restaurant. Build new relationships, broaden your reach and spark fresh collaboration across both counties.

Sponsored by:



**Time:** 12 noon – 2.30pm at Lore of the Sky, Compton Abbas Airfield, Ashmore, near Salisbury, SP5 5AP  
**Cost:** £37.99 plus VAT members  
£47.99 plus VAT non-members

## Ignite Somerset conference 2026

Tuesday  
**30 Jun**

Held in partnership with Somerset Council and the Somerset Growth Board and sponsored by NatWest, this new major flagship business and investment event is designed to accelerate economic growth and showcase the county's most significant commercial opportunities. The conference is expected to attract up to 250 delegates, including SME leaders, major corporates, investors, developers, and regional stakeholders.

Sponsored by:



**Time:** 8.30am – 4pm at Haynes Motor Museum, Sparkford, near Yeovil, BA22 7LH  
**Cost:** £29.95 plus VAT members  
£49.95 plus VAT non-members

## Somerset HR professionals' forum

Wednesday  
**8 Jul**

We're hosting an exclusive roundtable for in-house HR managers, HR directors, and workforce development leaders to discuss challenges, share best practice and explore solutions with peers from across the region. Chaired by Emma Warren, Managing Director of Elite Staffing Solutions, and sponsored by Porter Dodson, the forum will be held at Numatic International, in Chard, and offers an optional, pre-booked tour of the site, too!

Sponsored by:



**Time:** 9.30am – 11.30am at Numatic International, Millfield Industrial Estate, Chard, TA20 2GD  
**Cost:** £24.99 plus VAT members  
£34.99 plus VAT non-members

## Construction Connections – Weston-super-Mare

Wednesday  
**1 Jul**

Looking to build your network in the construction or property industry? Join us for Construction Connections, the go-to networking event for construction professionals. Expect relaxed conversations over breakfast rolls and refreshments. We're excited to welcome Galliford Try, one of the UK's leading construction groups as guest speaker.

Sponsored by:



**Time:** 8.30am – 10.30am at The Grand Pier, Regency Suite, Weston-super-Mare, BS23 1AL  
**Cost:** £25 plus VAT members  
£30 plus VAT non-members

## Somerset Chamber annual summer barbecue

Thursday  
**16 Jul**

Our summer barbecue is back! We're firing up the grill for one of the highlights of the Chamber calendar – our annual summer barbecue, which this year will be held in the glorious setting of Cannington Court, near Bridgwater! Expect relaxed networking, great company, welcome drinks on arrival and, of course, a delicious barbecue spread.

**Time:** 6pm – 8pm at Cannington Court via the main Cannington Park and Ride  
**Cost:** £28.95 plus VAT members  
£38.95 plus VAT non-members

## County Connections - Taunton

Tuesday  
**21 Jul**

What better way to start the day then with a cooked breakfast and a host of networking opportunities! Join us for our County Connections networking breakfast in partnership with Taunton Chamber to raise the profile of your business, make new connections and catch-up with existing contacts.

Sponsored by:



**Time:** 9am - 11am at Taunton School, Staplegrove Road, Taunton, TA2 6AD  
**Cost:** £24.99 plus VAT members  
£34.99 plus VAT non-members

## County Connections - Weston-super-Mare

Tuesday  
**15 Sep**

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

Sponsored by:



**Time:** 8.30am - 10.30am at Worlebury Golf Club, Monks Hill, Weston-super-Mare, BS22 9SX  
**Cost:** £24.99 plus VAT members  
£34.99 plus VAT non-members

## Somerset engineering and manufacturing forum

Tuesday  
**8 Sep**

Designed for senior level leaders in engineering and manufacturing businesses, join us at Haynes Motor Museum for our Somerset engineering and manufacturing forum to network with industry professionals and discuss ways to showcase this sector in the region. You'll also be able to tour nearby Sycamore Process Engineering, the go-to process engineering company in the country for the dairy, food, beverage and plant-based industries.

Sponsored by:



**Time:** 9am - 12 noon at Haynes Motor Museum, Sparkford followed by Sycamore Process Engineering, Sparkford  
**Cost:** £24.99 plus VAT members  
£34.99 plus VAT non-members

## Somerset entrepreneurs' group

Wednesday  
**16 Sep**

The Somerset entrepreneurs' group gives all attendees the opportunity to introduce themselves to the room, highlighting their company or organisation and giving delegates more information about themselves and what they do. There will also be an optional tour of Harry's Cider.

**Time:** 9am - 11.30am at Harry's Cider, Long Sutton, Langport, TA10 9NS  
**Cost:** No charge for members  
£20 plus VAT non-members

## Annual breakfast update with the Bank of England

Tuesday  
**22 Sep**

Join Somerset Chamber and the Bank of England for a must-attend breakfast briefing at Taunton Racecourse. Hear from the bank's South West agent about the latest UK economic outlook, covering GDP, inflation, the labour market and monetary policy—packed with insights relevant to South West businesses. Enjoy a cooked breakfast and valuable networking, followed by a Q&A exploring the key pressures and opportunities which are shaping today's business landscape.

Sponsored by:



**Time:** 8am - 10am at Taunton Racecourse and Conference Centre, Orchard Portman, TA3 7BL  
**Cost:** £28.50 plus VAT members  
£33.50 plus VAT non-members

## Elevate Somerset - autumn leadership event

Thursday  
**10 Sep**

Exclusively for Elevate and charity Chamber members - no charge to attend. Elevate Somerset is a new strategic leadership network developed by Somerset Chamber of Commerce and hosted on behalf of our Honorary Patron, His Majesty's Lord-Lieutenant of Somerset, Mohammed Saddiq. It brings together senior leaders from across Somerset as part of a collaborative initiative designed to shape the county's long-term economic future. Speakers will include Nigel Colman, Managing Director, Leonardo Helicopters UK, Mark Bolton, Principal and Chief Executive, Yeovil College and Bill Revans, Leader of Somerset Council.

**Time:** 4pm - 6pm at the iAero Centre, Bunford Lane, Yeovil, BA20 2EJ

\*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.

## Auxilium HR Solutions named B2B Business of the Year following continued growth



Auxilium HR Solutions Ltd has been named B2B Business of the Year at The Yeovil Business Awards, recognising the company's growing impact supporting SMEs across the South West.

The award is particularly meaningful for the business, as the nomination came directly from clients. It reflects Auxilium's focus on delivering practical, commercially focused HR that helps businesses move beyond reactive people management and build a more structured, scalable way of operating.

Auxilium works with growing SMEs that are starting to feel the strain of inconsistent people management. Issues are often handled case by case, managers lack confidence, and business owners remain the default escalation point.

Over time, this creates inefficiency, risk, and frustration at leadership level. Rather than acting as a traditional HR provider, Auxilium partners with leadership teams to bring clarity, structure, and consistency to how people are managed.

Its approach is centred around three core areas: aligning structure and roles to support growth, building management capability, and introducing simple systems that improve visibility and decision-making. Together, these create a more controlled and sustainable way of managing people as businesses scale.

The award follows a period of continued expansion. Auxilium has recently welcomed a new team member, with a further appointment planned later this year, and is currently recruiting an HR Manager to support increasing demand.

The business supports a growing number of Somerset-based organisations, including several Somerset Chamber members, and is focused on scaling its team carefully to maintain the quality, consistency, and commercial focus that clients rely on.

Auxilium was founded on the belief that HR should be a driver of performance and growth, not just a reactive function. This principle

continues to underpin its work, helping businesses improve decision-making, strengthen leadership capability, and reduce reliance on business owners as the default problem solvers.



▲ Photo, from left: Project manager Shelley Anderson, regional facilities manager Jim Solomon, head of Bristol office Paul Bray, CEO Paul Crocker, chief people officer Amy Taylor, programme director Alasdair McAlley and chief operations officer Scott Bentley celebrate PKF Francis Clark's B Corp certification.

## PKF Francis Clark gains Certified B Corporation status



PKF Francis Clark has officially become a Certified B Corporation, joining a global community using business as a force for good.

It marks the latest step in the accountancy firm's ongoing efforts to make a positive impact for its clients, communities and colleagues, as well as the environment.

Certified B Corporations, or B Corps, are businesses that meet B Lab's verified standards of social and environmental performance, transparency and accountability.



its impact across five key areas: governance, workers, community, environment and customers. This process prompted the firm to examine every part of its operations and make significant improvements.

One of the biggest shifts has been in how the firm is governed, with environmental, social and governance (ESG) considerations embedded into every board level discussion and managers' responsibilities.

The firm has also invested heavily in improving the experience of its people, including through enhanced wellbeing support and regular engagement surveys. Learning and development opportunities have grown substantially, with around 200 professional qualifications funded each year, alongside a bespoke suite of leadership programmes.

On the community front, every office now has a dedicated charitable budget,

enabling colleagues to support causes that matter locally via the PKF Francis Clark Community Fund.

More broadly, the firm and its people donated and raised more than £100,000 for good causes and colleagues also contributed 2,384 hours of volunteering. Meanwhile, partnerships with schools, colleges and universities have expanded, helping widen access to careers in accountancy across the South and South West.

Environmental action has also accelerated, in line with the firm's goal of reaching carbon net zero by 2035. Offices have been upgraded with renewable energy, LED lighting, solar panels and smart plugs to reduce energy consumption. Green teams are active across the firm's offices, supporting colleagues to get involved in sustainability initiatives.



## Somerset connections bring much-needed back support cushion into production

A Somerset-based health business has relaunched its back support cushion after years of searching for a new manufacturer, thanks to a series of local connections that have now brought production to the South West.

Rachael and Lorna Kennard-Wall, from It's All About Health, originally developed the Sittingwell back support cushion through their clinical work with clients experiencing ongoing back pain.

They found that for many people, the sofa was often the least supportive place to sit, and in some cases, the source of the problem.

The cushion was designed to look like a regular scatter cushion rather than an orthopaedic product, while still offering support where the spine needs it most. It helps people sit more comfortably at home and reduces unnecessary strain on the back.

After relocating to Somerset, the pair faced an unexpected challenge when their original manufacturer retired. Despite several years of searching across the UK, they were unable to find the right fit to continue production.

That changed through a chance conversation with Charlotte England of Langport-based business The Web Barn, who introduced them to Jo Norman-Brown of Suttons in Picts Hill, Langport. The connection led to a new manufacturing partnership just 10 minutes from their clinic in Kingsbury Episcopi.

Production has now started locally, with additional elements of the product also sourced within the south-west, including labels from Plymouth-based company Asquith's.

Rachael said: "We spent years trying to find the right manufacturer, and nothing quite fit. Then through a simple



conversation, everything fell into place, right on our doorstep. It really brought home how important those local connections and conversations are."

The Sittingwell cushion is now being handmade again, continuing its original purpose of helping people sit more comfortably and support their back in day-to-day life.

Alongside the relaunch, the business has also been nominated for the 2026 West Country Women Awards in the Health and Wellbeing category. The nomination recognises their ongoing work supporting clients and their local community across Somerset and beyond.

This is the second time the business has been shortlisted for the award.

Lorna said: "To be recognised again means a lot. It reflects not just the work we do with clients, but also the journey we've been on to bring the cushion back. It really has been a very exciting week indeed."

## From Office Assistant to Student of the Year: how skills training is shaping Somerset's future workforce

Pitman Training Taunton is proud to celebrate the success of Isobel Fitzgerald-Pollard, whose inspiring journey demonstrates the transformative power of practical skills training.

As an Office Assistant at Junction 24, Isobel is gaining hands-on experience while training in event and wedding



management. Rather than following the traditional university route, she chose to build her career through structured workplace learning and completed her Event Management Diploma with Pitman Training Taunton

The results have been remarkable. Isobel recently addressed more than 150 delegates at the Somerset Chamber Business Skills Summit, confidently sharing how her studies helped her develop the knowledge, confidence and professionalism to take on greater responsibilities in her role. Her story highlights how combining accredited training with real-world experience can create meaningful career progression.

Debbie Frankland, Centre Manager at Pitman Training Taunton, said:



"Isobel's journey is a fantastic example of how focused, flexible skills training can unlock potential and create new opportunities."

Working closely with local employers, Pitman Training Taunton provides industry-relevant qualifications that help individuals upskill and businesses close critical skills gaps. From administration and bookkeeping to leadership and specialist diplomas, the centre supports learners at every stage of their career.

By recognising Isobel as Student of the Year, Pitman Training Taunton said it was not only celebrating one learner's achievement, but the wider value of investing in skills and training to strengthen Somerset's workforce for the future.

## Haynes Motor Museum secures lottery funding to transform the Red Room and support career pathways

Haynes Motor Museum has been awarded £180,000 from The National Lottery Heritage Fund to transform the iconic Red Room gallery and support career pathways into automotive and heritage engineering fields.

The funding will support Red Room Reimagined: Engineering Futures, a two-year project that will redevelop the museum's celebrated Red Room exhibition and introduce interactive STEM experiences, immersive interpretation and a dynamic learning programme designed to make complex automotive engineering accessible and engaging. The project is also supported by Arts Council England.

Home to over 300 vehicles spanning more than a century of motoring history, Haynes Motor Museum holds one of the UK's most significant collections of historic and contemporary cars.

As a registered charity and an Arts Council England Accredited Museum,



the organisation is dedicated to preserving automotive heritage while inspiring curiosity about engineering, design and innovation.

Red Room Reimagined will transform how the museum interprets and shares automotive design and engineering through its collection.

The project will create an interactive gallery experience for visitors and deliver a wide-ranging learning and careers-focused programme that promotes STEM learning.

It is designed to help address the UK skills gap in engineering by creating pathways into the sector and helping build the next generation of skilled professionals in automotive and heritage engineering.

The project builds on the legacy of the Museum's founder, John Haynes OBE, creator of the world-famous Haynes Automotive Manuals and renowned for his ability to explain how things work.

The reimagined Red Room will reflect this spirit by encouraging visitors to explore the question "How?" and uncover the engineering stories and social histories behind the vehicles on display.

Alongside the gallery transformation, the project will introduce curriculum-



linked workshops, outreach activity, Home Education days, a Young Engineers Club and an annual automotive and heritage engineering careers event, expanding the Museum's educational offering both on-site and beyond the Museum.

Chris Scudds, CEO of Haynes Motor Museum, said: "The UK faces a growing engineering and technology skills gap, and too many young people lose interest in STEM before they even consider it as a career. We are determined to help change that.

"Through Red Room Reimagined and our expanded learning and outreach programme, we will bring automotive engineering to life with hands-on experiences that build confidence in technical subjects and turn curiosity into capability.

"By doing so, we can create pathways into automotive and heritage engineering careers for the next generation, supporting skills development that is vital for the UK's future economy and competitiveness."

## MY CFO welcomes new Chief Commercial Officer

MY CFO Ltd has announced Marc Gordon as the company's new Chief Commercial Officer. Marc brings over 20 years of senior commercial leadership experience, along with extensive expertise within the part-time and project-based leadership space, known as fractional C-suite space.

His appointment marks an important step in the continued growth of MY CFO Ltd, as the business expands its reach and supports more SMEs with high-quality, experienced CFO-led support.

Marc said: "I'm a seasoned commercial leader with over 20 years of

experience helping businesses grow through strategic insight and execution. I am passionate about enabling SMEs to access high-quality financial leadership in a flexible and impactful way."

MY CFO Ltd provides flexible, CFO-level financial leadership to growing businesses, allowing them to access experienced strategic support without the need for a full-time hire.

The team works alongside business owners and leadership teams, delivering everything from financial oversight and forecasting to strategic guidance and decision support.

## MY CFO LTD

Expert Fractional CFO Services



## Building Britain's battery future: Agratas' 2026 highlights to date

Construction work initially began on Agratas' multi-billion-pound battery manufacturing facility in 2024 and, when complete, it will be the biggest of its kind in the UK.

Based in Bridgwater, Somerset, the facility is set to play a crucial role in advancing clean technology and sustainable energy, producing battery cells for automotive and energy storage solutions.

At the start of 2026, Agratas announced the successful completion of the steel frame for the landmark first phase of the project, known as 'Building One' – marking a key construction milestone and an important step forward in the delivery of the project.

In preparation for operational readiness, Agratas has also officially



formalised a collaboration with UCS College Group through the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). A significant advancement for skills development in the South West, the agreement establishes UCS College Group as Agratas' designated training provider and coordinator.

Becki Robertson, Vice President Human Resources at Agratas, said: "Establishing UCS College Group as our primary skills partner and coordinator ensures that local people and our future workforce will have access to high-quality learning opportunities.

"This unlocks a wide range of accessible career pathways, empowering individuals with the skills needed to thrive in advanced manufacturing and sustainable technologies."

With recent progress in mind, Agratas welcomed the Rt Hon Peter Kyle MP, Secretary of State for Business and Trade, for a tour of the steel framework that forms the backbone of the new battery manufacturing facility.

During the visit, the Business Secretary announced significant UK Government investment into the advanced manufacturing sector, with Agratas having secured £380 million in funding to support the construction of the Somerset facility and the procurement of manufacturing equipment for battery cell production.

While in late April, Sir Ashley Fox MP joined local schoolteachers and pupils to unveil creative new artwork now on full display at the entrance to the site.

The mural is a collection of drawings by children from Woolavington and Puriton primary schools, who, in autumn 2025, were invited to create designs as part of a competition set by Agratas.

When in full operation, Agratas' overall facility is set to create around 4,600 direct jobs and is expected to generate around £43 billion in economic growth over a 25-year period.

To learn more about Agratas, visit [agratas.com](https://agratas.com).

## Tech West England Advocates announces 2026 tech trade mission to China

Tech West England Advocates (TWEA), the not-for-profit tech community for West England, has announced its 2026 international programme, headlined by the fourth UK Tech Mission to Guangzhou, Shenzhen and Hong Kong.

Taking place from November 23-27, the mission coincides with the 25th anniversary of the sister-city relationship between Bristol and Guangzhou and 20 years of the Birmingham-Guangzhou partnership.

To honour these milestones, the 2026 mission will focus on deepening the long-standing trade corridor between West England and Southern China's Greater Bay Area, fostering a new era of innovation and bilateral growth.

For the first time, the delegation will include Guangzhou alongside Shenzhen, known as the Silicon Valley of China and Hong Kong, the region's premier global financial hub.

Richard Lowe, Founder of Tech West England Advocates and mission organiser, said:

"The programme builds on the momentum of recent high-level discussions between

UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer and President Xi Jinping. With bilateral trade exceeding £100bn annually and new visa-free access opening windows for UK founders, the timing for expansion has never been more optimal. This mission provides senior-level access, meaningful introductions, and real commercial opportunity.

"By running bilateral missions from taking UK founders to China in November to bringing Chinese innovators to London, Bristol, and Birmingham in June, we are truly cementing a two-way bridge for global tech growth."

The mission is open to all UK-registered tech companies. Registrations of interest, or to find out becoming a mission partner, can be made by emailing [contact@techwestenglandadvocates.co.uk](mailto:contact@techwestenglandadvocates.co.uk).



## Female founder secures angel investment to scale corporate style programme

Devon-based image consultancy TopStylista Image Consultancy has secured angel investment to accelerate the growth of STRIBE, its structured corporate style programme.

STRIBE is designed to help employees show up with confidence, presence and clarity in a hybrid working world and aims to form part of a wider people and wellbeing strategy.

The consultancy was founded by Chantelle Znideric more than 20 years ago. Chantelle has previously worked Westfield London's in-house styling team and as a fashion columnist for Surrey Life and Devon Life. Growing up in Devon.

She was selected for the Creative UK Create Growth Programme alongside Innovate UK funding - both recognised as significant validators for an



independent business scaling from a small village in rural Devon.

Her female angel investor is also a TopStylista client so has experienced first-hand the impact personal styling can have.

Chantelle said: "Securing investment

### CHANTELLE ZNIDERIC AWARD-WINNING PERSONAL STYLIST

as a female founder is no small feat. Nationally, just 2.3% of venture capital goes to all-female founding teams, and only 14.2% of female-led businesses secured debt finance in 2024 - the odds are not in our favour.

"To have found an investor who not only believes in the commercial opportunity but genuinely understands the mission behind STRIBE means everything. This is about proving that businesses built by women, focused on confidence and backed by purpose, deserve to be taken seriously."

For more information visit [www.personal-stylist.co.uk](http://www.personal-stylist.co.uk) or contact [chantelle@personal-stylist.co.uk](mailto:chantelle@personal-stylist.co.uk).

## Total Clean Air takes full ownership of joint venture Modular Clean Air

Total Clean Air (TCA), the Somerset-based cleanroom specialist, has taken full ownership of its Modular Clean Air (MCA) joint venture which launches last year.

Originally established to bring together modular construction and cleanroom expertise, it now operates as TCA's dedicated modular cleanroom brand.

By bringing MCA fully in-house, TCA can offer a more integrated and streamlined approach to project delivery, combining specialist cleanroom knowledge with modular construction under one unified structure.

The move also reflects continued growth for the business from its

Somerset headquarters, supporting clients across the South West, UK and internationally.

Demand for modular cleanroom solutions continues to rise, with the global market forecast to grow at over 12% annually, driven by increasing requirements across pharmaceuticals, life sciences and other highly regulated sectors.

Phillip Godden, CEO at TCA, said: "This is a natural next step for Modular Clean Air following its successful launch last year. Bringing MCA fully into the business reflects the confidence we have in both the market and the capability we've built.



"It allows us to strengthen our modular offer and provide clients with a smarter, quicker and safer approach to delivery.

"We have an exciting pipeline of developments ahead, and MCA will play a central role in how we continue to evolve our offer and support clients in increasingly complex and fast-moving environments."

## Chamber duo work together to clinch must-win bid

Somerset Chamber members Alchemy Training Group (ATG) and Bartlett Bid Management (BBM) worked together to submit a vitally important bid - which, together, they won!

A must-win, the tender was evaluated by a representative of a multinational German supplier of lifting equipment, who said their submission was the best among all contenders.

The pair said the achievement

demonstrated the collaborative spirit of Somerset Chamber, with the two members working together to secure the win.

Craig Hallworth of ATG said "This submission demonstrated our vision of value, clarity, and feasibility. We have established a fantastic relationship with the client over six years and are delighted to have won this single supplier framework with the help of BBM.

"We are excited at the prospect of continuing to support our client with the specialist training they need to grow their business."

Curtis Bartlett, of BBM, added: "What a great result and a real accolade to our client, ATG for the specialist training services they provide. It was a genuine pleasure to be involved with the team in this successful tender project."

## Bank of England summary – Middle East conflict dents business confidence but too early to gauge full impact

By Malindi Myers – Bank of England Agent South West



@BoESouthWest

In previous rounds, despite the weak outlook for economic activity, there had been early signs of improving business confidence. A hope of lower interest rates and a sense that the worst of the previous shocks was behind us had led contacts to expect a modest recovery later in 2026.

The Middle East conflict has eroded that confidence, with contacts worried about its potential impact on demand, supply chains and input costs.

But despite the uncertainty, apart from the small number of contacts who trade directly with the Middle East, few report significant impacts on their output, activity and intentions yet.

And any feedthrough to costs or prices so far remains modest, outside of the direct impact of higher prices for fuel and oil-related products which have been felt immediately.

Intelligence suggests overall annual output growth remains weak and is being dragged down by declining output in construction and manufacturing.

Demand for business services is weak as their client businesses are typically in cost cutting mode.

Demand for UK exports is weak, especially in the European Union (EU). And UK households are still reluctant to spend and remain very price conscious.

Employment intentions are broadly flat this round having seemed to have firmed a little ahead of the Middle East conflict. The conflict is reported as a risk to employment growth by some recruiters but is not yet material.

Around four-fifths of 2026 pay settlements are now agreed, with the cumulative average pay settlement running at around 3½%. There is little evidence of a Middle East effect on pay yet, although some contacts acknowledge it as an upside risk to future settlements because of the higher inflation outlook.

Higher oil prices are increasing input cost inflation, particularly through fuel and transport costs. But so far manufacturing price inflation remains around normal. Higher transport costs have caused the decline in business services price inflation to stall.

The combination of higher costs and lower demand might prevent the gradual recovery in profit margins contacts had started to pursue.



## BANK OF ENGLAND

The oil price shock, together with broader-based cost rises associated with the conflict in the Middle East, is expected to offset disinflationary pressures elsewhere in consumer price inflation. But there is much uncertainty beyond the very short term.

Consumer spending growth was already subdued before the onset of the Middle East conflict. Since then, there have been early signs that growth could be weakening further.

Contacts generally expect very modest volume growth this year, even in the best-case scenario of a swift end to the conflict. And they see downside risks from the conflict's impacts on household energy costs and consumer confidence.

Early intelligence this round had suggested a modest improvement in investment intentions, but the conflict in the Middle East, if protracted, may suppress any improvement.

Prior to the Middle East conflict, contacts' investment intentions had remained broadly flat, although the tone of conversations was beginning to turn more positive with some sense that the worst had passed. More contacts reported returning to normal investment cycles or sometimes catching up after past low spending.

The impact of past cost inflation and delays continue to dampen sentiment in the construction sector, where elevated levels of uncertainty persisted even ahead of the Middle East conflict. Contacts in construction are, together with those in the consumer facing sector, the most likely to be cautious regarding investment decisions.

It is too soon for most of the contacts spoken to since the Middle East conflict began to have a clear sense of how they will react. But there is a general sense that, if protracted, the conflict is likely to dent investment intentions. Some contacts talk of cutting or postponing investment in the short term in case of sharp rises in costs, including finance costs, or lower demand.



## Business owners turn to AI for advice

Research from American Express has revealed a growing shift in how UK small business owners seek advice, with many now turning to AI. The research found that 26% of business owners sought guidance from AI platforms instead of other business owners. Time pressures and limited availability of local networking events were the biggest barriers to seeking in-person advice, making AI a convenient alternative.

Read more about the research at:

<https://channelx.world/2026/03/uk-small-business-owners-turn-to-ai-for-advice-but-human-connection-matters-most/>

## Campaign to help people understand their tax affairs

HMRC has launched a new campaign to help people with their everyday tax affairs. The Tax Confident website is aimed at filling in the gaps in taxpayers' knowledge and covers tax basics, working life, small businesses and retirement. It also provides guidance on how taxpayers can examine tax codes, find their National Insurance number and check how much tax they owe.

Read more about the campaign at:

<https://taxconfident.campaign.gov.uk>

## Small businesses curbing growth to avoid VAT threshold

HMRC figures have indicated that thousands of small firms may be deliberately limiting expansion to avoid crossing the £90,000 VAT registration threshold. The figures show that 683,700 businesses reported turnover below the VAT threshold in the year to December 2025, up from 671,000 the previous year. According to industry advisers, micro-businesses such as cafés, shops and tradespeople are reducing opening hours or switching to four-day weeks to stay below the threshold.

Read more about the figures at:

<https://britishbusinessexcellenceawards.co.uk/from-the-awards/businesses-curb-growth-to-duck-vat-threshold-hmrc-data-suggests>

## Lack of support prevents start-ups from growing

A report by the Enterprise Research Centre has found that 36% of working-age adults are now starting, running or planning to launch a business, the highest level since records began in 1999. However, small business innovation has fallen for the fourth consecutive year, and urgent action is needed to stop the decline. The report warned that the UK's entrepreneurial ecosystem is deteriorating, with persistent weaknesses in access to finance, entrepreneurial education and government policy support continuing to hold businesses back.

Read more about the report at:

[https://www.enterpriseresearch.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2026/02/SSBB-2025\\_26-Report-press-release.pdf](https://www.enterpriseresearch.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2026/02/SSBB-2025_26-Report-press-release.pdf)

Source: BAD News (Business Advisers News)

## Business support system “not fit for purpose”

A report by Oxford Innovation Advice has found that the UK's business support system is struggling to deliver impact and risks falling short without stronger foundations. The report found that underinvestment in shared infrastructure has created a fragmented landscape, leading to inconsistent advice, inefficient delivery and limited ability to track impact. The report recommends that a diagnostic stage is included in programmes to help develop a common starting point for businesses and record comparable data across regions.

Read more about the report at:

<https://oxfordinnovationadvice.co.uk/oi-insights/uk-business-support-system-not-fit-for-purpose-under-funding-pressure/>

## Guidance for councils to attract investment and boost growth

The Local Government Association has published new guidance to help local authorities engage more effectively with the private sector. 'Attracting Investment for Inclusive Growth: A Guide for Councils' provides practical steps to better support businesses and attract investment.

Read more about the guide at:

<https://www.local.gov.uk/about/news/lga-launches-new-guidance-councils-attract-investment-their-area-and-boost-local-growth>



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