

# SHROPSHIRE

September/October 2024

FREE

# BUSINESS

## BOOT ROOM TO BOARDROOM

Charlie Blakemore's incredible adventure



Award-winning news, views and analysis



**Plus:** The finalists are revealed for county's new apprenticeship awards





#AlarmsSaveLives



More UK homes trust Aico to protect them

Keeping you and your family safe from Fire and Carbon Monoxide since 1990, Aico has home life safety products that your household can rely on. **Safety first. Aico first.**



Aico, an Ei Company, are the European Market Leader in **Home Life Safety**, pioneering technologies and offering high quality alarms designed, developed and manufactured in Ireland.

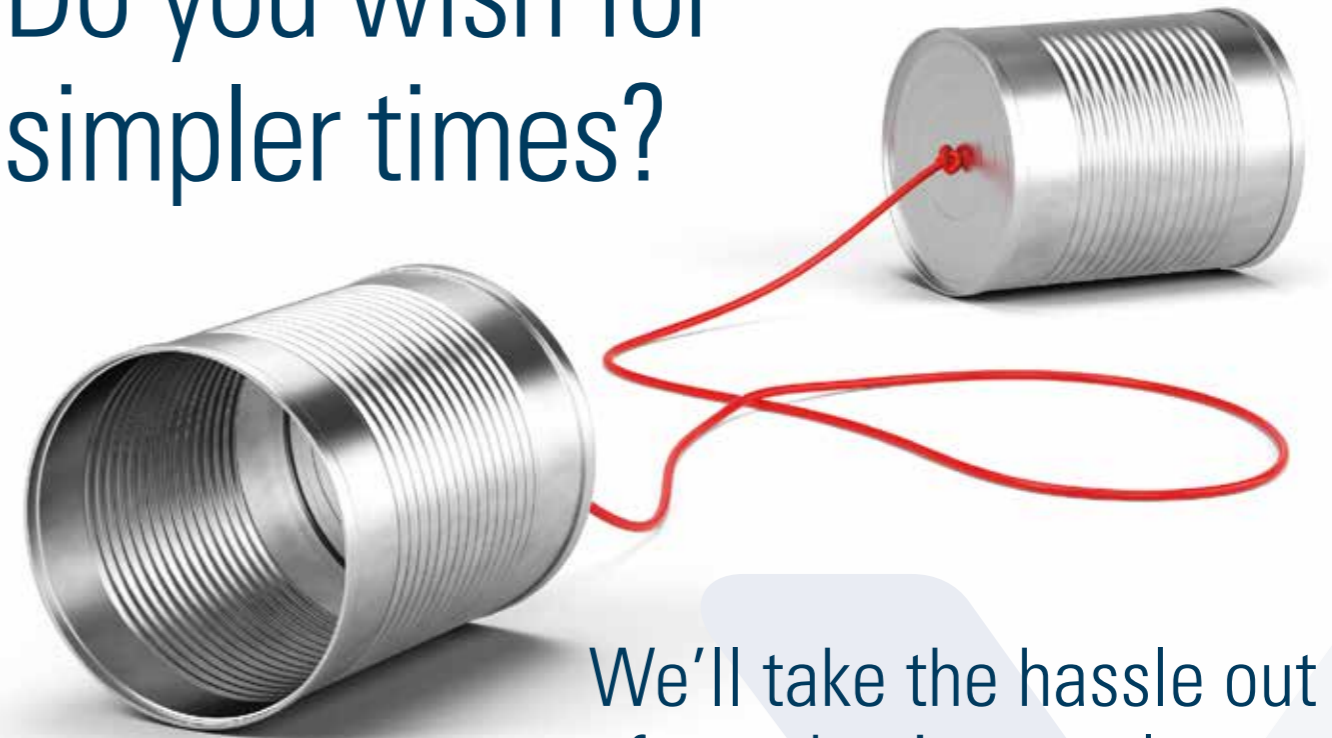


www.aico.co.uk | 01691 664100 | enquiries@aico.co.uk

an  Company

The European Market Leader in **Home Life Safety**

Do you wish for simpler times?



We'll take the hassle out of your business telecoms

- Our in-house engineers have more than 50 years of technical experience
- We are your local business telecoms provider
- We don't just do phones...we also do network security solutions, CCTV, Business Mobiles, Network Security solutions and Internet Connectivity
- We aim to suggest the best possible solution for your needs and budget
- Feature-rich business phone and communication solutions
- Every customer request, whether addressing any faults, providing a quote, or investigating a finance query, is treated as a priority



Call 01952 528 000

Email [sales@connexis.co.uk](mailto:sales@connexis.co.uk)  
Visit our website [connexis.co.uk](http://connexis.co.uk)



ISSUE 47:  
SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2024

**Magazine editor:**  
Carl Jones  
editor@shropshirebiz.com

**Operations director:**  
Henry Carpenter  
henry@shropshirebiz.com

**News editor:**  
Rachel Jones

**Editorial design and layout:**  
Paul Naylor

**Advertising:**  
sales@shropshirebiz.com

**General enquiries:**  
info@shropshirebiz.com



MIDLANDS MEDIA AWARDS  
Magazine of the Year – winner



SHROPSHIRE CHAMBER AWARDS  
Best New Business (SBLT)

Shropshire Business is published by Wiggly Worm Media Ltd. Reproduction of this magazine in whole or in part is prohibited without written permission of the editor.

The publishers have taken all reasonable care to ensure that the information in this magazine is accurate at time of going to press.

Wiggly Worm Media accepts no responsibility for the consequences of error or for any loss or damage suffered by users of any of the information and material contained in this publication.

The views expressed by our columnists are not necessarily those held by the publisher, or editor.

Printed in the UK by The Magazine Printing Company:  
www.magprint.co.uk



IN PRINT

- 18 **Earning And Learning:** Meet the finalists in county's new apprenticeship awards
- 20 **Building Careers:** Free training for new generation of construction workers
- 23 **Job-Hopping:** How to handle 'loud quitters' and disruptive behaviour
- 35 **Packing A Punch:** The entrepreneur using boxing to change young people's lives
- 38 **G'Day For Exports:** Manufacturer lands lucrative contracts Down Under
- 45 **Striking Gold:** Team GB Olympian has her sights set on Shrewsbury
- 54 **On The Move:** Who's been promoted, and who's taking on a fresh challenge

TALKING POINT

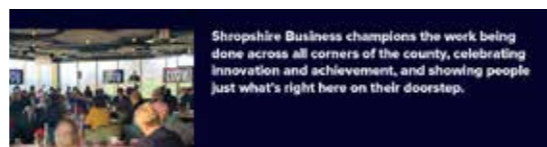
It's not been easy for small and medium-sized businesses in Shropshire to gain access to lucrative public sector contracts in recent years – but is that all about to change? Find out on Page 6.



Why Shropshire Business?

ADVERTISE WITH US

Did you know you can promote your company with Shropshire Business magazine and website for as little as £750 for a whole year? With a readership of more than 10,000, it's a powerful and cost-effective way of reaching out to new customers and partners on your doorstep.  
Email [editor@shropshirebiz.com](mailto:editor@shropshirebiz.com) for a copy of our media pack.



By Carl Jones  
Shropshire Business Editor

# SHROPSHIRE BUSINESS

## Welcome

**W**e're proudly celebrating apprentices, and their wonderful employers, in this issue.

The countdown is on to the first ever Shropshire Telford & Wrekin Apprenticeship Awards night – and to say we're all really looking forward to it is an understatement. Shropshire Business magazine has been closely involved in creating this brand new competition, a first for the county, and we're thrilled with how well it's been received.

At time of writing, the awards night on October 3 looks to be heading for a sell-out, which means it's going to be a fantastic celebration. Hopefully the first of many.

If you've already booked your place, I look forward to seeing you there. If not, don't worry – we'll be broadcasting extended highlights through Shropshire Business Live TV.

Interest in apprenticeships is certainly high right now. A survey landed on my desk the other day suggesting that online searches for 'apprenticeship' hit a peak this year, having increased by 614% since records began in 2004.

It suggests that students are much more open to exploring alternatives to university than the previous generation.

The star of our cover story this issue is a strong supporter of apprenticeships.

Charlie Blakemore is currently running a £60 million turnover IT company which is committed to bringing in apprentices – giving young people a chance and watching them flourish.

I had a fascinating afternoon catching up with Charlie to hear about his stellar success in business, giant-killing exploits as a football manager, and determination to give something back to the region's economy.

And talking of people with incredible business stories . . . we also have the inside story about how the chief executive of a

Shifnal company came to be mixing with some big international names following an invitation from UNESCO.

Food for thought. Talking of which, if you fancy owning one of the county's best known pub restaurants (which has been home to more than its fair share of Shropshire Business editorial planning meetings over the years) it's been put up for sale. You'll find the details on Page 32.

We're two months into the new Government now, so how are you feeling? Happier? Healthier? Wealthier? Wiser? Or none of the above?

The Prime Minister has spoken of the need to drive growth in the economy, and it certainly feels like Shropshire is doing its bit.

We've got news of expansions, acquisitions, job-creating retail projects, export successes and speculative new-build commercial property sites in this issue.

We also discover what the chief executive of the British Business Bank made of the county's agricultural sector when he came on a fact-finding visit to a local farm.

And if, like me, you were glued to the Olympics in Paris, check out page 45 for news of a Team GB legend who is coming to the county over the next few weeks.

Our expert columnists tackle a wide range of topics too, from advice about how to get yourself out of an under-performing contract, to top tips for investment and pension planning, and new skills development programmes.

Plus, the corporate partnerships manager at the Midlands Air Ambulance Charity, Pam Hodgetts, settles into our 'Five Minutes With...' hotseat to reveal some things about herself that I bet you never knew.

If you'd like to put yourselves forward for this popular feature, or have a news item or feature idea for us, please do get in touch.

Our role here is to turn the spotlight on the people and the issues that matter to the business community of this magical county.

### TG Builders Merchants



Bridgnorth, Chester, Ellesmere, Kidderminster, Nantwich, Northwich, Oswestry & Welshpool

### TG Concrete



Aberystwyth, Bala, Bangor, Bridgnorth, Chester, Ellesmere, Machynlleth, Newtown, Oswestry, Porthmadog, Prees, Pwllheli, Welshpool & Wrexham

### TG Skip Hire



All Skip Sizes: Mini Skips to 40 yd Maxi roll-on, roll-off Skips

### TG Electrical Services



Domestic, Commercial & Agricultural Contractors

### TG Renewable Energy



Premium Wood Fuel for all Biomass Boilers



Tel: 01691 626262 | www.tggroup.co.uk

# Contract opportunities for county SMEs

*In 2023, The Department of Education spent the highest figure with SMEs, but the £2 billion total represented only a quarter of overall expenditure*

**By Adam Pringle**

**It's not been easy for small and medium-sized businesses in Shropshire to gain access to lucrative public sector contracts in recent years – but is that all about to change?**

A simplified and more transparent procurement process for the supply of goods, works and services to public sector organisations comes into effect in October.

The Procurement Act replaces existing regulations that derived from the EU, and aims to create a more transparent and flexible system allowing the spending of taxpayers' money to be properly scrutinised.

For larger contracts, public sector organisations such as local authorities will be obliged to publish additional information about procurement processes, including an 18-month pipeline of upcoming activity and notices regarding the performance of supplier's contracts, such as where there are performance issues and variations to contracts.

A central digital platform, operated by the Government, will act as a 'one-stop shop' which should make it simpler for small businesses to access opportunities and it means they will only need to submit most of their organisational details once.

Councils will be encouraged to engage with the market of potential suppliers earlier in the procurement process to develop its requirements, and aim to remove and reduce any processes that could be considered a barrier for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to participate.

Mark Jones, Shropshire Council's cabinet member for growth and regeneration, said: "We spend around £400 million a year on buying in goods, works and services.

"Therefore, this is an important and welcome change which will not only increase transparency, but also make it easier for small businesses and social enterprises to compete for contracts with the council – a key aim in our policy."

The Act gives the council an increased ability to exclude suppliers under specific conditions such as historical severe poor performance.



Mark Jones

A central 'debarment list' will make it easier for procurement teams to see details of providers who have been excluded from public sector contracting.

Shropshire Council says the new procurement rules represent a change in priorities for procurement which aims to make the process more transparent and fairer for all parties.

Bringing public sector contracts into easier reach of the county's SMEs can't come soon enough in the view of Shropshire Chamber of Commerce.

The British Chambers of Commerce's new 'Procurement Tracker' – produced in association with data provider Tussell – shows that just 20% of direct procurement from the public sector went to SMEs last year.

Ruth Ross, Shropshire Chamber of Commerce chief executive, said: "A largely rural county like ours can often feel disconnected from the corridors of Westminster hundreds of miles away, and statistics such as these do little to help.

"Our brilliant SMEs are the lifeblood of the Shropshire economy. They want and deserve a procurement process in which they can properly compete, and which is not weighted so heavily in favour of larger organisations."

The BCC report followed the progress of nearly £195 billion of procurement expenditure from public bodies in 2023.

It found that local government had the greatest proportion of procurement spend with SMEs, with a share of 34%.

The Department of Education spent the highest figure with SMEs, but the £2 billion total represented only a quarter of its overall expenditure.

Jonny Haseldine, policy manager at the British Chambers of Commerce, said: "While it's welcome the value of SME procurement contracts is continuing to increase, government deals remain out of reach for too many businesses.

"It is vital that public bodies always consider SMEs when tendering contracts. Central government can learn lessons from local authorities who are consistently spending more on SMEs deals.

"We'd welcome further devolution of decision making to allow more procurement contracts to be awarded at a local level.

"The Procurement Act coming into force at the end of October has the potential to make the system simpler and more transparent for businesses.

"In addition, it's crucial we hear more from the new Government on their pledge to give SMEs greater access to contracts."

• **More information about the Procurement Act can be found on the Gov.uk website, where you can also subscribe to a regular update bulletin.**

Turas Accountants  
2013-2023  
TEN YEARS of accounting excellence

Follow us on Social for the latest news on HMRC updates, budgets and Making Tax Digital

Annual accounts | Self-assessments  
Ecommerce | Accounts management  
Cryptocurrency | Credit control  
VAT returns | Payroll | Bookkeeping

Turas Accountants

# Employment law: important changes are coming your way

Claire Brook



The King's Speech during the state opening of parliament formally announced the Government's plan to introduce several important changes to employment law, to provide a 'New Deal for Working People' with plans to 'ban exploitative practices and enhance employment rights'.

According to Labour's pre-election manifesto, the new Employment Rights Bill is likely to include significant proposals, many of which will be subject to consultation. So what are the key changes?

**Ban on one-sided flexibility in relation to 'exploitative' zero-hour contracts**

New legislation is to be introduced to provide workers with 'a baseline level of security and predictability' to include the right to a contract that reflects the hours that they regularly work (based on a 12-week reference period).

Employers should review any zero hours arrangements to risk-assess the potential impact of the introduction of a future change and prepare to update contracts and practices.

**Statutory Sick Pay**

There are proposals to remove the lower earnings limit so that it is available to all workers and remove the three-day waiting period for SSP.

This will mean that employers will be required to pay SSP from day one of an employee's sickness absence and will require a change of policy, practice and contractual terms that base sick pay entitlement on the current statutory rule that the first three days remain unpaid.

**Single Enforcement Body**

There will be a creation of the Fair Work Agency, with trade union and TUC representation to enforce workers' rights.

This will include powers to inspect workplaces and take targeted and proactive enforcement to uphold employment rights and act against exploitation. Further information is awaited to confirm how this will work in practice.



A 'fair pay agreement' is proposed for those working in adult social care

**Unions**

There will be a simplification of the statutory process for union recognition to ensure that workers and union members can have access to a union (and meeting facilities) within the workplace.

The Government will also remove the Conservative Government's law that aimed to ensure that there was a minimum level of service during strikes.

**Wages**

There is to be a removal of age bandings that are currently applied to calculate the minimum wage.

The Government has also confirmed their commitment to a genuine living wage to account for the real cost of living. Overall wage roll costs should be re-budgeted in line with these proposals.

**Social care sector (and beyond)**

A 'fair pay agreement' will be established for those that work within the adult social care sector. The agreement will establish national terms and conditions as well as fair pay rates with the intention that this will be extended to other sectors.

**Fire and rehire**

It is proposed that the practice of terminating

employment and offering new contracts on reduced terms will 'end'. A new statutory code and enforcement remedies will be introduced, together with guidance for employers.

**'Day one' Rights**

Establishing day one rights for parental leave, sick pay as well as protection from unfair dismissal, though it is proposed that probationary periods will assess new hires and we await further information on the potential impact.

**Maternity returner protection**

It will be unlawful to dismiss an employee who has had a baby for six months after 'return to work' (except in specific circumstances, to be confirmed).

**Equality (Race and Disability) Bill**

This is a proposal to introduce the mandatory reporting of pay on ethnicity and disability (similar to the current gender pay gap reporting requirements).

The new legislation will apply to larger employers who employ more than 250 employees, and it will require careful consideration given the data collection issues arising (particularly as it is not currently a requirement to disclose protected characteristics in most circumstances).

Claire Brook is an employment law partner with Shrewsbury law firm Aaron & Partners

**KEYNOTE**

**40% OFF - LAST FEW TICKETS**

**PEAKEFEST**  
27th - 30th September.

**BUSINESS CONFERENCE WITH A DIFFERENCE**

"LEARN HIGH LEVEL BUSINESS INSIGHTS WHICH YOU CAN IMPLEMENT IMMEDIATELY!"

- ✔ Learn how to make more sales.
- ✔ Connect with Driven Business Owners
- ✔ Attend as many workshops as you like
- ✔ Reset in the wellbeing area.
- ✔ 3 NIGHTS OF EVENING ENTERTAINMENT

**JOIN US TODAY AND GET 40% OFF!**  
**USE CODE SHROPSHIRE40 AT CHECKOUT**

Photo Credit Sara Davies - Jade Mangles & Jodie Blackburn

**SCAN ME!**



# Man of many talents

*From Typhoons and Tornados to Warrior armoured vehicles – Charlie's worked with them all*

He's run some of the country's biggest businesses, performed giant-killing heroics in the FA Cup, and been awarded for his commitment to the region's business community. Charlie Blakemore reflects on his incredible career with CARL JONES.

**Charlie Blakemore is a difficult man to pigeonhole – both professionally, and geographically!**

He's held senior positions in the worlds of engineering, defence, aerospace, shipbuilding, IT and cyber security during a remarkably successful 40-plus year career which has taken him all over the world.

And that's not to mention managing a non-league football team that performed some of the most incredible giant-killing heroics in the long and proud history of the FA Cup.

"Yep, I am bit of a hybrid," he says. "Born in Wolverhampton, raised in Staffordshire and Shropshire, but also very involved in the business community in Birmingham too. I've got deep roots and great friends in all of these places, and am proud of them all."

From his first job as an apprentice at GKN Defence in Telford, Charlie progressed swiftly through the ranks to lead the £1.2 billion turnover global land business at BAE Systems, where he was responsible for over 10,000 staff, 17 sites and operations in four countries.

This was followed by other senior board-level positions in the maritime and air sector divisions of BAE Systems, including the historic shipyards on the Clyde in Scotland.

It involved successfully leading business transformation and delivering large complex projects including Type 45 Frigates and the largest ships ever commissioned by the Royal Navy, the Queen Elizabeth aircraft carriers.

"The time when I was chief operating officer of the Maritime Naval Ships Business leading the transformation of the UK shipyards up in Glasgow was probably the toughest job I've done," he says.

"We were building two aircraft carriers at the same time as modernising the business and the ways of working. It also coincided with the Scottish Referendum. I was away from my family during the week for three years. It was hard."

During this time Charlie was also flying all over the world attending business think-tanks, seminars, conferences and presentations, and rubbing shoulders with everyone from prime ministers to presidents, international sports stars, and even one of the first men on the moon, Buzz Aldrin.

Charlie's next job at BAE systems was operations and transformation director in the Air Sector based in Lancashire, producing exciting products such as Typhoon, F35 and Hawk Jets.

Six years ago, Charlie was enticed back to his West Midlands roots for a full-time role at

Birmingham-based Intercity Technology after spending nearly 3 years on their Board as a non-executive director.

Charlie is now CEO of the fast-growing specialist in communications, managed IT services, cloud and security products.

Charlie now lives in Albrighton on the east Shropshire border, and is loving this latest chapter of his career which gives him a challenging and high-powered job, more time with the family, and an opportunity to give back to the local business community too.

"I've always been the sort of person who will give 150% to a task, and go at pace," he says. "If it's sport, I want to win the league. If it's business, I want to create momentum, set ambitious targets and make sure we reach them."

"Good leadership, in my opinion, is all about clarity of purpose, having a clear strategy and plan, communicating that plan, and giving people belief, confidence and encouragement to be the best we can individually and collectively be."

So, let's talk about sport for a minute. Alongside his high-powered business career, Charlie made his name on the national football scene as manager of non-league minnows Chasetown FC, from Burntwood.

With an average attendance of just 90, he



*Early years – office technology was a bit different during his time at GKN Defence*



*Charlie spent eight incredible years as manager of Chasetown FC*

famously took the BGB Southern Division One team to the third round of the FA Cup in 2007 after a 1-0 win over Staffordshire rivals Port Vale, from League One. To this day, Chasetown remains the lowest ranked team to ever reach that stage of the competition. This was in addition to reaching the FA Cup first round in 2005 and winning two promotions.

"They were amazing times, and I'm incredibly proud of what we did," says Charlie, who himself captained Shropshire under 18s in his teenage years and had a long non-league playing career at teams such as Shifnal, Donnington Wood, Bridgnorth, Ludlow, Newport, Stourbridge, Willenhall Town, Wednesfield, Rushall Olympic – and Chasetown.

He eventually stepped down as Chasetown manager in 2011 after eight years when he felt pressure of work was preventing him from dedicating enough time to the role. He had a football phone, and a work phone, and working hours were, in his words, 'ridiculous'.

Any regrets? Could that job have been a stepping stone to other managerial posts further up the football pyramid? "There were a few conversations floating around," he says. "But nothing quite came together, and anyway, with my career going so well at that point it would have taken a very big job offer."

The manager's role at his beloved Wolverhampton Wanderers FC perhaps? "Absolutely. I've been a fan since the age of seven, and if they'd offered me that, I'd have walked down to Molineux in my bare feet or crawled on my hands and knees to sign the contract – then my family would have killed me," he smiles.

Charlie believes there are so many parallels between running a multi-million pound business and getting peak performance out of a football team at any level.

"It's about people. Everything is about people. Lots of things have changed in business over the past 40 years, but that's one factor which most certainly hasn't."

"It's been a common ingredient for me in every role I've had. Getting on well with people. Understanding people. Bringing people together. Being authentic and being myself – all those things that my dad told me when I was 16."

"In sport or in business, it's at challenging times when real leaders come out and give the



*Incredible scenes – Charlie and his backroom team celebrate FA Cup giant-killing heroics*

team confidence and a platform to build on.

"I've had a great relationship with trade unions everywhere I've worked, despite in some cases having to make decisions about quite heavy job losses at a time when automation was starting to come in."

"It's about doing things in the right way, as a human, and having that empathy. You'll get a lot more respect for being honest and authentic, and making it clear you are prepared to listen to – and appreciate – other people's views. Whatever you decide, you've got to be able to take people with you."

"Coming from the shop floor environment myself as an apprentice was the best grounding I could possibly have had for everything that's followed. Universities can't teach you the mentality, and appreciation of how people think; that only comes from experience in the workplace."



Charlie traces his 'people person' credentials back to his teenage years when his father ran The Anvil pub in Shifnal, where he would listen, learn, and store snippets of wisdom away

It set him in good stead, he believes, for that first job as a technical apprentice and mechanical engineer with GKN, where he was part of the launch team who paved the way for the production lines which built the Warrior armoured vehicle in Telford for the British Army. ▶



**Charlie is a lifelong fan of Wolverhampton Wanderers FC**

“That was such an honour. We basically had a blank piece of paper to set up the production line in Telford. How good is that? I embraced it, loved it, learned a lot, made lots of mistakes, but had the craic as well, playing football with the lads.

“We recently had a charity event at Hadley United Services Club for a friend and ex-colleague who is bravely battling cancer. I met many of the people who helped shape me in my early years at Telford. They are the salt of the earth.

“It was quite emotional, because I’ve had so many incredible experiences and opportunities in my career, and travelled all over the world – but I was back on the learning ground where it all started for me. I’ve never forgotten those people, and that time.”

Giving back is high on Charlie’s agenda these days, which is one of the reasons he’s been delighted to take a seat as a non-executive director of the Greater Birmingham Chambers of Commerce, where he engages with local and national government and promotes businesses in the West Midlands region.

“There are over 2,000 businesses in the network, and I love engaging with them, and learning from them. I love meeting new people, and really enjoy the opportunity to help others, imparting some of the experiences and mistakes I’ve made. I am always humbled by the fantastic talent that we have in our region.

“I have learned a lot in business, from things that have gone well and also from things that have not gone so well. Everyone will make some mistakes; it comes with the territory in very challenging roles.

“Football is the same, and it’s important you learn how to win and how to cope with losses. You reflect, and then try to put it right in the next game.”

The commitment to supporting and celebrating his roots hasn’t gone un-noticed. Charlie received the lifetime achievement prize at the Innovation Awards 2022 for his contributions to the business industry and wider community.

A fellow of the Institute of Directors and Association for Project Management, he’s also deputy chairman on the board of Innovation West Midlands, board advisor on Cyber Security, and a member of the Black Country Chamber of Commerce too.

“The last few years at Intercity have been incredible. In 2018, when I was a non-executive director, it was a successful mobile phone business which was developing and diversifying with acquisitions, led by chief executive and our owner Andrew Jackson.

“I could see the potential of this business,



**“If people want advice, I’ll always have time for them”**



**Charlie with Intercity chief executive and owner Andrew Jackson**



**Presenting at the NMBS conference in Cyprus**



**Meeting man-on-the-moon Buzz Aldrin during a trip to the USA**

and brought in project management disciplines I’d used before from the likes of the Typhoon and Tornado, and tailored them to the needs of the business.”

In 2020, Charlie took on the role of group managing director – just weeks before the pandemic – but has seen the business grow in that time from a £28 million turnover business to £60 million, with 160 staff rising to 330.

“We have significantly widened our portfolio and have had impressive organic growth supplemented with targeted acquisitions to complement our capabilities and market demand”.



**Receiving the President’s Medal from the Greater Birmingham Chambers of Commerce**

Last summer Intercity was announced as the official IT partner of Edgbaston Stadium and Warwickshire County Cricket Club, and Charlie is currently having exciting discussions with other major sports clubs.

He has his sights set on taking the business over the £100 million mark, with a workforce of more than 500.

Charlie adds: “The IT sector is very different to anything I’ve worked in before, but I’m absolutely loving it.

“Recruitment is tough out there at the moment, but we’ve got a brilliant team, and are committed to bringing in apprentices,



**Charlie at the Business of Football summit with Zlatan Ibrahimovic**



**The successful partnership with Edgbaston could be the first of a number of high-profile sporting projects**



**Charlie with his lifetime achievement award**



**At a business round table event in Birmingham**

giving young people a chance and watching them flourish.

“I have to say though, that I couldn’t have done any of these things in my career without having such a supportive family around me. My wife Charlotte has been a rock, and I’m so proud of the people my two daughters have become.

“There will always be times when you have self-doubt and having people around you that give you the belief and confidence to overcome negative thoughts is really important.

“It’s not all been success in my life, or in my career. There have been times when I’ve felt

I’m not enjoying it, shouldn’t be here, or am not the right person to be doing this job. That’s when your family, friends and mentors help to pick you back up.

“Leadership is about that – spotting when people need a lift, and reaching out a hand. Because we all go through it.

“If people want some advice, I’ll always have time for them, because I recognise how important it has been that people have always had time for me.”

At the age of 56, Charlie is relishing the increased family time, the chance to spend a few more hours on the golf course, and



**A visit to the Houses of Parliament**

continues to play five-a-side football with his mates. I’m still full-on – I think that’s just me. I’m not sure I’ll ever change from that point of view.”

And his advice to anyone taking up a leadership position for the first time? “Be yourself and have confidence in your own capabilities. Take the time to recognise other people’s strengths and qualities to get the best out of them.

“Be challenging, be fair, act with honesty, integrity, and humility – and whether it’s football or business, make sure you get your tactics right.”

## New managing director is a familiar face to county's business community

A new managing director has been appointed at CEL Sheetmetal in Telford. Christopher Greenough says he is 'thrilled' to have taken on the position at the Stafford Park company, which specialises in sub-contract sheet metal manufacturing and assembly.

"This is an exciting new chapter, and I'm eager to work alongside the talented team here to drive innovation, efficiency, and growth.

"Together, we'll achieve great things and continue to push the boundaries of what's possible in the manufacturing sector."

Chris is well-known on the Shropshire business scene, having served as a director of Shropshire Chamber of Commerce, and worked for nearly 30 years at Sde Technology in Shrewsbury, where he was chief commercial officer.

He was also president of the Made In The Midlands Council, which he has been involved with for nearly a decade.

"I am passionate about manufacturing and the Midlands region. There are so many great people and businesses doing some fantastic work. And it is through this work that manufacturing is driving the UK economy forward."



Chris Greenough is managing director at CEL

## Martin's burning desire to open further showrooms

**Business is hotting up at a Shropshire fireplace centre after an employee acquired the business to allow the founder to enjoy his retirement.**

Martin Musker had worked at Admaston Firecraft Centre for two years before owner Peter Brocklesbury decided he wanted to sell the business and retire, 30 years after founding the company.

Martin has since rebranded the Atcham Business Park company as The Firecraft Centre as the business moved out of Admaston many years ago. He says the new name will also allow him to easily open showrooms in other areas.

The specialist firecraft centre provides wood and multi-fuel burners, gas, electric and bioethanol fires, along with a range of wood and non-combustible beams and surrounds and bespoke designed media walls.

Martin said he had been overwhelmed with the support and the boom in business from customers across Shropshire and surrounding areas since he took over.

"We have exciting plans for the premises which will see a mezzanine floor installed in the showroom to allow us to expand our range of woodburners on display.



Martin Musker, new owner of The Firecraft Centre, with Kaz Peate

"We have seen people have media walls created and then plastered and painted, but the trend is now taking the next step with our range of bespoke wood veneer which looks exceptional.

"The vast majority of the fireplace brands we

stock are only available in a showroom and that is important to us. People need to be able to see the product, feel the quality, and ensure they like the look of it and the functionality of it for their specific needs."

Kaz Peate, office and showroom manager,

with an extensive retail background at large High Street stores, said: "I am very excited about the future as Martin has ambitious plans."

The duo say they are already looking to build the team further with more fitters, showroom staff and apprentices.

# So, what examination results did you get?



Hollie Whittles

**Seeing all the posts about student exam results takes me back to a time when I didn't know what I wanted to do as a career, who I was and the feelings of stress, anxiety and worry associated with those big decisions you're expected to make when you have no real experience of the world.**

In an age where information is at our fingertips, do traditional subjects still hold value?

The modern school curriculum was shaped by industrialisation highlighting the need for basic literacy and numeracy skills. Religion was a great influence to help instil moral

values. Studying history and literature helped demonstrate lessons learned from the past to help shape the future.

Over time, the curriculum and educational landscape has evolved through various acts and reforms incorporating changes in society, technology, and the job market.

Subjects like maths, science, and languages build critical thinking and problem-solving skills and can be a stepping stone to specialised careers. History and the study of literature contribute to cultural awareness and citizenship.

The issue we have in business is changing skill requirements. Skills like coding, digital literacy, and creative problem-solving are now increasingly important in today's world. A subject-based curriculum can stifle creativity and disengage students who might benefit from a more interdisciplinary or personalised approach which is why I advocate so much for the arts and sports – let them have fun, get outside and be creative because we need creative thinkers and problem solvers in the workplace.

I often see the meme about a quick blast of three blind mice on the recorder is of no use nowadays but I disagree – the skills needed to play an instrument are directly related to the world of work!

Music and sports teach critical skills such as communication, collaboration, patience,

resilience... the show must go on. We can't stop because someone played a wrong note and that is such a valuable life lesson!

I talk to students about 'entrepreneurship', rather than referring to subjects as English or maths because by giving them real world examples they then understand the importance of what they are learning and how it can be applied.

I've read a lot of entrepreneurial autobiographies from people like Richard Branson who left school with no qualifications, and look what he has achieved. While qualifications are still important, I often wonder how education will evolve to better serve future generations and be more inclusive, so I try to play an active role to help shape that direction.

As we prepare students for an uncertain future, should we rethink what we teach, or how we teach it?



Having left school with no qualifications to his name, Richard Branson hasn't done too badly

Hollie Whittles is a director of Purple Frog Systems in Telford



# Golden opportunity

**An Oswestry IT company struck gold with its latest high-profile contract . . . becoming the official technology partner for Team GB at this year's Paralympics.**

Specialist Network Operations said it was 'proud' to have been chosen to manage the network and IT infrastructure for the team at various locations across Paris.

The SNO network has been supporting over 250 users in the village accommodation blocks, including all operational and public areas.

In addition, the Shropshire firm has provided the network infrastructure at PGB House, the team's hospitality centre in Clichy. This includes hospitality zones, administration, and the visitor management system.

The contract involves managing content streaming for the media feed which has been used by Channel Four TV and other broadcasters.

Security of the network is paramount, especially where confidential data is being handled in the medical and performance centres, the company says.

The other priority is to make ParalympicsGB team members feel at home and able to communicate with their families



While Para GB performs on the track, SNO is part of the 'team behind the team'

and friends as soon as they arrive in the village.

The company's IT services team is headed by Stephen Goodman, systems engineering director.

The whole planning, design, staging and installation started months before the Games and the infrastructure must be maintained throughout with an onsite presence. Following

the Games, the equipment will be stored, ready for the next project.

Stephen said: "Every Games presents a new and exciting set of challenges. Our priority is to ensure everything is ready when the athletes arrive and to support the wider ParalympicsGB team. We are delighted to be involved and to be part of the 'Team behind the Team'"

Tony Brook, the Maesbury Road company's chief executive, said: "Building a secure network and setting up hundreds of devices is no mean feat.

"We feel enormously privileged to be supporting our talented Paralympians and giving them access to their IT devices and mobiles during the Games."

David Clarke, chief executive of ParalympicsGB

, said they were delighted to be working with SNO and benefiting from the company's expertise and personnel – both in the lead up to and during the Paris Games.

"We have a variety of complex technology needs across multiple sites at Games time and working with SNO has made this a very smooth process. A huge thank you to everyone involved, but especially the team out in Paris with us."



The £9.5 million design and build project was commissioned by parent business Morris & Company



Hortonwood 45 is the 26th commercial development by Morris Property in the Telford and Wrekin area

## Hortonwood 45 – pioneering sustainable commercial spaces



**Hortonwood 45, a new commercial unit developed by Morris Property in Telford, stands as a testament to the evolving landscape of sustainable commercial developments in the county.**

Set in the heart of Telford's thriving Hortonwood industrial area, the £9.5 million design and build project commissioned by parent business, Morris & Company, is on course for BREEAM 'Very Good' accreditation – and is reported to become the only such building available at Hortonwood.

### The Vision Behind the Build

Hortonwood 45 represents Morris Property's clear commitment to investing in Telford and creating flexible and sustainable commercial space that is not only functional but also forward-thinking.

Hortonwood 45 is designed with a clear vision: to meet the highest standards of construction and sustainability.

The building represents the 26th commercial development undertaken by the Shropshire-based family-run property group in the Telford and Wrekin borough, including two other Morris developments, Access442 and Paragon Point at Hortonwood West. It also marks the company's 14th development solely in the Hortonwood area.

### Sustainable Design and Construction

Morris Property recently achieved Considerate Constructor 'Excellent' status at Hortonwood 45 – an industry accolade which recognises the site's commitment to raising both environmental and community social value standards.



Morris Property recently achieved Considerate Constructor 'Excellent' status at Hortonwood 45

### GREEN FACTS

Hortonwood 45 benefits from a unique layout that prioritises green open space and the natural environment. The planned landscaping scheme is 20,000 sqm which is the equivalent of 46 tennis courts. Planting will include 16 varieties of trees, 14 shrub varieties, 2 km of hedging, wildflowers and grassed areas and is set to absorb 920 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> a year. The extensive landscaping gets under way this autumn.

Working to BREEAM standards requires a holistic plan for promoting construction, charity and community engagement and the Property team is working closely with sustainability experts and the local resident, Parish Council

and business communities to deliver a 'cradle to cradle' development.

"The intention is to create a sustainably superior building, working to BREEAM 'Very Good' rating which impacts from concept to completion. It is about how we build for the good of future tenants, the environment and the community," Chris Morris, Morris Property Director explained.

"The generous landscaping scheme we have designed for example, is destined to be twice the size of the actual building footprint, so more than 50% of the site is green. This landscaping will absorb about 920 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> a year.

"We believe the quality and environmental credentials of the final structure will prove an attractive proposition for forward thinking businesses looking to grow in a future-proofed, sustainable building," Chris Morris added.

● For more information on Hortonwood 45 visit [www.hortonwood45.co.uk](http://www.hortonwood45.co.uk)

## It's never too late to learn

Whether you need to upskill in digital, boost skills in numeracy or want to retrain there's a place for you at



### Join us at an open event

- Apprenticeships
- Short Courses
- Distance Learning
- Step into Training
- Pre Employment
- Skills for Life
- Higher Education
- Maths & English



Register today

Step into a world of possibilities

[www.telfordcollege.ac.uk](http://www.telfordcollege.ac.uk) | Haybridge Rd, Wellington, Telford TF1 2NP



Organisers, sponsors and supporters at the shortlisting day

# A celebration of county's apprenticeship schemes

**A stellar line-up of finalists has been revealed for the first ever Shropshire Telford & Wrekin Apprenticeship Awards.**

The event has been created to celebrate the brightest apprentices in the area, as well as recognising employers for their support of apprenticeship programmes.

McPhillips of Telford, WR Partners of Shrewsbury, and Dyke Yaxley of Shrewsbury are shortlisted in the large employer category, while the medium-sized employer finalists are Fabweld from Telford, Pave Aways of Knockin, and Shingler Group from Myddle.

In the small employer category, the three finalists are Ascendancy of Newport, Connexis from Telford, and Start Tech of Shrewsbury.

Finalists in the individual categories come from all corners of the county. Categories include Construction, Health & Social Care, Engineering

& Manufacturing, IT & Digital Industries, Early Years and Education, Creative & Media, and Business, Legal & Finance.

Tickets are now on sale for the awards night which includes a drinks reception, three-course meal and live musical entertainment. It will be held at the Mercure Telford Centre Hotel on the evening of October 3. For all the details, see <https://stwaa.co.uk/>

In addition to the individual category winners, an overall star apprentice for both the Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin areas will also be crowned on the night.

The competition is backed by some of the county's biggest and best names, led by headline sponsors Aico of Oswestry and Telford College, and supported by the Marches Careers Hub.

Categories are sponsored by WR Partners, SJ Roberts Construction, Dyke Yaxley, McPhillips, Northwood Hygiene Products, Pave Aways Building Contractors, University of Chester,

Purple Frog Systems, In-Comm Training Services, and Start Tech.

The event has been organised by award-winning Shropshire events company Yarrington, in partnership with Shropshire Business Live TV which will be filming and streaming the awards presentations.

Carl Jones, producer and presenter at SBLTV, said: "The quality and volume of entries surpassed all expectations, and the panel of judges said they faced a very difficult task narrowing down each category to three finalists and choosing their winners."

Mark Allsop, managing director of Yarrington, added: "We're delighted with the response to the awards in its first year, and are looking forward to a fantastic awards evening."

"It's going to be a real celebration of the brightest and best apprentices in the county, and the businesses which go the extra mile to support the next generation of skilled staff."

## The finalists, their employers, and training providers



### MANUFACTURING AND ENGINEERING

- Tom Farquharson, Iconsys, Shrewsbury Colleges Group
- Abigail Jones, i2r Packaging, Telford College
- Mitchell Taylor, Elite Precast Concrete, Telford College

### IT AND DIGITAL

- Mary Harris, Ascendancy, Aston University
- Christa Bridges, PebblePad, University of Wolverhampton
- Ryan Ward, Start Tech, Intequal

### HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

- Francesca Farruggio, SaTH, Telford College
- Rachel Palin, SaTH, University of Chester
- Chris Sheldon, Shropshire Council, University of Chester

### CONSTRUCTION

- Harry Barrett, SJ Roberts, Shrewsbury Colleges Group
- Luke Courtnell, McPhillips Telford College
- Joe Shingler, Shingler Group Shrewsbury Colleges Group

### BUSINESS, LEGAL AND FINANCE

- Kieran Jones, Shropshire Council, Lifetime Training
- Marloe Nudds, WR Partners, Kaplan
- Maisie Evans, Berrys, Harper Adams University

### CREATIVE AND MEDIA

- Jenny Evans, RJAH hospital, Gobowen, PR and Comms Association
- Ella Shorthouse, Buy-from.com, Althaus
- Rhea Draycott, Shropshire Festivals, Shrewsbury Colleges Group

### EARLY YEARS AND EDUCATION

- Tom Miles, Castle House School, Telford College
- Kiran Kaur, Trench Tots, Telford College
- Zoe Gray, Southall School, Telford College

### SMALL EMPLOYER

- Connexis, Telford Ascendancy, Newport Start Tech, Shrewsbury

### MEDIUM EMPLOYER

- Fabweld Steel Products, Telford
- Pave Aways, Knockin Shingler Group, Myddle

### LARGE EMPLOYER

- McPhillips, Telford
- WR Partners, Shrewsbury
- Dyke Yaxley, Shrewsbury

**BOOK YOUR TICKETS FOR THE AWARDS NIGHT:**  
The awards night will be held on October 3 at the Mercure Telford Centre Hotel, including the presentation ceremony, a three-course meal, and live musical entertainment. Tickets are on sale at £55 plus VAT from the website [stwaa.co.uk](https://stwaa.co.uk)

### Awards sponsors



### Headline sponsors



# Firm's golden years continue

Shropshire law firm Lanyon Bowdler has retained gold status in its commitment to environmental performance – marking 15 years of continuous improvement.

The company has once again been awarded Green Achiever Gold Standard with Diamond Banner, issued by E4environment – a specialist in providing guidance on environmental issues in the areas of waste and renewable energy, working on projects all over the UK.

Lanyon Bowdler was praised for its work in areas of compliance management, air emissions, waste

and raw materials, with the report noting that even pencils in the meeting room were made from recycled newspapers.

Brian Evans, Lanyon Bowdler's managing partner, said: "We are committed to exploring any opportunities that can help us achieve this goal, and implement new strategies wherever possible to deliver on what we view as our environmental responsibilities. This includes reduced paper consumption, less storage requirements, less transporting needs and an overall reduction in waste."



Brian Evans of Lanyon Bowdler

# Build a career in construction

**A new series of free training courses is being launched at Telford College to help people gain valuable qualifications and skills for careers in the construction industry.**

They are the latest stage of a successful 'Built By You' partnership between the college, Telford & Wrekin Council, and national housebuilder Lovell.

The flagship initiative was launched earlier this year to boost skills and support people into a future career in the construction industry, and it has proved a huge success.

It offers four-week programmes for people aged 16 and above who are not in work – with a guaranteed job interview at the end of the process for everyone who completes their studies.

New courses start at Telford College in September, with places reserved on a first come, first served basis. For more details, call 01952 642554 or email employability@telfordcollege.ac.uk.

The training includes some on-the-job construction experience, and each person who completes the course will have an interview with Lovell or another partner for the opportunity to secure a permanent position.

Simon Wingate, regional partnerships director at Lovell, said: "When we launched Built By You at the start of this year, we were determined to create an opportunity for young people in Telford to access careers and see construction as a long-term profession.

"Providing students with real-world insight direct from businesses is the only way to make sure applicants have the skills and attitude that we want to see, putting them on track for fulfilling and rewarding careers."

Robert Lees, director of automotive, engineering and construction at Telford College, said: "The programme has been a great success so far. All the candidates have been hands-on on site, and the subcontractors have been fantastic in showing them the ropes. We're delighted with the way things are progressing.

"This collaborative partnership is a perfect example of education and business working closely together to deliver the skills that local employers need. Companies want to recruit and retain the best quality staff to grow and thrive,



**The project blends construction training at the college and time on a building site – and includes a job interview**

and it's our role to help make it possible."

Councillor Shirley Reynolds, Telford & Wrekin Council's cabinet member for children, young people, education, employment and skills, said: "We are delighted to see the Built By You programme going from strength to strength and the next cohort of learners about to start in September.

"Built By You is the perfect platform for people to learn new skills that support the

construction industry's future workforce. It gives them the opportunity to complete qualifications and gain hands-on skills in the workplace and on building sites across the borough.

"It's a very positive initiative for both employers and jobseekers in Telford and Wrekin and can lead to some fantastic outcomes which include full time employment in the construction industry."

# Get the most from WhatsApp



Joe Newton

**Have you considered integrating WhatsApp into your business communication strategy?**

Perhaps you thought it wasn't practical or scalable, and that one person would need to handle all enquiries on their smartphone.

Or maybe you believed you'd have to publicise a mobile number to use WhatsApp. Think again.

Connexis offers a range of products to help you maximise the WhatsApp Business platform.

Launched in 2009, WhatsApp now boasts over 30 million users in the UK.

With around 10 million downloads annually, this user base is set to grow. It's the world's most popular messaging service, used by 76% of adults in the UK, with 65% of them considering WhatsApp their primary online communication tool.

So, why encourage customers to contact you via WhatsApp instead of SMS?

**Read Receipts**

WhatsApp's tick system lets you see when customers have received and read your messages.

**Cost-Free for Customers**

WhatsApp is free for your customers to use, provided they have an internet connection, allowing them to message you as often as they like.

**Verified Business Accounts**

Meta verifies your company, and you can upload your logo, making customers feel safer when communicating with you compared to SMS.

**End-to-End Encryption**

All communication over WhatsApp is encrypted, protecting the privacy of both you and your customers.

WhatsApp is also a powerful marketing tool. While marketing emails typically have a 20% open rate, WhatsApp messages boast a 98% open rate.

Users trust WhatsApp, spam is less common, they can see who is sending messages, and they can easily block unwanted senders.



Authorised Reseller



There are two ways to use WhatsApp Business:

**WhatsApp Business App**

Download the app, register it with your mobile phone number, and use it like the regular WhatsApp app. This is ideal for self-employed individuals and micro-businesses but doesn't scale well.

**WhatsApp Business API**

Larger businesses should use the WhatsApp Business API, which allows third-party applications to utilise the WhatsApp Business platform. API stands for Application Programming Interface, and basically enables two applications to communicate with each other.

Connexis offers several solutions to help you leverage the WhatsApp Business API:

**OmniChat**

A standalone WhatsApp Business platform, think of it as "Outlook for WhatsApp". It's perfect for businesses that don't already use a system with WhatsApp Business API

Above, the OmniChat application itself, left, "OmniChat Widget" is the widget that customers can put on their website to initiate WhatsApp chats. iPECS and Wildix are communication systems that integrate with WhatsApp, and x-bees is the application from Wildix that would have the integration.

functionality. OmniChat also features a fantastic WhatsApp widget for your website.

**Wildix**

For our Wildix customers, the x-bees application will soon support WhatsApp integration, seamlessly bringing WhatsApp into your existing Unified Communications solution.

**iPECS Cloud**

Our new iPECS Cloud telephony platform now supports WhatsApp integration, giving you a unified interface for all your customer communications.

Whichever path you choose, Connexis can assist with setting up the Meta Business Suite, and you can use your main business number or any number of your choosing.

To find out more, call us on 01952 528000 or email Sales@Connexis.co.uk



**Joe Newton is Technical Director at Connexis, based in Telford**

# Tuning out the noise

CARL STACEY of Azets Wealth Management explains why ignoring short-term market volatility is crucial for long-term investment and pension planning

**In today's world, investors are frequently overwhelmed by sensational headlines and short-term market movements.**

Stories of crashes and fads create a sense of urgency and panic. However, successful long-term investment and pension planning depend on ignoring this noise and focusing on fundamental principles. This article underscores the importance of a long-term perspective amidst market volatility and media hype.

### The Pitfalls of Short-Term Thinking

Market volatility is a natural aspect of investing. Fluctuations due to economic data or geopolitical events can be unsettling but often have little impact on long-term investment value.

### Short-term thinking can lead to:

- **Panic Selling:** Selling during downturns locks in losses and forfeits potential gains.
- **Chasing Trends:** Reacting to media hype may result in speculative or overvalued investments.
- **Neglecting Fundamentals:** A focus on short-term moves can obscure the importance of solid long-term financial planning.

### The Media's Influence

Media often sensationalises market movements to attract attention, heightening fear. While staying informed is crucial, it's equally important to distinguish between news that impacts long-term planning and mere noise.

### Long-Term Investment Strategy

Long-term investing involves holding assets for years to achieve goals like retirement, recognising that markets typically recover and grow over time. Key strategies include:

- **Diversification:** Spreading investments across asset classes to manage risk.
- **Regular Contributions:** Consistent investing, regardless of market conditions, to benefit from pound-cost averaging.
- **Rebalancing:** Adjusting the portfolio periodically to maintain alignment with long-term goals.
- **Patience and Discipline:** Committing to the plan despite short-term volatility.



A financial advisor helps navigate market complexities



Carl Stacey of Azets Wealth Management

### Benefits of Ignoring Short-Term Volatility

1. **Compounding Returns:** Long-term investing allows earnings to generate further earnings, significantly growing the portfolio.
2. **Reduced Stress:** Ignoring market noise reduces stress and supports rational decision-making.
3. **Goal Focus:** A long-term view keeps investors focused on goals like retirement, rather than temporary market changes.

### The Role of a Financial Advisor

A financial advisor helps navigate market complexities by providing:

- **Objective Advice:** An unbiased perspective to keep clients focused on long-term goals.
- **Customised Strategies:** Personalised plans matching the client's risk tolerance and time horizon.
- **Education and Support:** Insights into market behaviour and emotional support during volatility.

### Conclusion

In an era of sensational media and market volatility, tuning out the noise is essential for successful long-term investment and pension planning. By maintaining a disciplined approach, focusing on diversification, and seeking professional advice, you can achieve your financial goals and secure your future.

At Azets Wealth Management, we are here to guide you through the complexities of financial markets. For tailored advice, visit our website: [azetswealthmanagement.co.uk](http://azetswealthmanagement.co.uk)

- This is for information only and does not constitute advice. The value of your investments can go down as well as up, so you could get back less than you invested. Past performance is not a reliable indicator of future performance. A pension is a long-term investment not normally accessible until age 55 (57 from April 2028 unless the plan has a protected pension age). The value of your investments (and any income from them) can go down as well as up which would have an impact on the level of pension benefits available. Your pension income could also be affected by the interest rates at the time you take your benefits.

- If you would like to discuss your accountancy and business advisory needs, please reach out to Carl Stacey on [carl.stacey@azets.co.uk](mailto:carl.stacey@azets.co.uk), James Dawson on [james.dawson@azets.co.uk](mailto:james.dawson@azets.co.uk) or Tax Advisory partner Francesca Hutcheson – [francesca.hutcheson@azets.co.uk](mailto:francesca.hutcheson@azets.co.uk)

**Azets Wealth Management is a trading name of Azets Wealth Management Limited, which is authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority. Azets Wealth Management is a subsidiary of Azets Holdings Limited.**



# Influencers are shaping workplace behaviour

**How can Shropshire businesses deal with so-called 'loud quitters' and 'rage applying' – two of the big economic trends being amplified by online platforms?**

According to new statistics, two in five employees will be changing jobs before the end of the year, with the demand for hybrid roles a key driving force in their desire to move.

The concept of 'job hopping' – in which young workers rapidly move from post to post to improve pay and progression – is becoming increasingly common amongst Gen Z... with disruptive consequences for businesses, particularly at a time when Shropshire firms continue to struggle to recruit.

Gary Clark, academy director at Basecamp, a specialist in gap year ski season courses to young people, says: "Gen Z are often portrayed as the workforce who want it all – flexible working, better pay and core value alignment, but in reality, they're a future workforce who businesses should be listening to."

"TikTok trends such as 'loud quitting' and 'rage applying' highlight a prevalent malaise amongst younger workers, so employers should take note to retain top talent. In some cases, a 'gap year' in which young people can make money while travelling can also be an alternative to bouncing from job to job."

Here, he explores ways businesses can potentially deal with this rapid turnover to help younger staff members in their careers and minimise the impact on the workplace.

### Flexible working

The pandemic reshaped our working norms, with the rise of flexible working being a silver lining for many employees.

In fact, 78% reported an improved work/life balance as a result of working from home, while 52% found tasks quicker to complete, with 47% recording improved wellbeing.

As a result, wanting a better hybrid working policy has become a significant factor for those considering a job change.

Employees seek a balance between office-based and remote work, and businesses that can offer this flexibility have the opportunity to attract and retain top talent.

### Understanding the trends

While amusing, social media platforms such as TikTok have become powerful influencers in shaping workplace behaviour.

Take, for example, the rise of 'loud quitters' who rejoice in their experiences of quitting jobs dramatically by posting resignation videos or sharing grievances with a wide audience.

This is similarly accompanied by 'rage applying', which involves impulsively and often indiscriminately pursuing new job opportunities driven by frustration or disillusionment with current working conditions.

Fuelled by endless 'doomscrolling' of job postings on social media, the trend reflects the restlessness and ambition of a generation seeking more fulfilment and purpose at work.

While such behaviours are partly meant for entertainment, they also highlight a deeper dissatisfaction with traditional work structures. What can be done to reduce this?

### Strategies for Effective Management

To effectively address these trends and mitigate their impact, businesses must adopt proactive strategies that prioritise employee engagement, satisfaction and retention.



Gen Z are the future workforce that businesses need to be listening to

## Here are some key considerations:

- **A Positive Work Culture:** Foster an environment of transparency, open communication and mutual respect. Encourage feedback, listen to employees' concerns and take proactive steps to address issues before they escalate.
- **Offer Flexibility:** Embrace this demand for hybrid roles by offering flexible work arrangements, remote work options and opportunities for professional development. Empower employees to achieve a healthy balance between work and personal life.
- **Invest in Wellbeing:** Prioritise employee wellbeing by offering comprehensive wellness programmes, mental health resources and support networks where appropriate. Demonstrate a genuine commitment to the health and happiness of your workforce.
- **Provide Meaningful Opportunities:** Create pathways for career advancement, skill development and learning opportunities. Empower employees to pursue their passions, explore new roles and chart their own career paths within the organisation.
- **Embrace Diversity:** Foster a culture of diversity, equality and inclusion where all employees feel valued, respected and empowered to contribute their unique perspectives and talents.

**As Gen-Zers and Millennials continue to redefine working patterns, smart businesses will listen, learn and evolve to meet their needs.**



# Time to start your skills training this September

September is an exciting time for Shrewsbury Colleges Group, with the month not only heralding the start of the academic year, but also a prime opportunity for us to engage with companies who are keen to enhance their workforce skills, drive innovation, and cultivate a culture of continuous growth.

We remain at the forefront of this, committed to helping businesses like yours thrive by offering a wide array of training programmes, workshops and apprenticeships, all tailored to meet the evolving needs of the modern workplace.

### Transformative Training for September and Beyond

September is not just for students. It's the perfect time for businesses to re-evaluate their training strategies and seize the opportunity to upskill their workforce. At Shrewsbury College, we have spent the summer investing heavily in our facilities, ensuring you can benefit from an even more robust suite of training programmes, many of which are eligible for government funding.

So, whether you're looking to onboard new talent through apprenticeships, try out one of our T level students on an extended industry placement, or develop existing staff, the college has you covered.

### Apprenticeships: Shaping the Future of Your Business

September is not too late to explore our pool of eager, skilled students ready to make a positive impact in your business. With the recent increase in apprenticeship funding for 16-21-year-olds, now is the perfect time to hire an apprentice. We not only assist with recruitment but also provide exceptional



Shrewsbury Colleges Group can help to improve professional skills required by business



Shape a future in engineering this September

training and resources to ensure that apprentices thrive within your business.

### University Level courses: Nurturing the Next Generation

September is a busy month for university level courses starting here at Shrewsbury College. Flexibly delivered, we offer a wide range of short, fully funded, modular programmes, designed to equip the next generation of leaders and senior staff with the skills they need to drive business success. Available in engineering, construction, health, digital, management and computing, these courses cover a broad spectrum of vital topics, all delivered flexibly to accommodate business pressures.



Gain the appropriate trade skills

### Join the Skills Revolution

The business landscape is constantly evolving, and there has never been a better time to invest in the future of your workforce.

As summer fades, take the opportunity to re-engage with your company's training and development goals. The college's Employer Engagement team is available and waiting to hear from you. Together we can help you plan and implement strategies that will ensure your business remains competitive and future ready.

**Train your workforce for tomorrow, today and watch your business grow.**

● Call us on 01743 653602 or email [employer@scg.ac.uk](mailto:employer@scg.ac.uk)

## Business park will open in November

A new business park is to open on the edge of Ellesmere town centre following the sale of the former Fullwood Packo site.

Triang Developments Limited has acquired the factory complex in Grange Road, with work now under way to transform the site ahead of the launch of the new Fullwood Business Park.

Providing a range of individual units to be let to local businesses, the first phase of units will be available in November.

James Owen, of Triang Developments Limited, said: "We have acquired the site, which is partly still occupied by Fullwood JOZ Limited, as part of our strategy of investing in industrial property and land in Mid Wales and Shropshire, to enable us to refurbish, develop and let suitable accommodation for growing local businesses."

James Harrison, portfolio manager, confirmed: "The site is now to be known

as Fullwood Business Park and we will be undertaking a phased programme refurbishing and subdividing the existing buildings, to provide commercial workshop and storage units totalling circa 100,000 square feet.

"They will range in size from 1,200 sq ft to 33,000 sq ft. The units will be available to let on flexible leases from November this year."

Towler Shaw Roberts had invited offers in excess of £2 million for the site, which features a large manufacturing facility with offices, workshop and storage accommodation.

It also provides on-site car parking and extensive external yard areas, with access from both Grange Road and Brownlow Road.

Extending in total to approximately 99,790 sq ft on a site area of five acres, the property was previously owned and operated by Fullwood Packo.

Specialising in the design and manufacture of milking systems, it has since operated under the name of Fullwood JOZ after being sold to a Dutch company in 2022.

## Helping man's best friend



Faye Hudson of Reech with members of the Dog A.I.D team, based at Bicton Heath

Marketing agency Reech is providing £10,000 of support to a dog training charity.

The Shrewsbury-based agency named Dog A.I.D as the winner of its Reech and Reward initiative for 2024. The charity specialises in training dogs to help people with a range of physical disabilities.

Chief executive Belinda Johnson said: "Winning the Reech & Reward initiative is incredibly exciting for Dog A.I.D."

"Reech's support will be instrumental in allowing us to share our story with a wider audience and secure the resources needed to train more life-changing assistance dogs. We're incredibly grateful."

Amelia Redge, agency director at Reech, said: "We can't wait to work with Dog A.I.D to raise their brand awareness and drive results for them as a charity."

# Tailored advice from legal experts



**Aaron & Partners**  
Solicitors

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

Chester | Shrewsbury | Greater Manchester | Wirral



Andrew Crow (Cherrington Farm owner), Louis Taylor (British Business Bank CEO) and a representative from Oxbury



Cherrington Farm is a mixed arable and beef farming business that has diversified into renewable energy production, run by The Crow family

# A taste of farm life for British Business Bank

**The chief executive of the British Business Bank visited a Shropshire farm to see first-hand how the bank's funding is being used in the agricultural sector.**

Louis Taylor spent time at the 900-acre Cherrington Farm near Newport, with senior figures from Oxbury Bank and members of the British Business Bank's guarantee and wholesale solutions team.

Oxbury is a UK bank with a singular focus on farmers, food production and the rural economy. It recently secured a second transaction under the British Business Bank's ENABLE Guarantee.

Run by Andrew Crow and the Crow family,

Cherrington Farm is a mixed arable and beef farming business that has diversified into renewable energy production for local biomass boilers as part of the 1200 acre holding.

The farm's loan is part of the ENABLE Guarantee facility provided to Oxbury by the British Business Bank. The purpose of the original loan was for a combination of a biomass boiler refinance following extensive development and a strategic land purchase.

Gaynor Dykes, senior manager, origination and relationship management, said: "Visiting Cherrington Farm really helped bring to life the ultimate benefit of our ENABLE programmes.

"It was also interesting to hear first-hand some of the challenges facing UK farmers today. We are grateful to the Crow family for their hospitality."

Announced in June, Oxbury Bank recently secured agreement with the British Business Bank to increase its existing ENABLE Guarantee transaction by £100 million to £200 million.

The British Business Bank is the UK Government's economic development bank. Established in November 2014, its mission is to drive sustainable growth and prosperity across the UK and to enable the transition to a net zero economy, by improving access to finance for smaller businesses.

Oxbury was established by bankers, farmers, agricultural businesses, and technologists, combining the worlds of farming, financial services, and technology to create the UK's first and only fintech with a full banking licence, focusing solely on serving customers in the agricultural sector.

# Companies solder on together

**Maintenance engineers from two of Shropshire's biggest employers have put their soldering skills to the test as part of a new series of short courses at Telford College.**

The staff, from Muller Dairies and Denso Manufacturing, were invited to complete modules of a micro soldering and PCB design short course which will officially launch at the Wellington campus in September.

"The two companies have worked closely with us to help develop this new suite of courses, so we invited some of their staff to try out the curriculum," explained Robert Lees, Telford College's director of automotive, construction and engineering.

"We wanted them to give us feedback on this, and several other modules, ahead of the official launch to ensure it meets the skills training needs of the local economy."

The courses are being delivered by the college as part of the Marches Education Partnership, a collaboration between further education and training providers across Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin and Herefordshire.

Mr Lees said: "We are running 16 different short courses at Telford College as part of the LSIF project, and the Muller and Denso engineers sampled modules which focus on printed circuit board design and repair, and micro soldering techniques.

"They completed a six-hour short course involving foundation soldering and PCB design with a mix of theory and practical elements. The later courses will expand on this subject with more advanced knowledge and skills."



Engineering lecturer Richard Molli-Boulock (centre) with the maintenance engineers, from left, Mark Griffin, Ryan Hawkins, Craig Thomas, and Leigh Brooks









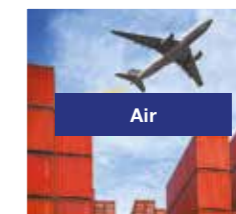
Maintenance engineers from Muller Dairies and Denso Manufacturing put the college's new micro soldering and PCB design short course to the test



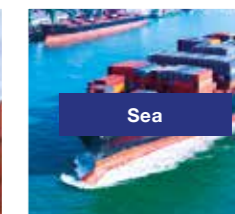
Need help with International Trade?

Whatever you need to move and wherever it needs to go – Global Freight Services can meet the challenge

-  Exports
-  Imports
-  Cross Trade
-  Warehousing
-  Packing
-  Custom Formalities



Air



Sea



Road




Rail



Over 20 Years of Freight Forwarding Excellence

sales@global-freight.co.uk  
Unit C3, Halesfield 23, Telford, Shropshire, TF7 4NY

www.global-freight.co.uk  
+44(0)1952 270 699





## Amidst AI hype, how can you apply Artificial Intelligence to your business?

- Utilize our AI consultants for predictive analytics.
- Transform historical data into predictive models.
- Enhance forecasting and customer insights, including behaviour and demographics.
- Create custom machine learning solutions, from text analysis to outlier detection.

Get in touch to book your FREE AI consultation today: [sales@purplefrogssystems.com](mailto:sales@purplefrogssystems.com)

Microsoft Partner





# Proud of 30-year milestone

Enable is celebrating 30 years of providing supported employment services in Shropshire with a series of events at the Darwin Shopping Centre in Shrewsbury.

The free events include a training provider roadshow on September 14, offering information on local training options, and an employers' jobs fair on September 25.

Shropshire Council's Enable supported employment service has grown and diversified over the years, offering a range of services such as bespoke training, jobs fairs, and innovative programmes funded by the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF).

Sarah Harley, Enable's business development officer, said: "We are very proud of what we have accomplished in the past 30 years and we are excited to share it with the community."

# Adding further strength

**WR Partners, the Shrewsbury-based firm of accountants, auditors, business advisors and tax specialists, has announced an acquisition that will strengthen its presence in Shropshire and Mid Wales.**

It has taken over Caerwyn Jones Chartered Accountants – a company with bases in Shrewsbury, Welshpool and Knighton.

WR Partners already has offices across Mid-Wales, Wrexham and Cheshire and a portfolio of over 6,500 clients, and has described its latest acquisition as a 'significant milestone'.

Helen Spencer, managing partner at WR Partners, said: "WR Partners and Caerwyn Jones share a commitment to client care and delivering personalised service."

"Our shared values make this partnership a natural fit. Caerwyn Jones clients will now benefit from an expanded range of services, including comprehensive tax and business advisory support, available through WR Partners."

WR Partners said the acquisition of Caerwyn



The WR Partners and Caerwyn Jones team

Jones further strengthened its presence in Shropshire and Mid Wales, and aligned with its growth strategy.

"Staff joining from Caerwyn Jones will ensure continuity for Caerwyn Jones clients and increase the WR Partners team to around 250 employees," the company said.

Caerwyn Jones was established in the heart of Shrewsbury in 1966. The company had three partners, four managers and around 20 other full and part-time staff.



# To braai or not to braai... that is the question



# First Aid Courses

Held in our state-of-the-art training facility at our Cosford airbase and charity headquarters, our courses are quality assured by The First Aid Industry Body and are accepted by HSE inspectors, Department of Education and OFSTED.



Learn more and book >



Midlands Air Ambulance Charity, Airbase Avenue, Neachley, Shifnal, Shropshire TF11 8UR 0800 8 40 20 40 educationandtraining@midlandsairambulance.com



## Anton Gunter



**Man has always cooked on fire. From the beginnings of mankind, fire has been at the centre of all things social within the human settlements.**

Even as time has moved on, we have seen fire emerge in houses in the form of open fires used for cooking and for heating. It has always been key to the survival of humans and no matter how we dress it up, fire makes you feel happy.

"Yes, yes, yes," I hear you shout – unless of course the fire causes your house to burn down.

Ever since the voortrekkers – the start of the boers – left Cape Town because they didn't want to be ruled by the British, (yes it's that nation again!) fire has played a key part in the social wellbeing of all South Africans. The fire was the centre of attention as they cooked and enjoyed each other's company.

A lot of the culture is centred on the good old braai – a coming together of friends, family and enemies around, yes you guessed it, fire. When a friend rings up and says we are having a braai there is a silent jump of excitement, and only the date gets discussed. No mention of what to bring, what time to arrive or indeed alternatives if the weather is going to play an important part, because quite frankly that's not needed.

Now let's look at barbecuing (said in a posh voice). Typically, BBQ arrangements in the UK are made months in advance and are highly detailed.

Arrive promptly at 3pm. Start to stand around uneasily, as people you have never met try to huddle with you around the host and his impressive outdoor cooker. Watch him turning the dials on his garden centre-bought equipment, which is brand new and will only ever be used this once.

People can only stand around for so long before they head inside to sit on the comfy sofa with the words 'It's a bit cold outside' and 'Oh I am so glad to be in the warm'. It's something prehistoric man and his families never echoed at all – because guess what? They had fire.

But back to the BBQ. The meat is brought out and is an inspirational blend of burgers, sausages, and those stick-filled kebab things. The burgers eventually turn into ice hockey pucks and the sausages start to fountain juice

everywhere, which in turn causes the cooker to erupt in flames... bringing loads of people outside to see what the laughter and fun is about.

Can you guess what it is that has persuaded them to come back outside? Not the impressive gas cooker, but the fire.

So what is it that brings the apathy to barbecuing? Is it a lack of confidence by some men for cooking outside? Is it a lack of confidence by some women in letting their men cook outside? Or is it lack of confidence in being able to host a BBQ, regardless of who's doing the cooking?

We've all been to a BBQ where the host is an absolute genius and cooks food that is genuinely tasty, but likewise we've been present when the host – let's be honest – burns everything and we all walk away hungry and disgruntled, claiming never to want to eat his or her food ever again.

But this should not deter us from at least trying to BBQ, whether it's for social or business networking purposes.

My old man once told me, in order to braai, you need to understand meat and you need to understand the fundamentals of braaing.

H&H – hot and high – start your charcoal braai with hot coals and a high grill and gradually bring the two together. Turn often – don't be one of those people who just leave it to burn. Don't be scared. If all else fails, have loads of alcohol and have loads of fun.

**Anton Gunter is managing director of Global Freight Services, the international freight forwarder with its headquarters in Telford**

# First step in a period of change

**Demolition of the former Riverside shopping centre and medical practice is under way, kick-starting the transformation of the Smithfield Riverside area in Shrewsbury town centre.**

To mark the milestone, Shropshire Council is asking for the public's help in compiling a history of the area over the last 50 years.

Named 'Riverside Remembered,' the social history initiative will see Shropshire Council and Shropshire Archives work together to curate a collection of memories from the area between the years of 1974 and 2024. Members of the public are encouraged to submit their photos online at [smithfieldriverside.com](http://smithfieldriverside.com) for inclusion in the project.

For those with physical photographs, video tapes or even mementos, a drop-in event will be held at Shropshire Local in the Darwin Centre on September 5, from 9am - 3pm.

On October 1, an event will be held at Shropshire Archives on Castle Gates, Shrewsbury, that will include a display of images submitted, and screening of a film about the historical development of Raven Meadows.

The demolition marks the first visible sign of change as part of the wider Smithfield Riverside regeneration scheme - an ambitious plan led by the council and its development manager, RivingtonHark, to revitalise the area between the River Severn, The Darwin Centre, Roushill and Raven Meadows in Shrewsbury town centre.

Funded by £19 million from the UK Government, the demolition - carried out by specialist demolition contractor Cawarden - is expected to take around three months. Once the site has been cleared, work can begin on the first phase of the Smithfield Riverside project - the creation of a landmark park adjacent to Roushill.

This attractive green space has been designed to help breathe new life and vibrancy into the area, as well as improve biodiversity and flood resilience in the town centre. It will feature play equipment, accessible facilities for visitors of all ages, and a dedicated events and performance area.



**Demolition of the Riverside Centre has begun**

Mark Barrow, Shropshire Council's executive director of place, said: "This is a significant moment for Shrewsbury. The start of demolition at the Riverside site is the first step in an exciting period of change for this area of our town centre - one that will ultimately help us attract new visitors, residents, businesses and jobs."

"We've been working hard with the project team towards this moment for many months, so it's truly fantastic to see the project now officially moving forward."

Spencer Winter, project director at RivingtonHark, said: "Seeing work start on site is naturally an exciting moment for us, having been involved in the project since 2022."

"This is the beginning of a transformational journey for Shrewsbury town centre."



# Access to expertise

**Ruth Ross**



**Understanding the skills and training needs of the local business community is a vital role for Shropshire Chamber of Commerce.**

It is crucial that businesses and workers have access to the expertise they need, to thrive and progress. Many employers are telling us that this has not been the case for a significant time.

Since August 2022 we've been leading the Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) project for the Marches area, covering Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin and Herefordshire.

It's designed to gain a better understanding of the area's skills training requirements over the next three to five years, with particular emphasis on sectors such as engineering, manufacturing, professional services, construction, environmental technologies, and health & social care.

Through a combination of questionnaires, text polls, one-to-one interviews, and collaboration with education and economic development organisations, we have been working with our partners to build a comprehensive picture of how employers are coping with staff recruitment and skills shortages.

We've just published the latest progress report: a 20-page document which charts actions against the identified priorities, and explores what still needs to be achieved.

Providing skills training which is easily accessible to all sizes and sectors of business is one of the LSIP priorities, and we have launched a series of upskilling programmes across the county's market towns, including Bridgnorth, Whitchurch, Market Drayton and Shrewsbury.

A significant amount of progress has also been made over the past year to support the health and social care sector, which reported major recruitment difficulties. New facilities and qualifications are now up and running, and education providers have developed a closer working partnership with the NHS.

It's not just the health sector facing recruitment issues, of course. Our quarterly surveys regularly place it as the biggest challenge facing employers in all sectors across Shropshire.

That's why multiple programmes have been rolled out in recent months in response to employers' frustration with the standard of soft skills and 'work readiness'.

The visitor economy is particularly important for our area, which has four Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) including Shrewsbury and Oswestry. Businesses have

spoken of their willingness to pay a levy to fund these services, as they see the values they bring, which is good news.

One of the most powerful outcomes from the Marches LSIP to date are the Local Skills Improvement Fund (LSIF) projects. The Marches Education Partnership, made up of six education and training providers, is delivering a suite of courses focusing on two clear areas of need - manufacturing and engineering, and green construction. You'll be hearing a lot more about these projects as they come on stream in the coming months.

So, in summary, there has been much progress made over the past 12 months. Some outcomes will take time to bear their full fruits, but the foundations are in place, driven by solid partnerships and constructive debate.

Things will only change for the better if decision-makers have a clear understanding of current gaps in training provision, barriers to access training, and the suitability of the education curriculum to prepare students for the 21st century business world.

This is an exciting opportunity to bring together employers, training providers and other key stakeholders at a time of great need. And that's why I'd urge everyone, if you've not already done so, to take part in the LSIP research and make sure your voice is heard.

• *Want to know more? Email project manager Rosie Beswick at [r.beswick@shropshire-chamber.co.uk](mailto:r.beswick@shropshire-chamber.co.uk) or contact the administration team at [lsip@shropshire-chamber.co.uk](mailto:lsip@shropshire-chamber.co.uk). There is also more information about the LSIP project on the policy and representation page of the Shropshire Chamber website, [www.shropshire-chamber.co.uk/policy-representation](http://www.shropshire-chamber.co.uk/policy-representation)*

**A HUGE (PROPOSED) THANK YOU**

Our mission is a simple one - we want every child in the UK to have access to fantastic educational resources - available via Oscar's Tree Academy CIC. There is a real opportunity for schools and businesses to come together, supporting each other in collaboration - providing engaging education and additional environmental benefits.

Thank you to **SIEMENS ENERGY** who have sponsored learning activities in a number of schools. The learning content is provided by Oscar's Tree Academy in association with Cedarwood Tree Consultants (Mark Chester) and design partner Media & You (Paul Naylor).

If you would like to sponsor an event or materials into schools - or other educational establishments (for example, forest schools, cub scout groups) - from as little as **£100**, contact Mark or Paul to discuss.

mark.chester@treeconsultants.org.uk or call 01981 570426      paul@mediaandyou.co.uk or call 07914 304504

OSCAR'S TREE ACADEMY - TEACHING CHILDREN (AND ADULTS) ABOUT TREES AND NATURE

**Ruth Ross is chief executive of Shropshire Chamber of Commerce, which has bases in Telford and Shrewsbury**



# Country pub and so much more is for sale

A Shropshire village pub described by the national media as one of the 'Great British Boltholes' is on the market.

Offers in the region of £1.2 million are being sought for The Haughmond at Upton Magna.

This is more than just a country pub – the business also includes a restaurant, letting rooms, a barn conversion holiday let, a further barn conversion, together with a village shop, café and bakery.

Forge Property Consultants is selling the former coaching inn jointly with Cooper Green Pooks.

Renowned for the quality of its food, having acquired AA 3 Rosette accreditation and featured in the Michelin Guide, the restaurant has scope to accommodate between 60-70 covers.

Upstairs, there are five ensuite double bedrooms, currently let as B&B accommodation, along with a manager's apartment. Outside, there are two further letting rooms, each with an ensuite.

Managing director at Forge, Charles Lawson, said: "Upton Magna is a truly community-led village and the current owners, who are now planning to retire, have been part of this very active community for ten years."

"This is an amazing prospect for someone looking for a business or investment opportunity which has great scope to build on the success, reputation and good will established by the current owners and develop still further as a destination venue for dining, holidays, and special celebrations."



Offers around £1.2 million are sought for The Haughmond at Upton Magna

# Increase in demand for goods and services is encouraging

**A stronger improvement in demand for goods and services underpinned a further expansion in business activity across Shropshire and the rest of the West Midlands over the past few months.**

The figures are contained in the NatWest West Midlands Growth Tracker looking at the health of the economy at the start of the third quarter.

Efficiency gains meant that firms were able to process workloads in a timely manner.

Meanwhile, inflationary pressures were among the lowest in over three years and employment broadly stabilised after a sustained period of contraction.

The headline West Midlands Business Activity Index – a seasonally adjusted index that measures the month-on-month change in the combined output of the region's manufacturing and service sectors – fell from 51.6 in June to an eight-month low of 51.2 in July.

However, remaining above the neutral mark of 50.0, the latest reading extended the current growth sequence to ten months.

Demand for goods and services improved further in July, as signalled by another increase in new business intakes.

The latest expansion was moderate, but quicker than in June and the eighteenth in successive months. Advertising, prospects coming to fruition and the securing of large contracts underpinned the rise, anecdotal evidence showed.

July data showed a further upturn in the overall expenses of private sector firms, which panellists attributed to greater food, insurance, labour, packaging and transportation costs.

The report said: "In line with the trend for input costs, there was a softer increase in prices charged for goods and services. The rate of charge inflation was solid and above the historical average, but nevertheless one of the lowest seen since February 2021."

Blue Orchid Recruitment is an award-winning recruitment agency who are truly passionate about helping people, either by seeing someone grow into a career they love or helping a business build its team and watch it thrive.

## IT'S THE PEOPLE THAT MAKE THE DIFFERENCE

- REC qualified
- Temporary & Permanent appointments
- Nationwide coverage
- Specialists in sourcing candidates in office and commercial environments
- More than a decade of experience
- Outplacement support
- Fair, inclusive & supportive – Armed Forces Covenant signatory & Disability Confident Scheme member
- Member of TEAM (The Employment Agents Movement)
- Ongoing support & advice services

"We always come back to Rob for our recruiting needs. He has always managed to find us the perfect employee, even with short notice. Professional, friendly and fair service. Highly recommended."

Bosco Brothers

"Rob at Blue Orchid Recruitment recently sourced two new employees for our team. He was friendly, enthusiastic and dedicated, taking time to understand our requirements and match us with the best candidates for the positions available. Rob was professional and pro-active throughout the process, supporting us and our candidates with regular contact to make sure everything went smoothly. We would definitely use Blue Orchid Recruitment again. It's a wonderful service and Rob is a pleasure to work with. Thank you, Rob!"

Redan Publishing

W: blueorchidrecruitment.co.uk T: 01743 612013 E: mail@blueorchidrecruitment.co.uk

Blue Orchid Recruitment Ltd  
Grow with us.

# A finalist in its field

**The team at Shrewsbury-based Halls Commercial has been rewarded with a place in the final of the Midland Property and Investment Awards for the second year running.**

Shortlisted in the Commercial Agency Team of the Year category, Halls Commercial is competing against six rivals.

The winners will be announced at the awards ceremony at The Eastside Rooms in Birmingham on September 20.

The awards, launched last year, celebrate and showcase excellence and innovation in the Midlands property sector and recognise the outstanding achievements of companies, teams and individuals.

Entries are welcomed from both residential and commercial property professionals and organisations based in the Midlands.

The Commercial Agency Team of the Year award is for agencies providing leasing, sales and acquisition advice, development strategy and professional services to the commercial property sector.

Judges consider financial information relating to the number of transactions, area of space transacted, transactional and consultancy fee income, repeat business and income per full-time fee earner.



Members of the Halls Commercial team (from left) Ellie Studley, Simon Cullup-Smith, James Evans and Kylie Jones

The agency must be committed to and show progress towards Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) related goals and targets.

James Evans, head of Halls Commercial, said: "It's a huge boost to the enterprising Halls Commercial team to be shortlisted for a second time."

"The announcement comes at a particularly busy time for Halls Commercial as we extend our footprint across the UK and continue to secure major national and regional instructions for a range of commercial properties."

Halls Commercial is the commercial arm of Halls, the independent firm of estate agents, chartered surveyors, auctioneers and valuers.

# Inspirational driving force

A successful Shropshire entrepreneur with a TV Dragons' Den appearance on her CV is proving to be an inspiration to 'more mature' drivers seeking a change of career – by passing her coach driving test in her early 60s.

Jacqueline Porteous, from Buildwas, set up a dog grooming business 20



Jacqueline Porteous

years ago, launched a second business – Baskit Geni – which she took onto Dragons' Den in 2011, and most recently passed her Category D coach test after completing a course with vehicle training provider Dulson Training.

Jacqueline passed that test at the age of 62 and now, two years on and after building up her extensive coach driving experience working for three locally-based companies, she is keen to share her life experiences with others.

"I love challenges in life," said Jacqueline. "My dad was a lorry driver and a big inspiration to me. I travelled around with him whenever I could – I absolutely loved the bigger vehicles."

"Initially I thought that maybe I could be a minibus driver but someone said why not go for a few more feet? Well, I did, and it was more than just a few feet when I took on the 40ft coaches – but I loved it and it has been a great experience, being of service and helping other people which is really important to me."

## OLD HALL AND WREKIN OPEN DAY

### SATURDAY 5TH OCTOBER

Enjoy a tour of our school, hear from staff, and pupils, and ask any questions you may have about the admissions process.

Reserve your place today:  
**E: admissions@oldhall.co.uk**  
**E: admissions@wrekincollege.com**  
**01952 265603**

[www.wrekinoldhall.com](http://www.wrekinoldhall.com)

Wellington, Shropshire TF1 3BH  
Registered Charity No: 528417

"Excellent" in all areas. - ISI Report 2023

Independent co-educational day school 4 - 11

Independent co-educational day and boarding school 11 - 18



Aico alarms are being fitted to housing for Cheshire West & Chester Council



Three Tuns Brewery in Bishop's Castle wins again at the Great Taste Awards

- Cheshire West & Chester Council is fitting multi sensor alarms from Aico across its entire housing stock as part of a major upgrade and replacement programme. The Oswestry company's combined optical, heat and carbon monoxide alarm was launched last summer and has become the 'go-to' device for many social housing schemes. James Fishwick, electrical contracts manager for the Liberty Group which is fitting the products, said: "This is such a good alarm and ticks so many boxes in one go. We were keen to start fitting them as soon as our client gave us the new specification. We're now starting to see them on others around the country as well. It's a no brainer."

- Getting access to finance and moves to cut emissions and save energy continue to be a top priority for businesses across the region, new figures show. Data compiled by the business support teams in Herefordshire, Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin shows the vast majority of enquiries they received in the last three months concerned funding opportunities. The figures, which cover April to June this year, show 75 % of enquiries were about either the Marches Energy Grant scheme – which offers help to cut energy bills and carbon emissions – or other funding programmes and finance.

- A tenant is being sought for a proposed coffee drive-thru or café development in Madeley, on a site owned by Telford and Wrekin Council. The letting of the 0.57-acre site, which fronts Madeley Court Way, is being handled by Halls Commercial on behalf of the council. Surrounding occupiers comprise a variety of food and other retailers, including Aldi, Lidl, KFC and Subway.

- A selection of real ales from Three Tuns Brewery in Bishop's Castle has been recognised in the prestigious Great Taste Awards, for the third successive year. The family-run brewery has received a two-star Great Taste accolade for its winter seasonal special Fezziwig. The judges wrote: "Fezziwig is a clean, sparkling amber ale with a delicate marmalade nose. The flavour builds on the palate, with a satisfying combination of bitter peel and caramel that lasts well on the finish."

- Shrewsbury-based specialists in flood risk, drainage, groundwater and contaminated land, GeoSmart Information, have recorded their highest figures yet, with their annual reported revenue at £2.1m – up from £1.85 million in 2022-23, and tripling since July 2017. The sustained business growth is mostly attributed to a surge in demand for GeoSmart's flood risk services

from architects, planners, and surveyors, as well as major project wins linked to Section 19 flood investigations and environmental due diligence supported by its newly-developed FloodSmart Analytics tool.

- A business networking event returns to Oswestry in September following a hugely successful debut in the town earlier in the year. Arranged by Lanyon Bowdler, the September 27 event will feature a talk by guest speaker Victoria Sugden, director of the Robert Jones and Agnes Hunt Hospital League of Friends. The inaugural Women in Business event took place at The Townhouse in Oswestry in early May, and included a talk by North Shropshire MP, Helen Morgan. The September event will be returning to the same venue.

- Citizens Advice Shropshire is looking for new trustees to help oversee its vital and much-needed service covering all of Shropshire. Based in Shrewsbury, the charity is looking to recruit a new treasurer – ideally from an accountancy background, as well as trustees who can bring their skills and experience related to strategic management, charity sector regulations and compliance. Citizens Advice Shropshire has seen demand for its free, confidential, and impartial service rise following the cost-of-living crisis.

# Packing a punch

CARL JONES chats to the founder of a trailblazing business which is using sport to empower, mentor and inspire young people

**The word 'unique' is over-used. But there's only one Shropshire businessman who can proudly claim to have shared a boxing ring with former world champion Anthony Joshua, and addressed an equally heavyweight meeting of the United Nations.**

His name is Joe Lockley, and his story is entrepreneurial, motivational, and inspirational.

Joe is the founder and a co-director of Shifnal-based Brightstar, which uses the power of sport – fuelled by his own background of boxing – to help change the lives of people who, for a variety of reasons, may have lost their way.

He describes himself as someone with a passion for empowering vulnerable members of the community to create positive futures, having seen first-hand the impact physical activity can play in supporting the development of disadvantaged people.

"We know that boxing has the power to change lives," says Joe, whose programmes utilising sport and education are delivering life-changing benefits for people struggling to manage their mental health or at risk of offending behaviour.

He officially founded Brightstar, which he now runs with co-director Kat Stanworth, at the beginning of 2021 after spending more than eight years with Energize, where he had been promoting the benefits of sport and activity for a healthy lifestyle.

Not only has the business expanded its headquarters on the Old Smithfield trading estate three times since formation, but it has also now opened a second base at Battlefield in Shrewsbury.

Both offer four key areas: classroom facilities, a 'calm room' to diffuse stressful situations, an area for one-to-one sessions, and of course a boxing ring (or two).

In the last academic year alone, Brightstar has helped more than 1,500 young people, and Joe says there is so much potential – and appetite – to grow the services even further.

Brightstar has been split into three different organisations:

- Brightstar Boxing: A boxing academy with sessions open to people of all backgrounds, ages and abilities which take place mainly in the evening.

- Brightstar Education: An alternative education provision for young people aged 8-16 who may be at risk of slipping off the



Joe Lockley of Brightstar with pupils

mainstream radar, or who are struggling with challenging behaviour.

- Brightstar Community: A number of community programmes offering empowerment and mentoring for young people at risk of criminal exploitation, working

closely with a growing network of other clubs and coaches.

"There are many young people who find a mainstream school environment difficult, and schools need access to quality, affordable alternative education provision," Joe says. ▶



Joe Lockley on the UNESCO panel in Paris



Amazed by invite – Joe taking part in the UNESCO panel debate in Paris



Brightstar Futures – the education programme in action



Joe with some of Brightstar's biggest sponsors and supporters

◀ “I’m the sort of person who tends to look forward rather than back, but I do reflect on the day back in 2018 when a friend of mine, Stu, and I first hit a punch bag – it’s amazing what that has led onto.

“If I’d told myself back then that I would have been doing this sort of thing now, I wouldn’t have believed it.”

That’s hardly surprising, because the role is taking Telford-born Joe to some incredible places, networking with some influential people.

Over the past few weeks, for example, he has been mixing with some big international names following an invitation from the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.

He received a VIP invitation to be a guest speaker on the panel discussion at the Change the Game conference at UNESCO’s headquarters in Paris – a top level global event held over two days.

The invitation came from Gabriela Ramos, assistant director general for social and human sciences at UNESCO, who recognised the positive impact Brightstar is having on young lives.

She wanted Joe to help explore how to leverage sport’s social impact across all sectors, showcasing good practices in measurement, communication and scaled investment.

“We commend your efforts to transform the lives of young people from all backgrounds through sport and education and to create a platform for building sustainable, resilient and equal communities,” she said.

Joe was invited to take part in a panel discussion on ‘investing in people’ at the UNESCO Change The Game conference. “Your experience and knowledge will bring great value to the discussion,” Gabriela said.



A great night – meeting 'absolute legend' Frank Bruno, and being crowned best small business in Shropshire in June 2022

“I was amazed to receive the invite and was delighted to take part,” says Joe. “The two-day conference was structured around a partners’ forum – which was why I was there – and a ministerial forum.

“The partners’ forum explored the social return on investment in sports policies and programmes, particularly in areas identified in the UNESCO report on the social impact of sports. The various panels focused on opportunities for investment in people – youth, athletes, coaches – and in infrastructure and support network systems.

“The panel discussion I was involved with was part of a session that began with the launching of the ‘Social Impact of Sport Report’, where key findings were presented.

“This report aims to clarify what is meant by social impact, including both the tangible and intangible benefits associated with investing in sport, while highlighting the

importance of measuring and communicating this impact. Our Investing in People panel discussion followed and there were a wide range of views put forward that were both interesting and thought-provoking – there was certainly a lot that I was able to take away from the discussion.”

It was quite a line-up. Other members of the panel included Aleksander Ceferin, the president of UEFA, Patricia Scotland, secretary general of the Commonwealth of Nations, and Marja Ruotanen, director general of democracy and human dignity at the Council of Europe.

UEFA, European football’s governing body, has become a strong advocate of the Brightstar formula and is helping to raise awareness of the work of Joe and his team by spreading the word around its own network.

Looking back on it now, Joe views the Paris invitation as a pivotal moment for Brightstar to have been recognised on such a global stage.

“I was proud to be a part of such a meaningful discussion, showing that there are many individuals and organisations out there all working towards the same goals as ourselves.

“Sometimes you can feel quite alone on your mission, so it was great for me to see how much it is connecting with people on that sort of level.”

When he’s not hob-nobbing with world leaders, Joe’s day-to-day work revolves around the fast-growing Brightstar headquarters. There are now 23 full-time members of staff in the team, plus more than 30 volunteers, and recruitment is ongoing.

His vision over the next five years is to be running a comprehensive range of programmes across the whole of the West Midlands, and having a national reach too.

“The aim is that, no matter where a person



Joe took part in a TV commercial with heavyweight champion Anthony Joshua



Joe addresses the audience at Brightstar's Webinar earlier this year

may be in the West Midlands, if they are in need of support, we will be able to provide it for them. Not only that, but we will also be influencing policy both nationally and internationally.”

Joe has been harnessing the power of sport for many years now. As a teenager, he completed a BTEC in science and exercise with Telford College, which he says gave him ‘a lot of opportunities’.

“I’ve tried to take full advantage of all of them – I managed to do some mentor volunteering and coaching whilst at college which kick-started my love for supporting others through sport.

“I still keep in touch with some of the staff and have made friends for life at the college. I have fantastic memories of a college trip to Paris as a 17-year-old – so it was quite surreal to be able to return to the city to talk about the transformation that sport can make in achieving world change to ministers and

global leaders as part of the UNESCO global ministerial sports conference.”

And on the subject of friends . . . over the past few weeks Brightstar has announced new collaborations with a series of boxing clubs across the West Midlands, including Fort Boxing Club in Whitchurch.

Joe says: “This partnership is more than just about boxing – it’s about shaping brighter futures for young people across the West Midlands.

“We’re committed to expanding this alliance, working with more clubs to create a positive impact across the region. Together, we can empower the next generation.

“A lot of people might see Brightstar as a boxing club but we want to change the perception of that. We try to empower people to choose the right path and help them make positive choices in their lives.”

Joe is delighted with the support he has received along the way from the Shropshire



Joe was invited to speak at Expo 2020 in Dubai

business community, which he describes as ‘absolutely brilliant’.

He particularly singles out Aico of Oswestry and Denso Manufacturing in Telford for the ongoing staff development, leadership support, and vital investment they have offered which has helped to expand and furnish the facilities.

“We are setting a ‘Champions Board’ to bring in people with specialist knowledge who want to support us. We don’t know everything about business, and I’m always open to learning from and collaborating with other people.

“For me, it’s very important to get out of the mindset of working in the business, and focus more of my attention to working on the business.

“I’m still involved in delivering programmes a couple of nights a week, but for the rest of the time, I delegate that side so I can concentrate on building Brightstar, and collaborating with more and more partners. I’m interested in developing new methods for solving some of society’s existing problems.”

Which leaves just one question: That day in the boxing ring with Anthony Joshua. So many questions – How? When? Why? What on earth...?

It happened back in 2019 when Joe was chosen as the then heavyweight world champion’s opponent in a TV commercial for betting giant William Hill.

He spent four days shooting the black and white promotional ad at Wembley arena which sees him being knocked out by the champion.

Joe was training at Great Wyrley Boxing Club at the time, and beat off stiff opposition from 700 other hopefuls to be chosen – without even knowing he was up for the role in the first place.

“It was actually my co-director Kat Stanworth who’d applied on my behalf. I got a call saying I had been shortlisted and thought it was a prank – so I hung up. When Kat explained to me that it was real I had to ring them back and apologise!

“It was just an unbelievable experience; AJ is my idol. He is so personable – such a great guy. He did say he’d try to come and visit us at Brightstar some time if he could. It’s not happened yet, but maybe one day.

“I’d actually met AJ at a dinner event three years earlier, and when I met up with him in London he said: ‘We’ve met before haven’t we?’ I’d only spoken to him for a few seconds but I think because of my size he had remembered.”

His size? Yes, in case you’re wondering, Joe stands 6ft 7ins tall . . . **SB**



The solar Continentals already in use at Queenstown



Frontier has extended its partnership with Aviramp

# Going down under to clinch deals in excess of £1million

**Aviation specialist Aviramp has strengthened its global position with two new deals worth £1.13 million in Australasia.**

The Telford-based company – which now has some 650 of its step-free, non-slip ramps in use across the world – has clinched new deals with both Sydney and Queenstown airports.

It is supplying two of its solar Continental ramps and two solar Internationals to Sydney, and two new Continental ramps to New Zealand's Queenstown Airport – where it already has Aviramps in use.

The deals come just weeks after the company also clinched £1.2 million of new orders with US-based Frontier Airlines for nine of its step-free boarding ramps, meaning the Denver-based carrier has invested nearly £2million with Aviramp in the last 18 months.

Aviramp chief executive Graham Corfield said: "We now have Aviramps in use in more than 40 countries around the world, helping redefine the passenger experience and providing a safe, dignified way for people to get on and off aircraft whatever their personal circumstances.

"Our patented design – which includes a gentle slope and 360-degree ramp – means that passengers with reduced mobility, families with young children, and wheelchair users can all be treated with the respect they deserve as they embark and disembark, while improving turnaround times for operators.

"We are particularly pleased to have won new orders from Queenstown, who are an existing customer and demonstrate that once an operator has used an Aviramp they never go back."

To add to the success, the company has also sealed more than £300,000 of additional orders with Toronto Pearson, Humberside Airport in the UK, and Palma Airport.



Queenstown Airport has ordered further aviramps to add to its existing solar Continentals

Aviramp – a holder of the Queen's Award for International Trade – is enjoying its best-ever trading year to date, with orders secured for nearly 50 ramps from airports and operators across the globe.

Graham said: "We could not be more delighted to strengthen our relationship with Frontier Airlines, as it continues to grow its US operation and build for the future.

"What's particularly pleasing is that Frontier have been using our ramps for some time and can see the advantages that safe, step-free and solar-powered ramps bring over traditional steps."

Aviramp now exports ramps and boarding bridges across the world, with orders for clients in the Philippines, Minneapolis, Saudi Arabia, Mauritius, Italy, Japan, South Africa and the UK all secured so far this year.






SHROPSHIRE CHAMBER  
**BUSINESS AWARDS 2025**

Join us in celebrating next year's Business Awards!

Be a part of something special, as we head into our 25th year!

Opportunities...

-  Sponsorship
-  Judging process
-  Celebrating the finalists

Find out more:

[awards@shropshire-chamber.co.uk](mailto:awards@shropshire-chamber.co.uk)

**SAVE THE DATE**  
20TH JUNE 2025

**Like child's play**

**SALOP LEISURE**  
For the journey

We make it easy to find your perfect holiday home, caravan, motorhome or campervan. We'll be there to guide, advise and help you through every step of the journey.

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

# Understanding the numbers

By Eddie Allan

**A lot of start-ups shy away from understanding business finance. Here are some core areas that they need to think about.**

**Make it easy for people to give you money!**

In order to receive payment, you need to produce an invoice. Invoice immediately on completion of work with customers. Don't invoice everything on a single date in the month . . . because that means you'll end up with only 12 paydays.

**Invoice quickly and collect quickly**

What should be included in a professional invoice?

- ✓ Contact details
- ✓ Consecutive numbers
- ✓ Date issued
- ✓ Description
- ✓ Charge/VAT separately, where applicable
- ✓ Date for payment
- ✓ How to pay
- ✓ VAT number and company number, where applicable

**Top Tip:** Ring clients a week before the due invoice date to make sure they'll be paying on time (politely). If not, negotiate with them at that point, so that you're in control and won't be caught when payments aren't received as anticipated.

**Good fences make good neighbours**

Issue and agree terms and conditions before any work commences. You need to agree with your customer regarding your obligations to each other.

Those not issuing terms and conditions find out their importance when things go wrong, such as no payment.

**Management accounts help you run your business**

Do you understand the success drivers for your business? What do you need to know?

- Sales reports: what have you sold?
- Aged debtors: who owes you money past the agreed credit terms?
- Cash flow: projected and actual

**Working capital**

This is the money your business needs to be able to operate from day to day.

It's the cash you have left after you account for money coming in and money going out over any given period.

Do you have sufficient funds?



**Eddie Allan, head of programme delivery at Good2Great**

Good credit control (ensuring you are paid promptly) and understanding your cash flow (projected and actual) will help you establish your working capital requirements.

**Break even**

In a time period (which may be weekly, monthly, or yearly) do you know what sales you need to produce in order pay all of your costs? Unless you do, you will not know when you starting to turn a profit.

For example, it costs £10 to make a widget when taking into account variable costs – things you need to purchase in order to sell something.

You sell a widget for £30 – that's your **sales figure**. Your **fixed costs** are £200 – these are the costs you generally need to pay irrespective of you selling anything, such as utilities and insurances.

- To **break even** you must:
- Make and sell 10 Widgets: 10 x £30 = £300
  - £100 Variable Costs + £200 Fixed costs = £300

**Next time we will conclude our 'Understanding the Numbers' discussion by talking about cash flow, and look at what you need to have in place for good governance and management of risk.**

● **Eddie Allan is head of programme delivery at Bridgnorth consultants Good2Great. You can apply for the Telford Growth Enabler programme if you have a business trading for over six months located in the Telford and Wrekin local authority area – see the link/QR code shown in the banner below. If you wish to apply for The Good2Great Start Up Awards you must have engaged in a Start Up programme with Good2Great in the last five years – use the link/QR code on the page opposite. Alternatively contact start@good-2-great.co.uk for any more information.**

## Discover The Fully-Funded Telford Growth Enabler Programme:

Scan the QR code



- ✓ Analyse your performance
- ✓ Meet your expert coach
- ✓ Build your success strategy
- ✓ Review your progress
- ✓ Grow your business

# Celebrating success stories

**onwards and upwards . . . we check in on two Shropshire start-up businesses which have been building successfully this year**

## Claywood 'The Brake'



**Toby and Ruth Dorrell have developed The Brake – a woodland hideaway set on a 15-acre site in Billingsley near Bridgnorth**



Featured here in January as a start up in its infancy, Toby Dorrell and his wife Ruth are behind the Claywood development – a 15-acre site in Billingsley, near Bridgnorth.

Former engineer Toby had just completed the Start Up programme delivered by Good2Great, aimed at helping fledgling companies in the county.

"The Brake", which opened in June, is a woodland hideaway with two ensuite bedrooms – a welcoming space for couples, families and dog lovers, providing space to slow down and switch off.

Guests can explore the private woodland directly from the garden, and sustainability is at the forefront of its design, incorporating solar panels as a renewable energy source.

"It has been really rewarding to launch the accommodation and get such positive feedback from guests on all elements of their stay. Good2Great has been an invaluable resource to ensure every area of starting our new business is covered," said Toby.

Contact: [hello@claywoodshropshire.co.uk](mailto:hello@claywoodshropshire.co.uk) or visit the website [www.claywoodshropshire.co.uk](http://www.claywoodshropshire.co.uk)

## Running Wild Pottery

"It started as a hobby, but look at me now!"

Bitten by the pottery bug, Nina Finch spent most of lockdown teaching herself throwing and other ceramic techniques.

"It now feels like the right time to make it more than just a hobby," she said, when we featured her Running Wild Pottery initiative earlier this year after completing a Start Up programme with Good2Great .

"It's strange to look back over the last few months. I've run a series of popular 'mug off' workshops at a local gallery, been part of a number of country shows, and I'm planning several festive workshops.

"I've sold at my first gallery exhibition, and in the next few months I'll be at the MAC in Birmingham and part of a retail space in Ludlow.

"My customers are looking for the 'special' and 'unique'. Something you won't find in a main chain store and that is truly one of a kind."

Visit: [www.runningwildpottery.co.uk](http://www.runningwildpottery.co.uk). Follow on facebook ([facebook/runningwildpottery](https://facebook.com/runningwildpottery)) and instagram ([@running\\_wild\\_pottery](https://instagram.com/running_wild_pottery))



**My customers are looking for the 'special' and 'unique'. Something you won't find in a main chain store and that is one of a kind.**



# The Good2Great Start-Up Awards

## Celebrating New Business Growth

Applications now open

*"Must have been a previous member of a Good2Great Start-Up Programme in the last 5 years"*

**GOOD2GREAT**

# Circular economy – with a festive flavour

Yes, we're still technically in summer – but that hasn't stopped many Shropshire businesses from turning their attention to the crucial Christmas period.

The Shropshire Hamper Company is preparing to launch its Christmas range in time for corporate gift giving. They will hand-pack thousands of hampers in the lead-up to the festive season.

Their hampers bring together food and drink products made by independent businesses, artisans, and producers. The business is based in North Shropshire and the products used come from the local area wherever possible. Products featured this year include Ludlow Nut Company, Shropshire Salumi, Tanners Wine Merchants, Rowton Vineyard, Shropshire Cheese Nibbles, and Iron & Fire.

Owners Jess and Scott Woodland are also the husband-and-wife team behind The Host's Pantry, which provides luxury recipe boxes and runs an online food hall.



Supporting Shropshire suppliers – locally-sourced hampers Jess Woodland



## Donation to put others in the shade

An Oswestry awning company has made a donation to Hope House children's hospice to help children and staff spend time playing and relaxing in the sunshine.

Roché Awnings has donated a state-of-the-art awning which can be easily controlled to provide shade for garden activities including play, picnics and care in the fresh air.

Marketing and strategy manager David Richards said: "We have been supporters of Hope House now for a number of years and are always blown away by the incredible work that goes on. We identified an opportunity where one of our products could help them make more use of an under-utilised outdoor space."

Jess said: "With both businesses, we hand pick the finest food and drink products to deliver a quality collection of goods. Across the two businesses, we can offer both fresh and ambient gifts.

"It can be hard picking corporate Christmas gifts that show you care, satisfy a wide range of people, reflect your business well, and are at the right price point. Our hampers show that you support local businesses, creating the perfect Shropshire circular economy."

There are 25 different hampers in the company's Christmas range, which launches on October 1.

# Dare we say the 'C' word?

With less than **100** days to go till Christmas, maybe it's time to start thinking about your business seasonal messages and gifts for your contacts and clients.

Here at Yarrington we have been getting into the jingle-bells spirit and have a range of ideas from digital scratchcards, animated e-cards, gift box mailings, office party packs, web pop-ups, video messages and even real bespoke Christmas cards.

Why not start a conversation now and be ahead of the curve. Let's make Christmas 2024 a real celebration.

Contact our experienced team.



DESIGN | EVENTS | VIDEO | WEB

Yarrington, 38B Vanguard Way, Battlefield Enterprise Park, Shrewsbury, Shropshire, SY1 3TG

Phone: 01743 234910 Email: hello@yarrington.co.uk

www.yarrington.co.uk



### FOR SALE

**HIGH QUALITY INVESTMENT PROPERTY**  
30 Church Street, Oswestry, SY11 2SP

- Net Initial Yield of 7%
- Restaurant with 3 residential flats
- 9 years unexpired lease term
- Purchase via a Transfer of a Going Concern (TOGC)

**OFFERS IN THE REGION OF £704,500 (EXCLUSIVE)**



### TO LET

**COFFEE DRIVE THRU**  
Madeley Court Way, Telford, TF7 5RQ

- Site Area approximately 0.57 Acres
- Adjacent to KFC and LIDL
- 3.5 miles south of Telford town centre
- Will be constructed to meet occupier specific requirements, by agreement

**RENT PER ANNUM ON APPLICATION**



### TO LET

**HIGH QUALITY MODERN OFFICES**  
4th Floor Offices, The Quad, Telford, TF3 4NT

- Total Net Internal Floor Area of approximately 7,575 ft sq
- Part of new development known as The Quad in the Station Quarter
- Use Class E and has car parking

**RENT PER ANNUM £113,600 (EXCLUSIVE)**

## COMMERCIAL PROPERTY EXPERTS

Sales | Lettings | Acquisitions | Valuations | Management

01743 450 700

commercialmarketing@halls.gb.com

halls.gb.com/commercial





St Vincent is a new wine bar in Fish Street, Shrewsbury

## Wine bar creates around 15 jobs

A new wine bar has opened in Shrewsbury town centre, creating around 15 jobs. St Vincent – which also serves food and has its own wine shop – is in Fish Street. Owner Alexis Hill has worked in hospitality in Shrewsbury for approaching 20 years and said: “We also have a retail space – a shop area, with about 250 wines in stock. We’ll ultimately be taking on about 15 people, so that’s great as well, providing jobs for the local community.”

# Funding of £50,000 needed for charity

**A campaign has been launched to save a Shrewsbury arts and wellbeing charity from closure.**

The Hive needs to raise £50,000 to keep its Belmont base open in the face of mounting pressures to attract funding.

It has operated as a specialist creative arts and wellbeing charity for over 19 years supporting almost 50,000 children and young people – many facing complex challenges in their lives – to achieve their potential through over 200 different projects.

Chief executive Katie Jennings said: “As an independent charity, we have always prided ourselves in securing considerable sums of external grant funding for decades in Shropshire, to be able to develop deeply meaningful projects; more than £4.5 million over the last 19 years.

“But this last year has been exceptionally challenging, and we have found that the demand for grant funding – particularly from national bodies like the National Lottery, Arts Council England, and Children in Need – has been extraordinarily high, and despite us writing strong funding bids which meet funders’ criteria, we have

been knocked back by the sheer volume of applications.

“To add to this, the cost-of-living crisis has hit hard, bills have sky-rocketed, and our energy bills have quadrupled. We find ourselves in a challenging climate where we need to appeal for help from our local communities to get through this tough time.”

Chair of trustees Helen Ball added: “Funding for the creative arts is a struggle at the moment, not least because local authorities are having to cut back on supporting those non-statutory services. This has placed a bigger demand on grant funding.

“We are grateful for the support of both Shropshire Council and Shrewsbury Town Council as both see the value that this charity brings to developing young people’s creativity, and we are hoping that some of the 48,000 people who have benefitted from our work will help us so that we can continue to offer such a valuable service.”

● *Details of The Hive’s charitable activities, events, and ways to support the ‘Save The Hive’ campaign can be found at [www.hiveonline.org.uk](http://www.hiveonline.org.uk)*

# Olympian is guest of honour

**Britain’s most successful female Olympian Dame Laura Kenny will be guest of honour at a business networking event in Shrewsbury in October.**

The former cycling star is heading to The Shrewsbury Club to speak at a networking event during October’s Lexus W100 Shrewsbury tennis tournament on October 17.

Dame Laura won six Olympic medals – five golds and a silver – during an illustrious career which also saw her win seven World Championship, 14 European Championship and two Commonwealth Games titles. She will be joined at The Shrewsbury Club by British entrepreneur Lara Morgan, who sold her first business which she launched at the age of 23 for £20 million, and who also once finished in the top 10 of the World Triathlon Championships.

The event, sponsored by legal firm Aaron & Partners and accountants, tax and business advisory WR Partners, will be hosted by Abigail Johnson, who is part of the BBC Radio Five Live tennis commentary team at Grand Slams.

Dave Courteen, The Shrewsbury Club’s managing director, said: “We always run a wide range of exciting events in our hospitality marquee throughout the week we host the W100 Shrewsbury tournament.

“The sport and business networking lunch is designed for all those in business who want



Dame Laura Kenny

to meet like-minded business people and enjoy great food, great company and hear from some inspirational speakers.”

Helen Johnson, partner and head of marketing at Aaron & Partners, said: “It’s a pleasure and privilege to be sponsoring the business networking lunch, which is part of one of the most hotly anticipated weeks in Shropshire’s sporting calendar.

“We’re also looking forward to hearing from a hugely impressive line-up of speakers, including Dame Laura Kenny, our greatest ever female Olympian.

“Supporting Shropshire’s business community is a key priority for us and alongside The Shrewsbury Club and WR Partners, we’ll be connecting with and celebrating the achievements of firms throughout the region.”

Paul Littler, business development director at WR Partners, added: “WR Partners are committed to supporting the local community and we’re excited to be teaming up with The Shrewsbury Club and Aaron & Partners to host the business networking lunch again.

“We’ll be welcoming guests and fellow business professionals to enjoy a lovely lunch, listen to two inspirational speakers and watch world class tennis. It’s always an absolute pleasure to be involved with this event.”

Tickets for the event are available, priced £35 each or £350 for a table of 10, from [www.worldtennistourshrewsbury.com/tickets-and-events/networking-lunch/](http://www.worldtennistourshrewsbury.com/tickets-and-events/networking-lunch/)

The Lexus W100 Shrewsbury tournament is the biggest women’s tennis event to be played in the UK this year outside of the grass court season, and will once again bring world class tennis to Shropshire.

Many leading British and international tennis stars now ranked in the world’s top 100 have played in the tournament on the indoor courts at the Sundorne Road venue.

# A fresh new sound for Shropshire

## shropshirelive on air

online smart speaker mobile app

# SHROPSHIRE OktoberFest

4 & 5 October 2024  
Shrewsbury Quarry Park

**Snap up a sponsorship opportunity or exclusive party area at Shropshire’s biggest party!**

Limited availability!

Email: [beth@shropshirefestivals.co.uk](mailto:beth@shropshirefestivals.co.uk)

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

# THINK LOCAL

with a Global Presence

Local Business, People, News, Events & More...

**Do you run a business?**

Our social media followers may want to hear about your products/services.

4,700+ 
 3,100+ 
 1,000+ 
 1,000+ 
 1,000+

We are also on YouTube

Get your message across through social media and website promotion.

Call: 07973 385929  
Email: [Karen@allaboutnewport.co.uk](mailto:Karen@allaboutnewport.co.uk)

from **£60** for 12 Months

Find us at... [www.allaboutnewport.co.uk](http://www.allaboutnewport.co.uk)



# Why sustainability is good business



**Liza Freudmann**

**Sustainability might sound like a buzzword, but it's more than just a trend. For businesses like yours, thinking sustainably isn't just about being green – it's about making sure your business can thrive now and for years to come.**

When we hear 'sustainability', we often think of recycling and reducing waste. But being a sustainable business means more than just looking after the environment. It's about making sure your business is financially sound, socially responsible, and environmentally friendly.

These three elements – people, planet, and profit – are all connected. If we ignore our impact on the environment, our employees, and the people in our communities, we can't expect to stay financially strong in the long run. Simply put, sustainability is about future-proofing your business.

The fact is, as businesses, we have a responsibility to think about the effect we are having on the world around us. We just have

to look at the news to see the very real impacts of climate change, excess waste and global inequalities. The chances are, some of this is impacting your business already.

There are other very practical business reasons to address these issues too:

***It's what your customers want***

If you're a B2C, you'll know that consumers are getting ever more savvy about where their products come from and the impact they have. And if you're a B2B, if you've not already been asked about your sustainability credentials by your customers, it will happen soon.

As part of their supply chain, you're vital in helping them to deliver their own sustainability goals. In making you more attractive and more resilient, being more sustainable will help you gain more customers, and it will help you keep the ones you already have,

***It's what your employees want***

Your employees genuinely care about your sustainability credentials – and this is especially true of Millennials and Gen Xs. If they don't see you as sharing their values, they just won't work for you.

Having a clear plan in place (and being seen as acting on it) is key to recruiting and keeping the best people. And this will only become more important as time goes on.

***It's what investors want***

More and more, investors are looking at how businesses manage their environmental, social, and governance (ESG) practices.

They're interested in businesses that are purpose-driven and resilient – qualities that are found in sustainable companies.

Showing that you have a clear sustainability plan – and that you're making progress against it – can make your business more appealing to investors.

***You'll become more innovative (and save money along the way)***

When you focus on sustainability, you start thinking differently about how you run your business. This can lead to creative solutions that improve your products and processes, reduce waste, and cut costs.

Many businesses find that sustainable practices not only help the planet but lead to both short and long-term cost savings.

***You'll manage risk better***

Understanding both how your business impacts the world around it, and how climate change impacts on your business, helps you mitigate risks associated with climate change, resource shortages, and regulatory changes.

Through adopting sustainable practices, you're better prepared to handle these challenges and protect your business from future disruptions.

Having a solid sustainability plan and taking tangible action against it isn't just good for your people and the planet – it's good for your business. It boosts your reputation and competitive advantage, strengthens customer loyalty, and positions you as a desirable partner for collaborations and investments.

In short, sustainability is smart business.

**Liza Freudmann is a director of BLA Sustainability, and is based in Shrewsbury**



Lord Lieutenant Anna Turner and deputy lieutenants Gill Hamer and Mandy Thorn meet 2024 winners Willo Game

## King's Award launch

**Businesses across Shropshire are being urged to enter the prestigious King's Award for Enterprise for 2025.**

A special event hosted by Shropshire's Lord Lieutenant Anna Turner and Lord Hamilton of Dalziel launched this year's awards at Harrington Hall in Shifnal.

Guests of honour were the team from Willo Game – the county's latest successful winners who scooped the King's Award for International Trade.

The King's Award has four categories: innovation, export, sustainable development and promoting opportunity through social mobility. The latter can now be entered by a collaborative partnership which includes a training provider.

Previous Shropshire winners include aviation ramp manufacturers Aviramp, packaging manufacturer i2r and Telford digital manufacturer Protolabs.

Advice and support on the entry process is available through the Shropshire Lieutenancy. For more information about entering the awards visit [www.kaeshropshire.co.uk](http://www.kaeshropshire.co.uk)



O'Donovan Engineering has its roots in Cork, Ireland

## New sales and distribution centre heads for university

Irish manufacturing firm O'Donovan Engineering has opened a UK sales and distribution centre near Telford.

The family-owned company from Cork in Ireland brings over 45 years of expertise in designing and making livestock housing and handling equipment.

Founded in 1978, the company has set up a base at the UK Agri-Tech Centre on the Harper Adams University campus at Edgmond.

Managing director Deirdre O'Donovan said: "Our establishment of a permanent office in the UK underscores our firm commitment to offer a complete customer-focused solution for the UK market. Our primary focus is on developing solutions that enhance farm safety and efficiency."

# If you want to go far, go together.

We get it. Running a business right now is hard work. But you don't have to tackle every challenge alone.

Join a trusted and confidential peer group of business leaders to take your business to the next level.

Find out more or register your interest at: [wrpartners.co.uk/blg](http://wrpartners.co.uk/blg)

WR Partners offer accounting, auditing and business services including; tax advisory and consultancy & payroll. 08000 664 664





# How to get out of a contract that isn't delivering



**Martyn James**



**I've been filming the new season of Rip Off Britain, which is a great excuse to meet up with my fellow broadcast experts and have a natter.**

In a gap between takes I was chatting to our legal expert, Gary Rycroft, about a few questions from viewers and readers. One subject that keeps coming up is about how to get out of contracts where businesses aren't meeting their commitments.

These scenarios can involve anything from a gym membership where the pool has been closed for months, to a dating site that's put so many limitations on interacting with future partners it's not worth the money.

Well, Gary and I have heard your pleas! Here's our advice on bailing on a rubbish contract.

**Your rights if a business doesn't deliver**

If you want to leave an ongoing contract, it makes sense to think about your ideal resolution. Are you trying to leave the contract

early without a penalty? Or do you want to get your money back for a service you paid for in advance?

Regardless of the end result, if you want to cancel a contract, you'll need to establish why the firm hasn't met its part of the deal.

Many of the legal protections that cover the goods and services we purchase come from the Consumer Rights Act 2015. This law sets out a range of circumstances under which you can cancel services if it turns out they are not as advertised.

If you can demonstrate a business is not delivering what it promised, you could get some or all of your money back. However, once you edge past six months from the point of purchase, things get a little tricky.

The law also states that all new subscriptions and contracts have to be 'actively' signed up to. This means a business can't automatically opt you into a contract – you have to choose to sign up – and the contract needs to be fair and clear.

**What if the services I've signed up for change significantly?**

Sometimes unexpected events can spoil an agreement with a business. This became very clear over the pandemic, when lots of things we signed up for simply couldn't be used – from holiday rentals to tennis lessons.

Under these circumstances, the legal principle of 'Frustration of Contract' can help you. This applies where goods or services cannot be delivered for reasons that may not have been anticipated when the contract was agreed. This applies to both a single event

– like hiring a wedding venue – or ongoing contracts like a gym membership.

Let's say you have agreed to pay £840 a year for gym membership and the gym is closed for two months: you could be able to claim a £140 refund under Frustration of Contract.

Alternatively, you may be able to pause or stop a regular subscription for the period facilities aren't available, though you would have to start up again once things were sorted out.

Of course, if a key service that's integral to the contract isn't provided, then you can ask for a full refund, or request that the contract is cancelled without a penalty fee.

**What if the business wants to make deductions for 'costs'?**

If you decide to go down the Frustration of Contract route for a refund, the business may be entitled to ask for a small contribution to certain costs it incurs, but only if the original contract says this is permitted. So check the T&Cs you were given when you signed up.

For example, imagine that you've purchased a static caravan in a holiday park for a year. If the park is flooded, you obviously can't use the facilities.

You might be able to get a refund for the period the park is closed, but the business can charge you for things like security and maintenance costs so the park is protected and maintained.

These costs should be reasonable, and you should be able to ask for a breakdown of everything the business is deducting too.

**Martyn James is a leading consumer rights campaigner, TV and radio broadcaster and journalist**

# Official launch for youth charity's new home

Work on a Shropshire youth charity's new £1.5 million headquarters is now complete, and visitors will get the opportunity to look around the building at a special networking event.

SYA – All About Youth's new HQ, in Upton Lane, Shrewsbury – has been made possible with a Youth Investment Fund grant.

Supporters are now invited to a celebration event on September 17, from 4pm to 6pm, with an opportunity to see the new facilities first hand with drinks and canapes.

Claire Purcell, community engagement and fundraising manager at SYA, said: "It has taken less than a year since we moved out and we couldn't be more pleased with how things have gone.

"We are now working on plans for a celebratory business networking event on September 17 to thank supporters as well as provide the opportunity for people to look around the new building. Now is also a good time to remind local businesses who would like to support SYA of the sponsorship opportunities that are still available at the new HQ."



Claire Purcell, left, with youngsters and volunteers at the new centre

# Move represents long term opportunities

**HM Revenue and Customs is to relocate from its current site at Telford Plaza to the Government-owned Parkside Court on Hall Park Way – a move that will ensure the retention of more than 1,000 jobs within Telford.**

The exact timeline for the move will be announced in due course. HMRC will join other Government departments, including HM Land Registry and Natural England, at the Parkside Court site, which will be transformed into a flexible office environment.

All current employees at Telford Plaza are expected to transition smoothly to the new location, given its close proximity.

Councillor Ollie Vickers, Telford & Wrekin Council's cabinet member for the economy, said: "It's fantastic news that, rather than relocate out of the borough, HMRC has chosen to stay in Telford.

"We understand that HMRC considered a range of options, so this commitment means that over 1,000 jobs are retained in Telford and Wrekin, providing valuable employment and career development opportunities.

"This move underscores our borough's growing reputation as a centre for digital and IT companies, and highlights our ability to offer modern, high-quality office accommodation.

"Our focus on digital skills and innovation continues to attract significant businesses in this sector which presents strong career opportunities here in Telford, helping us to retain local talent and support our community's growth."

Daljit Rehal, from HMRC, said the move would provide "long-term opportunities" for staff.

HMRC collects and administers tax on behalf of the Government at its Shropshire base. It moved to the Telford Plaza building in 2018, and has been leasing 13 floors.



## These are our five ways

Trust • Integrity • Experience • Knowledge • Support

**Established since 1967:** We've been providing professional insurance advice for over 50 years, in which time we've built up strong relationships with leading insurers across the UK.

**Building a relationship of trust:** Our aim is to establish a relationship of mutual trust. We'll find a policy that suits you; giving you complete peace of mind with your cover.

Newport 01952 812 380    Stafford 01785 251 790

**fiveways** insurancegroup estd. 1967

www.fivewaysinsurance.co.uk



SCAN ME





## New cafe

A new neighbourhood cafe has opened in a shopping complex in Shrewsbury's Gains Park. Cafe in the Park, owned by husband and wife team Duncan and Samantha McGregor, has quickly proved popular with locals since opening its doors at Pensfold Shopping Centre. Duncan said: "It's a nice community and there's been a lot of interest. We live locally and just want to be part of the community. We are already hosting the Women's Institute and reading clubs, so we are just looking to keep building."

# Bowled over with partnership

**A chance chat during a social training run led to a hugely successful long-running partnership between Cricket Shropshire and a Bridgnorth-based leisure consultancy.**

Strategic Leisure managing director Rachel Fowler was talking to Cricket Shropshire's Sheila Dickie during the run with Wrekin Roadrunners.

Sheila, who is now the board's safeguarding officer, asked Rachel if she ever sponsored groups involved in sport – the answer was yes.

Rachel soon found herself talking to lead officer Steve Reese which developed into a partnership which has seen Strategic Leisure supporting women's and girls'



Rachel Fowler presents trophies all over the county

cricket in Shropshire for the past five years. And Steve is in no doubt that the partnership has been a big factor in contributing to its huge growth in the county.

He said: "It has enabled us to buy equipment, organise extra competitions, pay for training of officials and expand the range of competitions on offer across the county. Without the support we have received from Rachel, all this would not have been possible."

Strategic Leisure is a sport, leisure and physical activity management consultancy specialising in the planning, development, management and evaluation of sport, leisure and physical activity facilities, services and events.

Rachel said: "What attracted me to the idea in the first place was the opportunity to get involved in Shropshire where the company was based.

"Secondly, it involved getting more women and girls involved in sport through participation. I have spent my career working in the development of sport and physical activity and I just know the benefits sport has given to me as an individual.

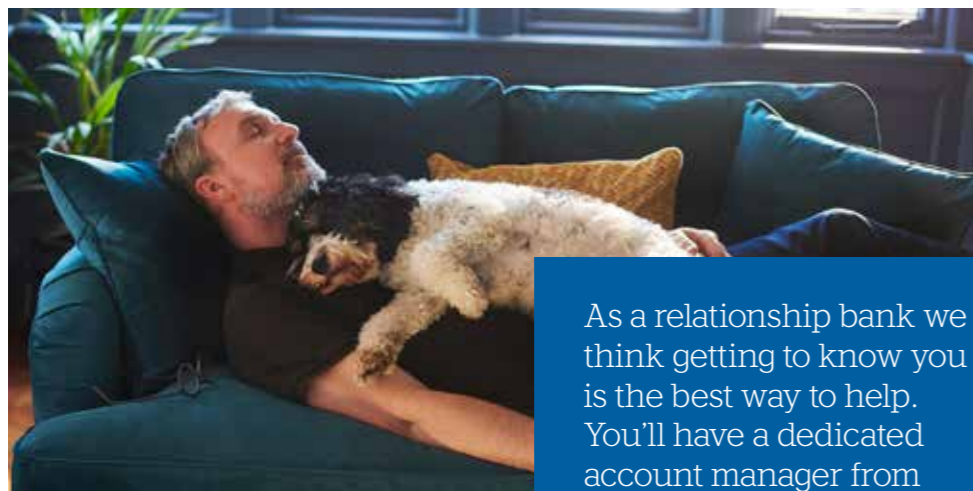
"It has been a really good partnership with Cricket Shropshire and I have seen what a big impact it has had on participation amongst women and girls.

"I get invited along to present trophies and medals for competitions and people are so grateful and thankful for the support we give which is great to see.

"What I really admire is that all the women and girls give it a go, support each other and appear to be really enjoying it, even if they have never been active sports participants previously. Seeing the togetherness and their achievements is wonderful."

● **There are lots of other sponsorship opportunities available with Cricket Shropshire, to find out more details see <https://cricketshropshire.co.uk/sponsorship/> or email [admin@shropshirecricketboard.co.uk](mailto:admin@shropshirecricketboard.co.uk)**

## Mortgages that work for you, without the hard work



As a relationship bank we think getting to know you is the best way to help. You'll have a dedicated account manager from application to completion, making key decisions so your move is stress-free.

**Ready to move?** So are we. Call Shrewsbury branch today on 01743 263780.

Your home may be repossessed if you do not keep up repayments on your mortgage

[handelsbanken.co.uk/shrewsbury](https://handelsbanken.co.uk/shrewsbury)

**Handelsbanken**

Our lending facilities are only available to persons aged 18 or over and are subject to status. Written quotations and Terms and Conditions are available on request.

Handelsbanken is the trading name of Handelsbanken plc, which is incorporated in England and Wales with company number 11305395. Registered office: 3 Thomas More Square, London, E1W 1WY, UK. Handelsbanken plc is authorised by the Prudential Regulation Authority and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority and the Prudential Regulation Authority. Financial Services Register number 806852. Handelsbanken plc is a wholly-owned subsidiary of Svenska Handelsbanken AB (publ).

2034 | 10.240 | 06.2024



# Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin Apprenticeship Awards

## Gala Awards Dinner Tickets now on sale

**Where: Mercure Telford Centre Hotel**  
**When: Thursday 3rd October**

Join us for a spectacular celebration of the region's star apprentices, and their employers, in front of the Shropshire Business Live TV cameras.

Tickets cost £55 plus VAT, or £500 for a table of 10. Price includes a three-course meal, awards ceremony, and live post-awards entertainment.

**Book now: [stwaa.co.uk](https://stwaa.co.uk)**





Staff at AHR architecture and building consultancy working in Shrewsbury

# WISH you were here... to enjoy investment in town

**A campaign has launched to pitch Shrewsbury as a great place to live and work – encouraging inward investment and creating jobs.**

The Work in Shrewsbury campaign – known as WISH – is being run by Shrewsbury BID and includes a raft of activities, case studies and masterclass learning sessions.

Attracting more inward investment is a key priority for Shrewsbury BID during its new five-year term, which began in April following a successful ballot among town centre businesses.

Work in Shrewsbury is part-funded by the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and aims to raise awareness of the superb living and working environment that Shropshire's county town offers.

Seb Slater, executive director of Shrewsbury BID, said the campaign would have a multitude of benefits for the local economy.

"We know what a fantastic place Shrewsbury is to live and work, so the WISH campaign is all about spreading that message far and wide.

"Central to the campaign is the website, which is the hub for a whole range of information, such as case studies, job opportunities and engaging videos and images showing Shrewsbury at its best.

"Alongside that, we are installing eye-catching branding around Shrewsbury and further afield to really raise awareness of the campaign.

"The project aims to attract new investment but also nurture the talent we already have through a range of activities, including masterclass sessions when highly-respected experts will come to Shrewsbury to share their expertise with businesses.

"We are also excited about the creation of a core 'cohort' of people who

will receive extra support and funding to develop their own business ideas – applications will open soon for those interested in taking up one of the 20 places available."

Ann Tudor, Shrewsbury BID board member, added: "These are exciting times in Shrewsbury, with a variety of major projects creating a wealth of opportunities right in the heart of the town.

"This campaign does a great job of highlighting the wonderful blend of creative work spaces we have in the town centre, along with the beautiful environment and wealth of independent shops, bars and restaurants people can enjoy once the working day is done.

"What better time for new businesses and entrepreneurs to consider Shrewsbury as the base for their investment?"

Mark Jones, Shropshire Council's cabinet member for growth and regeneration, said: "This campaign will not only highlight the benefits of working in Shrewsbury alongside the new office developments planned for the town – particularly within the Smithfield Riverside Redevelopment area – but it will also shine a light on how great it is to live in the town too."

We know what a fantastic place Shrewsbury is to live and work, so the WISH campaign is all about spreading that message far and wide.



Guests at the fundraising event at Shrewsbury Polo Club in Baschurch



Freddie Roe collects money for the raffle

# Polo event raises £2,500 for Injured Jockeys Fund

**Komplex Group, the healthcare organisation with its headquarters in Telford, held a polo event in aid of the Injured Jockeys Fund.**

The charity, which is celebrating its 60th anniversary this year, will benefit from £1,950 raised on the day at Shrewsbury Polo Club, which has been topped up to £2,500 by Komplex Group.

The Injured Jockeys Fund provides holistic welfare support and world-class rehabilitation services, with three state-of-the-art rehabilitation centres, as well as the provision of leading concussion management and mental wellbeing support for injured jockeys and horse riders.

Tom Roe, chief executive and founder of Komplex Group, said: "Komplex supports many people who have sadly been injured playing sports, including former jockeys, so it seemed a natural fit for us to raise money for a charity such as the Injured Jockeys Fund.

"The charity does phenomenal work to improve the lives of injured individuals, and we are delighted to have been able to raise funds for them."

Alongside the polo, attendees enjoyed a raffle and fundraising games to raise further funds.

Charity chief executive Lisa Hancock said: "The money raised will help contribute towards the support and services we provide to injured jockeys and their dependants as needed. We would like to thank them for their support and efforts in organising this successful and entertaining event."



Action from the polo charity fundraiser



Arriving for the day, from left, Vicky Edwards, Claire Thomas, Lucy Beardsmore, Stephanie Hough, Lizzy Bull and Dawn Madders



Helen Culshaw (right) welcomes new owners Chris and Christina Morledge

# Retirement plans follow sale of marketing agency

**A new owner has taken over a Newport-based marketing agency allowing the founder to 'retire'.**

Digital marketing and web design agency Ascendancy has been sold to husband-and-wife team Chris and Christina Morledge.

Helen Culshaw, who launched the business in 2004, currently remains with the team as part of the transition period and is already enjoying seeing her colleagues take the lead.

She says she hopes to enjoy a slower pace of life with her husband Paul – but won't be far away as the Ascendancy office and team will remain where it is... next to her own house!

Chris and Christina, who live in Nottingham, acquired Ascendancy following the successful acquisition of another agency, Copper Bay Digital based in Swansea in 2020.

Helen said: "Anyone who knows me will know this has been a huge decision for me but the time was right, and most importantly, the right person wanted to buy the agency."

"Chris was very clear from the outset that the business would remain in Newport and the team would remain and it would be business as usual – all of these elements were so important for me – especially as my family members are employed."

"Chris is eager to empower the team to grow as people and to grow the business. His team at Copper Bay means there will be a shared pool

of talents too, so everything fitted perfectly. I wanted to find someone like me and I am sure Chris is the perfect fit.

"I have spent the last 12 months planning for this, where the A-team have been enjoying more face-to-face meetings and learning about the business from the first proposal stage. It has been very strange taking a back seat and I'm sure it will take a while to adjust to 'retired' life."

"For our clients, it is very much business as usual. People will still see me running my training courses at the Shropshire Chamber of Commerce."

Helen and her husband Paul have already purchased a "semi-retirement" business which was formerly owned by a client. The duo now own online blanket business [www.blanketworld.co.uk](http://www.blanketworld.co.uk)

Chris said: "I am so pleased to have acquired Ascendancy and look forward to working with the team."

"Helen has done a brilliant job to grow the agency to where it is today, and now Christina and I look forward to focusing on the growth and elevation of the team, including the front-facing role which Helen has held throughout."

"Our other agency, Copper Bay Digital, is of a similar size to Ascendancy with 10 members of staff and has additional expertise in development, whereas Ascendancy has a stronger digital marketing team so there will be many shared opportunities between the two agencies."

# The search is on for new chief executive

Shrewsbury and Telford Hospital NHS Trust has appointed a new chief operating officer – and begun the search for a new chief executive.

Ned Hobbs brings extensive strategic and operational experience, having held a similar post at Walsall Healthcare NHS Trust for the past five years where he has also been deputy chief executive since last summer.

He said: "It is exciting to see the level of clinical, digital and estates transformation happening over the next three years."

"I know that staff are continuing to work in a difficult environment, facing very significant pressures, and I am committed to working with colleagues in the Trust, and the wider Integrated Care System, to be part of delivering improvements to services for our patients and staff."

"I enjoy living in Shropshire and my family and friends use the Trust's services in both hospitals. I am personally committed to improving the care and experience for all the communities that we serve and contributing to a positive working environment for colleagues."

His appointment comes as the Trust begins a search for a new chief



Louise Barnett will be leaving her post



Ned Hobbs – new chief operating officer

executive. Louise Barnett has announced that she will be leaving later this year after just over four years in the post.

Interim chair, Professor Trevor Purt, said: "I would like to thank Louise for her hard work and dedication throughout her time at the Trust. It has been a very challenging period with intense public scrutiny but her energy and commitment to improving the services delivered to the public served by the Trust has been exceptional."

# New branch opening in market town

**Halls, the estate agents, chartered surveyors, auctioneers and valuers, have opened a new branch in Wellington.**

The Market Street base initially has four staff, managed by Matt Gilbert, to cover Wellington, Telford and the surrounding area, stretching as far as Bridgnorth, Albrighton and Cosford.

It links up with Halls' network of nine other offices, including Shrewsbury to the west, Whitchurch to the north and Kidderminster to the south.

"We already have many clients in east Shropshire and we feel that Wellington is the ideal location to open a new office," said Halls managing director Jon Quinn.

"We are delighted to have recruited Matt, who has a wealth of property market experience in this area. There are so many houses being built in the Telford area and Wellington is the ideal base from which to cover them."

Matt, who lives in Tern Hill, has five years of experience working as an estate agent in the Telford area.

He said: "I wanted to join Halls because it's a multi-disciplined company that has a great track record. I will have a great team with me."

During his career to date, Matt has launched and later sold one of the first online estate



Matt Gilbert of Halls

agencies and worked for an estate agent in London. At the start of his career, he worked for Qatar Airways at Manchester and in Qatar, before travelling the world and setting up a charity in Malawi, having raised £3,500 to build five schools and an orphanage in the impoverished Domasi area.

The charity, now called Tikonwe Youth Organisation, has made great strides forward to establish a proper infrastructure and medical centres.

One of Matt's claims to fame is an unofficial world record for the longest time playing pool – 53 hours and 35 minutes, amounting to 600 games – in Manchester in 2011.



Councillor Lee Carter

# Lee is new leader of the council

Councillor Lee Carter is the new leader of Telford & Wrekin Council. He has taken over the role from Shaun Davies, who stepped down after being elected as the Member of Parliament for Telford.

Lee was the driving force behind the rebirth of AFC Telford United, having led a supporters' takeover of the club in 2004, at a time when its future was uncertain, and was awarded the Honorary Freedom of the Borough in 2005, in recognition of his 'efforts in establishing AFC Telford in the wake of the collapse and liquidation of Telford United Football Club'.

He went on to become the club's first chairman and was then the managing director between 2013 and 2016.

"It is a huge privilege to be elected by fellow councillors to lead Telford & Wrekin Council," he said. "I don't underestimate the challenge, but am determined to ensure the administration continues to do its very best on behalf of all Telford and Wrekin residents."



Justin Griffiths, Candice Donnelly and Rob Pollard

## New seniors for agency

M3.agency, the marketing agency with offices in Albrighton, Birmingham and London, has capped a record year with three new appointments to its senior leadership team.

The owners hope its expansion will be underpinned by the promotions of group creative director Justin Griffiths and group account director Candice Donnelly, plus the high-profile recruitment of Lightbox founder Rob Pollard as client strategy director.

Rob ran his own agency for 17 years, bringing with him a wealth of leadership, operational and strategic skills. He has also brought with him four members of staff and accounts with Purity Brewery, Davisons Law and WHG.

Nick Lovett, managing director of M3.agency, said: "We're setting our sights on bringing even more blue chip clients into the region, attracting them away from Manchester and London in the process.

"Our growth has been down to investment in the team, with the latest recruitment of Rob and the promotions of Justin and Candice giving us an extremely talented and experienced senior leadership team."

# Additions to a growing team

## An expanding Bridgnorth firm has continued its recruitment programme by adding two key members of staff to its team.

Business growth specialists Good2Great, based at The Printworks in High Street, has taken on Theresa Reynolds and Matt Jones.

Theresa is taking on the role of office manager, having gained extensive experience as a personal assistant within the NHS and private companies, and set up her own successful family business.

Matt Jones steps into the newly-created role as company accountant. A certified accountant under the Association of Accounting Technicians, he has wide-ranging experience in implementing innovative accounting systems and solutions.

He started his career at Swegon Air Management as an accounting team leader, travelling between the UK and Ireland implementing and training new finance systems across the group.

Matt joins Good2Great from Marks & Clerk LLP where he sat on the senior



Matt Jones and Theresa Reynolds

management team, shaping the company's finances. This led to the team being shortlisted for the West Midlands Finance Awards.

Earlier this year, Michelle Jehu was recruited at Good2Great as head of people development and Harriet Cox was appointed as digital marketing executive.

Director Johnny Themans said: "The addition of these four key members of staff comes at an exciting period of expansion for us and we are sure they will strengthen our commitment to driving growth for our clients across the Midlands."

# Return to county



John Cox has joined Lanyon Bowdler

## An experienced lawyer who was raised near Telford has returned home after 30 years of working in London to join a Shropshire law firm.

Senior associate solicitor John Cox has extensive experience in property litigation and has joined Lanyon Bowdler's dispute resolution team in Telford.

John said: "I know the area well having been brought up in Kynnersley. It was always my intention to return to the area, and having left the very successful specialist firm I co-founded in London thirty years ago, this seems like a good opportunity.

"I chose to join Lanyon Bowdler because it is a hugely respected local firm with a strong practice in my area of expertise, and I hope to play a role in helping to grow the dispute resolution side of the firm."

During his career, John has built up extensive experience in property litigation, including professional negligence claims against solicitors, along with landlord and tenant disputes, vendor and purchaser disputes, boundary disputes, nuisance claims, and disputes between co-owners.

Andrew Pegg, head of dispute resolution at Lanyon Bowdler, said: "We are delighted to welcome John on board - an appointment that will strengthen the dispute resolution team at a time when we are seeing an expansion of our client base."



Henry Beaver of Beaver Bridges Ltd

## CEO is elected as association chair

The chief executive of Shrewsbury-based Beaver Bridges Ltd, Henry Beaver, has been elected as chair of the BCSA (British Constructional Steelwork Association Bridgeworks Committee) and director of the main BCSA business.

Steel is an integral part of the bridges the company manufactures at its manufacturing operation in Wigan.



## KNOWLEDGE

Videos, podcasts, news and views

One place for your business | [sbltvknowledge.co.uk](http://sbltvknowledge.co.uk)

Do you need a newsletter? How about a magazine? Or perhaps a book? Then you need MEDIA & YOU.



We specialise in the creation of newsletters, magazines and books, but are equally at home putting together all manner of business essentials, including:

- Product Catalogues
- Media Packs
- Posters
- Advertisements
- Brand Design/Redesign
- Roller Banners
- Rate Cards
- Business Cards
- Information Cards
- Promotional Materials
- Illustrations & Infographics
- Podcast Service



Email: [paul@mediaandyou.co.uk](mailto:paul@mediaandyou.co.uk) Call: 07914 304 504 Visit: [www.mediaandyou.co.uk](http://www.mediaandyou.co.uk)



# Five minutes with . . .

PAM HODGETTS is corporate partnerships manager at the Midlands Air Ambulance charity. She has been at the Cosford-based organisation for five years.

**WHAT DOES YOUR JOB INVOLVE?**

My role is to lead a team of four, giving them the tools to go out and build impactful and mutually beneficial business partnerships across the six counties we care for.

**HOW IS YOUR JOB IMPACTED BY FLUCTUATIONS IN THE ECONOMY?**

We are no different to any other industry when it comes to environmental and economic factors. Corporate fundraising was impacted greatly during the pandemic, while individual giving saw an uplift due to people being unable to go out socialising. This has switched now; corporate is slowly growing, while we are now conscious of how much we ask of individuals due to the cost-of-living crisis.

**WHAT'S YOUR VIEW ON THE CHANGE OF GOVERNMENT FOR YOUR JOB?**

It will not have a huge impact on my role directly, and is unlikely to make any difference to the way any of the Air Ambulance services in the UK are funded. From a personal perspective, I would hope the change will help increase the amount of money in the population's pocket, reducing the amount of child poverty the county is seeing and – equally importantly – see investment into the NHS service.

**HOW DO YOU SEE ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE – AN OPPORTUNITY, THREAT, OR BIT OF BOTH?**

As a woman of a certain age, I am still getting my head around AI; it fascinates and terrifies me in equal measure. I can see so many positives for how it can make the working world more productive, but as someone that builds relationships for a living, I really value the impact of human interactions.

**HOW DO YOU HOPE YOUR COLLEAGUES WOULD DESCRIBE YOU?**

In my younger days, I probably spent too much time obsessing about what others thought about me. I now realise it is just wasted energy and a form of procrastination. I try to be authentic, thoughtful, honest, professional, and occasionally funny... all I can do is hope that is what people see.

**YOUR GREATEST STRENGTH IN THE WORKPLACE?**

Resilience and creativity. Ironically, resilience was something I felt I was always lacking in my youth, but it is one skill that really does come with age. Life will knock you down, and you will always have to dig deep to find a way back up. Fundraising takes a lot of resilience.

**BIGGEST CHALLENGE IN YOUR JOB?**

For anyone working for a charity it is getting an audience. There are so many good causes out there and companies are inundated with requests for support. Our greatest challenge is to find the USP that gets us a seat at the table.



*Pam Hodgetts, corporate partnerships manager*



*A familiar sight from Midlands Air Ambulance*



*Hot Fuzz is Pam's go-to film for laughter*

**HOW DO YOU RELAX AWAY FROM WORK?**

I love being in nature, gardening and walking with my dog. I have recently started to try to paint again – I have an A-level in art but hadn't picked up a brush in years.

**FAVOURITE THING ABOUT SHROPSHIRE?**

I love the countryside across the region and community ethos, especially within the business community.

**SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORM OF CHOICE?**

LinkedIn is my biggest tool in my role, however on a personal level I am old so it would be Facebook – but I do love a bit of Instagram too, though my wall is mostly images of my dog or sunrises.

**FAVOURITE MOVIE?**

Far too many to choose from! Breakfast at Tiffany's and Love Actually through to Con Air and Pulp Fiction. My go-to film if I need a giggle is Hot Fuzz, but if I'm honest, I would have to say a short film my son worked on at university called "The Cabin Below The Diamond Sky" just because it makes me proud.

**EARLY BIRD, OR NIGHT OWL?**

Definitely early bird! I love sunrise, the dawn chorus and the peace of early mornings.

**DREAM DINNER PARTY GUESTS, DEAD OR ALIVE?**

My dad – I'd love him to see how well the boys and I are doing – and maybe Ryan Reynolds, because let's be honest who wouldn't want to sit across a table from Deadpool?

**TELL US SOMETHING ABOUT YOU THAT MOST PEOPLE PROBABLY WOULDN'T KNOW.**

I once travelled 250kms across the Arctic by dog sledge to raise money for the Birmingham Children's Hospice.

**AND FINALLY . . . WHAT DOES THE NEXT 12 MONTHS HAVE IN STORE FOR YOU?**

A wedding, and a lot of hard work and fun to keep MAAC saving lives.

# Our People, Your Team.

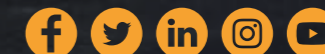
## Here to help you.

We can hold meetings via telephone and video and, of course, we are also able to offer meetings in person. Please contact us and a member of our team will be happy to help.

Find Us:

**Kendal Court, Ironmasters Way  
Telford, TF3 4DT  
Tel: 01952 291222**

**info@lblaw.co.uk  
www.lblaw.co.uk**



# RAINE

Exclusively designed by

*Rudell*

The Jewellers



*Rudell*

The Jewellers

97 Darlington Street, Wolverhampton WV1 4HB. Tel: (01902) 423308 / 427199

89 High Street, Harborne, Birmingham B17 9NR. Tel: (0121) 427 1904

[www.rudells.com](http://www.rudells.com)