

SHROPSHIRE

September/October 2025
FREE

BUSINESS

Award-winning news, views and analysis



EARNING & LEARNING

Do apprenticeships hold the key to recruitment challenges?

PLUS: Meet the finalists in this year's 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.**



Scan here to learn more

an  Company

connexis

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
Visit our website connexis.co.uk

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



ISSUE 53:
SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2025

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 Business is published by Wiggly Worm Media Ltd. 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 are not necessarily those held by the publisher, or editor.

Our publications are printed in the UK by Magazine Printing Company using vegetable-based inks combined with the latest 'chemical-free' plate and Heidelberg press technology.

All papers are sourced from well-managed, sustainable forests and their vast supply-chain hold many environmental accreditations. In addition to this, they hold a Climate Change Agreement along with ISO14001, ISO9001, FSC, PEFC and offer Carbon Balancing via The World Land Trust.



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



COVER STORY

EARNING AND LEARNING: Do apprentices hold the key to driving innovation, filling skills gaps, and building resilient talent pipelines across the Shropshire economy? Ten pages of news and views, including a look at changes to the Apprenticeship Levy, and the finalists in the 2025 Shropshire Telford & Wrekin Apprenticeship Awards

YOU'VE BEEN FRAMED

What can businesses learn from the high profile Coldplay 'Kiss Cam' scandal when it comes to privacy rights of their staff? P6-7

SOMETHING'S COOKING

Carl Jones meets a well-travelled entrepreneur who is cooking up a tasty new business venture in the county. P22-23

ENTREPRENEURIAL OPERATING SYSTEM

The quest to persuade Shropshire bosses that this is the perfect time for them to embrace the business improvement framework. P46-47

SOCIAL SCENE

From summer boat trips to royal encounters and long service awards – four pages of pictures from events around the county. P58-61

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 for a copy of our media pack.



By Carl Jones
Shropshire Business Editor

SHROPSHIRE BUSINESS

Welcome

We live in an era defined by skills shortages, shifting workforce dynamics, and the need for cost-effective diversity and growth.

For a growing number of companies across Shropshire, the answer lies in apprenticeships... the policy of growing your own future leaders.

Apprentices offer businesses something uniquely powerful: a bridge between potential and opportunity. They are not just about training; they are about evolution, and transformation.

From advanced manufacturing to digital media firms, and construction to finance, employers across all corners of our county are rediscovering the value of growing talent from within.

In our special report this issue, we take an in-depth look at how apprenticeships are allowing businesses to shape the skills they need, instil company culture early on, and foster loyalty in a way that traditional recruitment often struggles to achieve.

If your idea of an apprentice is rooted in the 1980s or 90s, look again, because apprenticeships have been reimagined for the 21st century. We've been speaking with bosses who are now routinely embedding them into their long-term strategy, and educators who are evolving delivery models to meet modern needs.

And if you're in any doubt about the calibre of apprentices who are already 'earning and learning' around our county, take a look at the fantastic finalists in the 2025 Shropshire Telford & Wrekin Apprenticeship Awards – a competition which is celebrating not just star apprentices, but employers too. Got your tickets for the October 2 celebrations yet? See stwa.co.uk for all the details.

Apprenticeships are not just for school leavers or manual trades these days. They go

all the way up to degree level, making them a tool for upskilling existing staff, diversifying leadership pipelines, and future-proofing organisations against disruption.

We're so often hearing how business leaders must look beyond short-term fixes and invest in sustainable talent strategies. Are apprentices an untapped resource for your company?

Elsewhere, it's fantastic to see new beginnings of very different kinds across Shropshire – from entrepreneurs relocating to our county, to new commercial property developments at high profile locations like the iconic Sentinel Works, and new Stadium Point sites in Shrewsbury.

That's one of a series of the important and topical issues tackled by our expert columnists in this issue, including:

- How to hit back against poor customer service
- How to get the most out of your promotional videos
- Why SMEs need access to lucrative defence contracts
- How businesses can win big with AI funding grants
- Why the rural support message has fallen on deaf ears

And are the days of hybrid working really numbered? New research reveals a growing number of businesses are expecting their staff to spend more time in the office.

We take a look at why the flexible working model which grew in popularity following the pandemic is being eroded, with nearly half of businesses expecting all working days to be 'in person' over the next 12 months.

Have you changed your policies on how much time your staff are required to be in the workplace? If so, how have they responded? We'd love to hear your views on that – or indeed on any other burning issue that you'd like to share with the Shropshire business community.

Visit: www.shropshirebiz.com @shropsbiz

facebook.com/shropsbiz

Shropshire Business Magazine

You've been framed

What can Shropshire businesses learn from the Coldplay 'kiss cam' incident when it comes to risk, reputation and preparedness? ADAM PRINGLE and CARL JONES report.

In an era when businesses are increasingly expected to take moral stances, a seemingly innocuous concert gimmick like Coldplay's infamous 'kiss cam' has evolved into a cautionary tale of how even the best-intentioned moments can morph into a reputational crisis.

A camera designed to innocently spotlight couples in the crowd took a dramatic turn when it cut to a pair of attendees, whose visibly uncomfortable response and subsequent online post alleging that they were not a couple went viral.

Within hours, social media platforms were awash with criticism over consent, performative intimacy, and public exposure without warning. The backlash snowballed into a public relations debacle. Fans demanded accountability, advocacy groups weighed in, and crisis headlines followed.

The CEO was suspended and the HR manager placed under internal review within 24 hours of the incident, and both subsequently resigned.

While the controversy may fade, the implications for brands and businesses will not – because the incident is cited as a textbook case of how reputation, risk, and readiness intersect in this hyper-connected age.

What works in one cultural context can be jarring in another – especially when the dynamics of consent, identity, and privacy are in flux.

For Shropshire businesses, this underscores a crucial point: 'wholesome' is not synonymous with 'risk-free'. In fact, it is precisely those on-brand moments – assumed to be safe – that often go unvetted by risk teams.

From promotional campaigns to live activations, experts say every public-facing touchpoint should be assessed not only for operational logistics but for cultural sensitivity and unintended consequences.

Ishbel Lapper, of Telford-based HR Solutions Shropshire, says the kiss cam scandal left HR professionals everywhere shaking their heads in exhausted familiarity.

"When the people responsible for enforcing the rules become the headline, it raises serious concerns about leadership accountability and blurred boundaries. But let's also remember they are human. Everyone makes mistakes, even those at the top.

"While the situation highlights important issues around power dynamics, perception, and accountability, it also serves as a reminder that leadership isn't about being perfect, it's about how you respond when things go wrong.

"In HR, optics are everything, and when senior leaders make choices that undermine professional credibility, they make it harder for the rest of us to enforce the very culture they've compromised.

"In HR, we constantly walk the line between holding people to



The now infamous 'kiss cam'



Ishbel Lapper

account and recognising their humanity. This is one of those moments where both matter equally. The consequences must be understood, but empathy shouldn't be forgotten.

"Without proper policies it is impossible for employees to know what is and is not acceptable and extremely difficult for the employer to properly protect their staff."

John Merry, senior partner and head of employment at Shropshire law firm Lanyon Bowdler, says: "Beyond the scandal factor of the affair and the personal impact on the two individuals and their families, the incident brings to attention wider considerations for employers relating to personal relationships in the workplace.

"Of course, many people meet their partners in the workplace, and while there are no general legal rules preventing or governing relationships at work, such relationships can give rise to various practical and legal considerations for employers.

"While the mere existence of a relationship is unlikely to be a justifiable reason to discipline an employee, having an appropriate policy setting out expected standards of behaviour and providing a framework for managers when dealing with such situations will hopefully avoid personal relationships impacting negatively on a business – and in the event that this nevertheless occurs, it will provide a basis for taking appropriate steps, which might include disciplinary action.

"The Human Rights Act 1998 enshrines in domestic law the right to respect for private and family life under the European Convention on Human Rights.

"Consequently, an outright ban on romantic involvement is unlikely to be proportionate (other than in very limited circumstances, such as for operational roles in the military).

"However, an approach based around staff disclosing workplace relationships where this might give rise to conflicts of interest – such as where the parties are in the same reporting line or in manager/subordinate roles – so that an employer can take pre-emptive steps to avoid such conflicts, will be permissible.



John Merry



Ben Mason

"The expectations of employees around the level of privacy to be afforded in connection with their personal relationships should also be respected to the extent reasonably possible."

The Coldplay episode reveals how quickly narrative control can be lost in a digital environment. The timeline was swift: incident at 9pm, viral TikTok by midnight, full-blown media coverage by sunrise.

In today's attention economy, reputational damage no longer follows a linear arc. There is no grace period.

Brands must be equipped to respond within hours – not days. That means pre-approved contingency language, a mobile-ready crisis team, and above all, a clear governance structure to authorise and disseminate responses.

Consent culture is now a business imperative.

What many brands still treat as a personal, social, or legal issue is now a reputational flashpoint.

Public interactions – whether in-store, online, or on stage – must respect the audience's agency. The assumption that participation equals consent is outdated.

For businesses, this means rethinking everything from marketing activations to user-generated content strategies. Is that Instagram re-share truly consensual? Is the audience prepared for surprise engagement? It also means investing in ethical risk training and scenario planning that accounts for emotional and social sensitivities, not just physical safety.

Too often, crisis planning is seen as a domain for high risk industries. But Coldplay's scandal shows how any brand can find itself embroiled in controversy. Entertainment, hospitality, tech, retail: no sector is immune.

Ben Mason, employment partner at Shrewsbury law firm Aaron & Partners, says: "While there is no specific employment law against workplace relationships, they can, if not carefully managed, expose employers to reputational risk and employment disputes.

"Concentrating on the potential for employment disputes, the key risk is the potential for harassment and discrimination claims including unwanted conduct constituting harassment related to sex.

"Without a clear policy on workplace relationships, the employer leaves itself open to the risk of litigation, as a result of ambiguity on what is and what is not acceptable in the workplace.

"As in this case, where trust and confidentiality are paramount to an individual's role, such as HR, their position can quickly become untenable when other colleagues lose trust and confidence in them, solely as a result of the workplace relationship.

"Employers should make all staff aware that their conduct, whether in the workplace or outside of the workplace, can bring the employer into disrepute, and should this be the case this could amount to gross misconduct and summary dismissal."

What matters is having an operational framework. This includes a real-time listening function (social media monitoring), cross-functional alignment (legal, comms, HR, marketing), and clear escalation protocols.

Every single business in Shropshire, whatever the size or sector, should treat reputation as an asset class, as valuable – and vulnerable – as intellectual property or supply chain integrity.

Today's stakeholders, especially Gen Z and younger Millennials, expect brands to anticipate harm, not just apologise after the fact. A truly proactive organisation engages with cultural feedback loops, embeds inclusivity into experience design, and treats brand safety not as a defensive tactic, but as a core principle.

So what's the takeaway from all of this? The Coldplay kiss cam scandal is a stark reminder that brand experiences, however joyful their intent, must be interrogated through a risk and ethics lens.

Reputation, once managed through media statements and advertising campaigns, now depends on a company's ability to navigate complexity with humility, speed, and foresight.

In the end, it's not about eliminating risk, it's about being prepared in the event that the spotlight turns, unexpectedly, on you.



- 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



Mini Skips to 40yd Maxi roll-on, roll-off Skips

All Skip Sizes

TG AGGREGATES



Choose from our extensive range of building and decorative aggregates

TG ELECTRICAL SERVICES



Domestic, Commercial & Agricultural Contractors

TG Group
Established 1874

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

New beginnings for a famous industrial site

One of the highest profile business sites in Shrewsbury is set for a new chapter.

The Sentinel Works – a precision engineering centre on Whitchurch Road since 1915 – ended production on April 30 last year when tenants Radius Aerospace UK Ltd closed its Shrewsbury operation.

The works originally made steam-powered Sentinel lorries before evolving to railway locomotives and later diesel-engined lorries, buses and locomotives. Rolls Royce took over the business in 1956 and made diesel engines in Shrewsbury until 1983.

Subsequent owners of the business were Perkins Engines, Vickers, Doncasters and Radius.

Now, more than 32,000 sq ft of warehouse and office space on the newly-rebranded Sentinel Trade Park has been let to Shrewsbury and Telford Hospital NHS Trust.

The letting has been secured by Shrewsbury-based agents Halls Commercial on behalf of Paterson Enterprises, parent company of Morris Lubricants and Morris Leisure, which owns the 8.5-acre park.

Multi-million pound investment by Paterson Enterprises has rejuvenated the famous former Sentinel precision engineering works into a multi-use trade park.



The site has been repurposed into a multi-use trade park



The famous Sentinel Works

Shrewsbury and Telford Hospital NHS Trust is leasing warehouse space for the storage of archives, and taking nearly 12,000 sq ft of offices.

Other parts of the park have been leased to Enterprise car rental, Lakeside Coaches, and Morris Lubricants which relocated its distribution function away from the company's Castle Foregate manufacturing facility as part of a £1.5 million investment.

Edward Goddard, a director of Paterson Enterprises, said: "We are delighted that the NHS is leasing space at Sentinel Trade Park as we bring this important site back to life for the benefit of Shrewsbury, in partnership with Halls Commercial."

James Evans, head of Halls Commercial, said: "This is a significant letting to the public sector of warehouse and office space on the repurposed site which is great news for the local economy in terms of jobs and investment."

"It has been a pleasure to work with Paterson Enterprises to find tenants for the former Sentinel Works, which has played such an important role in Shrewsbury's engineering heritage and it will continue to serve the town for many years to come, albeit in a different way."

Edward said at the time that while the closure of Radius Aerospace in Shrewsbury was sad news and the end of an era, it was also the beginning of "an exciting new chapter" for the Sentinel Works.

Excitement for investment at health and wellness club

David Lloyd Clubs has begun an £11 million investment at its club in Shrewsbury to create what it describes as 'a complete destination for health and wellness'.

The former Shrewsbury Club, at Sundorne, was taken over by the chain in August last year, and the new investment programme is planned to be complete by Spring 2026.

The centrepiece will be a 100-plus station gym, plus bespoke group exercise studios which will host more than 100 classes each week.

Other facilities to be refurbished include new, heated indoor and outdoor swimming pools, premium cushioned acrylic indoor tennis courts, and brand new padel courts.

The investment will include an indoor and outdoor spa retreat including a Himalayan salt sauna, rainforest experience shower, citrus steam room, ice cave, plunge pool, and a hydrotherapy pool.

And this will be accompanied by a spa garden, complete with a hydropool, plunge pool, sauna and loungers, and a business lounge designed to be 'the perfect alternative to working from home'.

Alvin Ward, general manager of David Lloyd



An artist's impression of how the new club will look after the £11 million investment

Shrewsbury, said: "We are thrilled to announce that work is officially under way at our club, and we're excited to see the development in progress."

"The club will be completely transformed, unrecognisable from what it is today, and will offer our members a fantastic new health and wellness facility for people of all ages."

Dave Courteen, co-founder and managing director of Mosaic Spa and Health Clubs, bought the site from administration 14 years ago.

He said at the time of the sale that David Lloyd Clubs were exceptionally keen to add The Shrewsbury Club to their portfolio and made some statements that they were keen to grow their business.

"We had turned them down a few times but it got to a point where, with what they were offering, it didn't make any sense for us to stay on. This was coupled with the fact that they were going to be investing so much into the club."

WREKIN PREP

WREKIN SENIOR

WREKIN SIXTH

See **Wrekin Prep**, **Wrekin Senior** and **Wrekin Sixth** at the

WREKIN COLLEGE

OPEN MORNING

Saturday 4th October

Discover **The Wrekin Way**, enabling every child to thrive. Enjoy a tour of our school, hear from staff and pupils, and ask any questions you may have about the admissions process.

Book your place:

admissions@wrekincollege.com • 01952 265603

www.wrekincollege.com

Independent school 4-18

Wellington, Shropshire | Registered Charity No. 528417

8

sales@global-freight.co.uk

+44 (0)1952 270 699

www.global-freight.co.uk

GLOBAL FREIGHT

In 1956 Malcolm Maclean invented and patented the first standard shipping container. In 1996 Global Freight Services started using this method of shipping for the first time. Today, we ship to over 112 countries worldwide and with the help of Road, Air, Sea and Rail, we can not only help you take your product local, but we can also help you take it GLOBAL.

Logistics Upside Down

Call Us

9

Unlocking AI funding:

How Shropshire businesses can win big with grants



Hollie Whittles

Let's set start by acknowledging that Artificial Intelligence (AI) is here and it isn't just for multi-national tech giants.

Across Shropshire, from boutique farms to local retailers and professional services, small businesses can tap into transformative AI, especially when backed by Government grants. But with multiple schemes, eligibility layers, and application deadlines to juggle, it can feel overwhelming. One thing Purple Frog is seeing more of is being asked to step in and help businesses to simplify, strategise, and accelerate AI adoption through grants like TechLocal, the AI Skills Partnership, and Innovate UK's Sovereign AI Proof of Concept competition.

Spotlight on key UK-wide AI grant opportunities

1. Innovate UK – Sovereign AI proof of concept

- **WHAT IT OFFERS:** £1.6 million in total shared funding to UK-registered businesses for developing AI proof-of-concept demonstrators with state-of-the-art performance, aligned with the UK's AI sovereignty goals.
- **TIMELINE:** Opens August 11 2025 and closes September 10 2025.
- **SCOPE:** one to three month project duration, £50K–£120K total costs:
 - Proof of concept of AI architectures or subsystem components
 - Technical validation of systems
 - Frontier AI performance
 - Scalable business models and approaches to data and compute infrastructure
 - Aligned to themes such as fundamental AI, materials discovery, healthcare, defence, and AI-aided design.



Tracy Pound of Maximity and Estelle Johannes from GTIA with Hollie Whittles in Nashville

2. TechLocal – Seed funding for regional innovators

- **WHAT IT OFFERS:** A regional level Innovate UK programme, providing seed funding for SMEs to spark AI adoption and technology development. Applications are evaluated by panels made up of local tech businesses before central review.
- **TIMELINE:** An emerging opportunity so early engagement is key for Shropshire businesses ready to innovate and learn how to qualify.

3. AI skills partnership and upskilling funds

- **WHAT IT OFFERS:** Match-funding for AI training costs for SMEs in professional and business services. For instance, the Flexible AI Upskilling Fund pilot allocated £6.4 million in support in 2024 (50% match funding).
- **TIMELINE:** Upskilling remains critical for AI readiness and future grants may emerge, Purple Frog can prepare firms now to be grant-ready.

Why AI matters for Shropshire businesses

Many local businesses may want to explore AI, but lack clarity about where to start or how to apply for grants. We simplify this by selecting suitable funding routes, guiding applications, ensuring alignment with eligibility and strategy, and boosting the odds of success.

1. Opportunity Identification

Monitor live and upcoming schemes like Sovereign AI and TechLocal and fit them to client objectives and readiness levels.

2. Eligibility & Fit Assessment

Evaluate client readiness (e.g., project scope, match funds, sector fit, capability to scale).

3. Application Support

Refine grant narratives, articulate proof-of-concept plans, and demonstrate strategic alignment with grant goals.

4. Readiness & Upskilling

Conduct AI readiness audits, recommend staff training (even where match funds are limited), and build foundational capability.

5. End-to-End Guidance

Beyond application, provide post-award support: project planning, compliance management, performance metrics, and potential scale-up.

Ready to get started with AI?

AI isn't exclusive, it's accessible, fundable, and scalable. And with help from consultancies like Purple Frog, navigating grants and getting ahead of the competition can become not only manageable, but strategically empowering. As Andrew Ng, one of the world's leading AI pioneers, famously said: "Artificial intelligence is the new electricity." Just as electricity transformed industries a century ago, AI is set to reshape how our vibrant Shropshire business community innovates and grows. Having just returned from the GTIA global technology conference in Nashville, the one thing that everyone was discussing was how they were leveraging AI. The question is: are you ready to power up your future?

SHROPSHIRE BUSINESS SUITE

Shropshire's new meeting space and podcast facility

SHREWSBURY



20 High Street
Shrewsbury
SY1 1SJ
01743 623263

www.shropshirebusinesssuite.co.uk



Hollie Whittles is a director of Purple Frog Systems in Telford

Why apprentices could give your business a strategic advantage

As the countdown begins to the 2025 Shropshire Telford & Wrekin Apprenticeship Awards, we ask: Do apprentices hold the key to driving innovation, filling skills gaps, and building resilient talent pipelines across the Shropshire economy?

In a climate of economic uncertainty and rapid technological change, businesses across Shropshire are looking for cost-effective ways to build skilled, loyal, and future-ready teams.

One solution is hidden in plain sight: apprenticeships. Long seen as an option mainly for trades, apprenticeships are now evolving into a strategic talent pipeline across sectors, from engineering and healthcare to tech, finance, and creative industries.

Yet despite Government incentives and proven return on investment, some employers still hesitate. Misconceptions about cost, quality and productivity persist, even as the evidence piles up that apprenticeships drive innovation and growth.

So it's time to shift the narrative. Apprenticeships are more than a training scheme – they're a business investment. Here's what makes them valuable:

- **Fresh Perspective:** Apprentices bring new thinking, often unburdened by legacy systems or 'the way things have always been done'. This injection of energy can foster innovation and challenge outdated assumptions.
- **Tailored Skills Development:** Unlike graduates who arrive with general qualifications, apprentices are trained in the specific skills your business needs, from day one.
- **Workforce Loyalty:** Many apprentices stay with their employer long after completing their training. According to the National Apprenticeship Service, 90% of apprentices stay in employment after completion.
- **Cost-Effective Growth:** With Government funding available for many programmes and lower initial wage costs, apprenticeships offer high value with relatively low investment.

Apprenticeships aren't just for plumbers and electricians anymore. Here in Shropshire, there are apprenticeship training schemes covering more than 20 professions, supported by our colleges and specialist training providers.

When it comes to engineering, on-the-job experience is critical for mastering complex systems. Apprentices provide continuity and future-proofing for ageing workforces.

In healthcare, nursing associates, care workers, and lab technicians are increasingly trained via apprenticeships to meet staffing gaps.



Kira Lacey of Dodd Group receiving her award from Mark Davies, regional managing director

And with skills shortages in cyber security, coding, and data analysis, tech apprenticeships offer a practical solution to build home-grown talent.

Digital, media production and marketing apprentices are helping local creative agencies to meet real-world project needs with fresh talent, and apprenticeship programmes now also cover financial and legal services such as auditing, compliance and paralegal training – offering routes to careers which were once graduate-only opportunities.

Some of Shropshire's biggest employers now view apprenticeships as essential.

Victoria Lawson, director of construction firm Pave Aways at Knockin, was among the sponsors who helped to shortlist the finalists in this year's Shropshire Telford & Wrekin Apprenticeship Awards.

"Apprenticeships are an important part of our culture at Pave Aways. Many of our team began their careers with us as apprentices or trainees and have since taken on senior roles – myself included," she said.

"We believe that the future of construction in the region relies on passing on practical skills to the next generation, ensuring that our industry continues to thrive."

Dodd Group of Telford – a former Shropshire company of the Year – employs around 175 apprentices and trainees, and crowned Kira Lacey, 27, from Telford as Apprentice of the Year for its major projects division.

John Kavanagh, the company's managing director, said: "The national skills shortage is well-documented but we believe that by encouraging such pro-active people as Kira into the industry we can protect our business."

Sara Davies, founder of Crafter's Companion and star of TV's Dragons' Den, says: "We treat apprentices as future leaders. They're not just trainees – they're a vital part of our long-term growth."

And research backs this up. The CBI reports that businesses using apprenticeships see enhanced productivity, stronger succession planning, and better staff retention.

Apprenticeships aren't just a socially responsible choice – they're a smart one. They build teams that are skilled, adaptable, and loyal. For UK businesses ready to future-proof their workforce, embracing apprenticeships is not a question of if, but when.

Whitchurch-based Landia – a pump and mixing manufacturer – has welcomed Government moves to invest in tens of

thousands of new apprenticeships and training opportunities.

At a time when around one million 16-to-24-year-olds are neither working, nor in full-time education or training, the company believes that its consistent success in developing highly-tailored opportunities creates huge benefits for a business and those young people keen to carve out a career.

Service and aftersales manager Tamas Rieder said: "To reap the rewards of seeing homegrown apprentices mature into skilled employees, companies must now take full responsibility and realise that your workforce is only going to be as good as you train them to be.

"Arm your apprentices with the proper tools to do the job, encourage them, give them time and proper hands-on experience.

"There's no doubt that this is a long process, but it is very rewarding and totally worth all the effort. It is a big win-win; young new engineers who already have first class skills and the right attitude towards serving our customers."

The company currently has five fully-qualified apprentices – three of whom have been there for over a decade.

Tamas added: "Gone are the days when smaller firms would just cash in for free on a flood of new apprentices that came out of the big businesses hungry for work. Those big industry names simply aren't there anymore.

"Anything the Government can do, as they say, 'to back the next generation by giving young people more opportunities to learn a trade, earn a wage and achieve and thrive' should be welcomed.

"Successive Governments decided that it was far cheaper to import skills than help train our own children, so no wonder we have so many unskilled, unmotivated young people in the UK because nobody has trained them. It is high time to put this right."



Tamas Rieder (left) from Landia with apprentice Will Lewis

BUSTING SOME MYTHS

Many businesses still hold outdated views on apprenticeships.

- | | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Myth: Apprenticeships are only for school leavers.● Reality: Apprenticeships are now available up to master's-level equivalents and are open to all ages. They're used for upskilling current staff and attracting career changers. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Myth: Apprenticeships are hard to manage or administer.● Reality: Training providers handle most of the administration. Employers focus on mentoring and integrating apprentices into their teams. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Myth: Apprentices are less productive and require hand-holding.● Reality: Most apprentices start contributing meaningfully within weeks. Structured programmes build autonomy while aligning with business goals. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Myth: It's not worth it unless you're a large company.● Reality: SMEs benefit hugely. Many cite increased morale, fresh energy, and customised skills development as key outcomes. |



PAVEAWAYS
Building Contractors
Building our future, together

The foundations of a strong business are built on its people. That's why we offer young people and career changers the skills, mentoring, and opportunities they need to thrive in their careers.

Our commitment has been recognised with the Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin Apprenticeship Award for **Medium Employer of the Year in 2024** and we're very proud to be shortlisted again this year!

INVESTORS IN PEOPLE
We invest in people Standard

paveaways.co.uk

Grace's new role

Shropshire Chamber of Commerce has welcomed a new events and training apprentice to the team.

Grace Bywater, from Shrewsbury, has just graduated from Cardiff University with a degree in English literature, journalism and media.

She said: "I am now looking to build a career where I can work closely with people, help organise events, and possibly get involved in marketing."

"I enjoy being part of a team, coming up with creative ideas, and making sure things run smoothly. I am especially interested in roles that let me connect with others and create memorable experiences."

She said her time at university had taught her the importance of organisation and planning, while also developing her communication skills.

"My role at the Chamber involves supporting the delivery of events and training. My responsibilities include liaising with trainers, securing venues and reaching out to members to ensure a welcoming and positive experience."

Grace worked part time for a catering company alongside her university studies, gaining experience across a variety of corporate and private events.



Grace Bywater

Firm career foundation

SJ Roberts Construction, based on the west Shropshire border, has earned national recognition for its commitment to developing future talent.

The company, which has its headquarters at Marton, has been ranked 13th on the UK Government's 2025 list of the Top 50 SME Apprenticeship Employers. It is the highest-ranking SME across both Shropshire and the West Midlands.

The annual ranking celebrates small and medium-sized enterprises that have shown exceptional dedication to apprenticeships, providing valuable training and career opportunities across the country.

Larger companies, including BAE Systems, Amazon and John Lewis, were also ranked on a separate league table.

Mike Sambrook, managing director at SJ Roberts Construction, said: "Being recognised by the UK Government for our investment

in the next generation of construction professionals is a fantastic honour. We've long valued the contribution that apprentices make to our business and increase our investment in them each year."



The 2024 intake of apprentices at SJ Roberts Construction

Maddison takes up an exciting position

Shropshire Creative – the content creation agency – has taken on a new digital marketing apprentice.

Maddison Bailey will be completing a level 3 multi-channel marketer apprenticeship at Telford College.

It marks what the company describes as a key step in Shropshire Creative's commitment to developing local talent and building a sustainable future in digital content creation.

The appointment is part of a year of growth as the company approaches its 10th anniversary in 2026.

"Taking on our first employee is a huge moment for us," said Ben Coates, co-director of Shropshire Creative.

"I started the business from the ground up, and it's grown into something we're really proud of. This next step feels like the start of an exciting new chapter."

"We're so excited to welcome Maddison to the team," added Vicky Coates, co-director of Shropshire Creative.

"Supporting young talent and opening doors into the creative industry is something I'm passionate about, and we're thrilled to be working with Telford College to help make that happen."

Shropshire Creative has seen consistent



New apprentice Maddison Bailey

growth across its video and digital production projects, working with a wide range of clients across automotive, events, and lifestyle sectors.

It comes as Moogies Management Ltd, the company behind Shropshire Creative and the automotive media brand Garage Talk, is relocating to new office space at The Quad in Telford Town Centre.

It describes the move as a 'milestone moment' for the business, giving it the space, profile, and environment needed to continue its upward trajectory.

Revamped levy

The apprenticeship levy has been revamped in a bid to provide greater flexibility for employers and learners.

Changes include new foundation apprenticeships, shorter minimum apprenticeship durations, and more flexible English and maths rules for older apprentices. The levy can also now be used for short courses to address specific skills gaps.

Key Changes to the apprenticeship levy include:

- Growth and Skills Levy: Replaced the old levy, offering more flexibility in how levy funds can be spent.
- Foundation Apprenticeships: Specifically designed to help young people start their careers and meet employer needs.
- Shorter Apprenticeships: The minimum duration for apprenticeships reduced from 12 to 8 months, aligning with industry requirements.
- Flexible English and Maths: For apprentices aged 19 and over, requirements will be more flexible, with qualifications not always mandatory.
- Short Courses: To help employers quickly address specific skills shortages.
- Increased Flexibility: Assessments will focus more on the specific skills being tested, rather than being tied to rigid qualification structures.
- Transfer Allowance Increase: The maximum percentage of unused levy funds that can be transferred to other employers has increased from 25% to 50%.

Advertisement Feature

From apprentice to boardroom: real world success at iconsys



At iconsys, we're proud to be named a finalist in the Shropshire Telford & Wrekin Apprenticeship Awards 2025 in both the engineering and medium-sized apprenticeship employer category, which is recognition of our continued investment in shaping the next generation of engineers.

As a leading UK systems integrator based in Telford, we deliver advanced power, control and automation solutions to some of the most demanding industrial sectors. For us, apprenticeships are not just a recruitment route; they are a strategic pillar in building a future ready workforce.

We have long championed apprenticeships as a key pathway for young people to enter the engineering sector. We are developing our own iconsys Academy, specifically designed to provide hands-on experience, blending practical education with on-the-job training.

Unlike the traditional university route, which often involves years of study before entering the workforce, apprenticeships offer an 'earn-as-you-learn' model. This approach not only provides financial stability for learners but also equips them with industry relevant skills from day one. Given the rapidly evolving landscape

of automation and control systems, this practical experience is invaluable.

We are proud to be part of this movement, investing in people, fostering innovation, and shaping the engineers of tomorrow. By championing apprenticeships, changing perceptions and working collaboratively with the wider industry, we can ensure the UK remains a global leader in engineering and automation.

The next generation of engineers is out there. It's our job to inspire, support, and empower them to take the leap into a future where they can make a real impact. And as a leading automation solutions provider, we are keen to enable the next generation to forge their own paths.

We are committed to doing our part. Through our apprenticeship programmes and STEM initiatives, we are nurturing the next generation of engineers, equipping them with the skills needed to thrive in a rapidly evolving technological landscape.

We're proud of our strong relationships with our apprenticeship training partners, Telford College and Shrewsbury Colleges Group. Their ongoing support is invaluable in helping us shape the engineers of the future and guiding learners along their development journey.

Take our board members, for example — 50% began their careers as engineering apprentices. Our founding member, Trevor Darrall, launched his engineering journey as an apprentice at Telford College.



Apprentices make a difference.



SBC Training have provided apprenticeship recruitment and training services for well over 40 years. If you would like to find out how apprentices can help your business to grow please contact our Business Development Team for a free consultation. #apprenticeshipswork

SBC Training provides apprenticeship training for the following sectors:

- Accountancy
- Business Administration & Customer Service
- Construction
- Digital and IT
- Engineering & Manufacturing
- Fire & Emergency Security Systems
- Health & Social Care
- Marketing
- Management & Team Leadership
- Warehousing & Storage Systems

Proud to sponsor the STWAA Business, Legal & Finance apprenticeship award

Phone 01743 454810 or 01691 898706 Email info@sbc-training.co.uk



The 2025 shortlisting panel

Awards night celebrates those who learn and earn

A stellar line-up of finalists has been revealed for the 2025 Shropshire Telford & Wrekin Apprenticeship Awards.

The event celebrates the brightest apprentices in the area, as well as recognising employers for their support of apprenticeship programmes.

Housing Plus Group and Ricoh UK Products – both from Telford – and SJ Roberts Construction from Marton are shortlisted in the large employer category.

The medium sized employer finalists are Pave Aways from Knockin, Shingler Group of Myddle, and iconsys from Telford.

In the small employer category, the three finalists are CQS Solutions and Purple Frog Systems, both from Telford, and Start Tech from Shrewsbury.

Finalists in the individual categories come from all corners of the county. Categories include construction and civil engineering, health & social care, engineering & manufacturing, IT & digital industries, early years and education, creative & media, and business legal & finance.

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

Tickets are now on sale for the awards night, which includes a drinks reception, three-course meal and entertainment. It will be held at the Mercure Telford Centre Hotel on the evening of



Last year's winning apprentices and employers

October 2. For all the details, see stwaa.co.uk

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

Other category sponsors include In-Comm Training Services, J&PR, Keele University, McPhillips, Pave Aways, Purple Frog Systems, SBC Training, Shrewsbury Colleges Group, ANTA Education, and WR Partners.

The media partner for the event is Shropshire Business Live TV, which will be filming and streaming the awards presentations.

Shropshire Business magazine editor

Carl Jones, who is compering the event, said: "The quality and volume of entries once again surpassed all expectations, and the judges faced a very difficult task narrowing down each category to three finalists – let alone choosing their winners.

"We're delighted with the response to the awards in this second year, and are now really looking forward to another fantastic awards evening.

"It's going to be a fabulous celebration of the brightest and best apprentices in the county, as well as 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 sponsored by In-Comm Tom Farquharson Iconsys/Shrewsbury Colleges Group Ryan Millington Royal Shrewsbury Hospital/Telford College Agata Serafin Elite Precast Concrete/Telford College	IT AND DIGITAL INDUSTRIES, sponsored by Purple Frog Systems Freddie Foster Connexis/Telford College Josh Howse Learning Community Trust/Telford College Kieron Walker Start Tech/Intequal	HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE sponsored by Keele University Aaron Capener Coverage Care/SBC Training Keeley Martin Coverage Care/SBC Training Christina Snellgrove Coverage Care/SBC Training
CONSTRUCTION AND CIVIL ENGINEERING sponsored by Pave Aways Kyle Blower LG Blower Bricklayers/Shrewsbury Colleges Group Honor Davies SJ Roberts/University of Wolverhampton Tom Potts Morris Property/Shrewsbury Colleges Group	BUSINESS, LEGAL AND FINANCE sponsored by SBC Training Maddie Armstrong Howden Insurance/SBC Training Summer Craven Dodd Group/Telford College Jess Slater Reconomy UK/Shrewsbury Colleges Group	CREATIVE AND MEDIA sponsored by J&PR Phoebe Clear Schneider Electric/Aston University Charlie-Mae Grimston Purple Frog Systems/Telford College Ellie Hendley Telford College/Telford College
EARLY YEARS AND EDUCATION sponsored by WR Partners Joseph Archer Belvidere School/Telford College Kylie Bowditch Southall School/Telford College Tom Miles Castle House School/Telford College	SMALL EMPLOYER, sponsored by McPhillips CQS Solutions Telford Purple Frog Systems Telford Start Tech Shrewsbury	
MEDIUM EMPLOYER sponsored by ANTA Education Iconsys Telford Pave Aways Knockin Shingler Group Myddle	LARGE EMPLOYER sponsored by Shrewsbury Colleges Group Housing Plus Group Telford Ricoch UK Telford SJ Roberts Marton	

BOOK YOUR TICKETS FOR THE AWARDS NIGHT:

Tickets are now on sale for the awards night, which includes a drinks reception, three-course meal and entertainment. It will be held at the Mercure Telford Centre Hotel on the evening of October 2. For all the details, see stwaa.co.uk

Headline sponsor

TEL FORD COLLEGE

In association with

The Marches CAREERS HUB

CAREERS & ENTERPRISE COMPANY

MANUFACTURING & ENGINEERING sponsored by

IN-COMM TRAINING SERVICES

IT AND DIGITAL INDUSTRIES sponsored by

purplefrog

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE sponsored by

Keele UNIVERSITY

CONSTRUCTION & CIVIL ENGINEERING sponsored by

PAYEAWAYS Building Contractors

BUSINESS, LEGAL & FINANCE sponsored by

sbct training

CREATIVE & MEDIA sponsored by

j&pr

EARLY YEARS & EDUCATION sponsored by

WR Partners Accountants, Tax & Business Advisors

SMALL EMPLOYER sponsored by

McPHILLIPS

MEDIUM EMPLOYER sponsored by

ANTA EDUCATION

LARGE EMPLOYER sponsored by

SHREWSBURY COLLEGES GROUP

BOOK OF THE NIGHT sponsored by

STARTTECH CERTIFIED IT & CYBER EXPERTS

EVENT MEDIA sponsored by

SBLTV

There's attractive financial incentives for employers

Imagine being the reason someone's life changes for the better...

That's what Telford College is doing every day, by helping employers to either take on apprentices or upskill and develop existing staff. The college is currently offering more than 20 different apprenticeship pathways across a broad range of sectors including business and finance, automotive, construction, computing, engineering, early years & education, and health & social care.

And in many instances, there are some very attractive financial incentives for employers prepared to take on new apprentices.

Chris Field, employer relationship manager at Telford College, said: "Behind every apprenticeship is a story – a young person gaining confidence, a career switcher discovering their potential, and a business finding the perfect fit for their team."

"This summer, we've been buzzing with activity; there are so many candidates looking to find apprenticeships and we want to match them with meaningful opportunities that can transform their lives and strengthen businesses."

There are some significant financial incentives on offer at the moment to employers in the construction industry.

For every property maintenance, bricklaying



The construction and groundworks training area at Telford College

or groundworks apprentice employed by a construction business up to £8,500 can be claimed in financial support over the two years of the programme thanks to a funding scheme backed by the Construction Industry Training Board (CITB).

And best of all, the expert teams at the college and training board will lead employers through all the paperwork... which means it's a time-efficient and straightforward process.

Chris added: "We have a large pool of candidates with great potential – and we want to match them up with employers in Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin."

"We can recommend the right candidates from our talent pool and arrange the interviews, leaving you to simply select the candidates you feel would be the best fit for your business."

"Why employ an apprentice? Because they can bring fresh energy into your team, and address skills gaps in your workforce in a cost-effective way, saving on recruitment costs."

"We're here to make it happen – simply, smoothly, and with full support, including funding and compliance. All it takes is a quick chat with our team to explore what's possible."

• Want to know more? Call the Telford College apprenticeships team on 01952 642452.

TELFORD COLLEGE

Create a pipeline of talent for your business.

Recruit an apprentice or upskill & develop staff.

Telford College offer a one-stop shop to support every step of the way.

01952 642452
apprentices@telfordcollege.ac.uk



SHROPSHIRE TELFORD & WREKIN APPRENTICESHIP AWARDS 2025

Gala Awards Dinner Tickets Now On Sale

Where: Mercure Telford Centre Hotel

When: Thursday October 2nd

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 £60 plus VAT, or £550 plus VAT for a table of 10.

Price includes a pre-dinner drinks reception, three-course meal, awards ceremony and post-awards disco.

★ **BOOK NOW**
STWAA.CO.UK



Supported by:

stwaa.co.uk



College renames and has a rebrand in fresh new look

Over the summer, Shrewsbury Colleges Group has changed its name to Shrewsbury College. As part of this change, we have undertaken a comprehensive rebranding project, which came into effect at the start of September.

Why have we changed?

This name change reflects our commitment to evolving, embracing new opportunities, and better representing the regional community we serve.

Our current name has served us well, but as we continue to grow and adapt to the evolving educational landscape, we believe our new, simpler identity will more accurately reflect our mission, values, and aspirations.

The college's new name will more accurately represent its structure and standing in the regional community.

What does this mean for students and the wider community?

While our name and visual identity will change, our dedication to our students, staff, and the wider public remains unchanged.

There will be no disruption to our students' studies or any existing partnerships.

We began to roll out the new brand in August, featuring updated signage, digital channels, and marketing materials.

Shrewsbury College was formed following the merger of Shrewsbury Sixth Form College and Shrewsbury College on 1 August 2016.

The college is the largest sixth form college in the country. It provides post-16 education to approximately 4,200 16 to 18-year-old students and offers adult education, higher education, community learning, and apprenticeship training. In total, the college works with around 9,000 students each year.



Shrewsbury College bucked the regional trend to see an increase in level 3 high grades this year

Ofsted inspected the college between March 4 and 7 2025 with a team of 13 inspectors. The college was graded as 'outstanding' for overall effectiveness, with 'outstanding' grades for quality of education, behaviour and attitudes, personal development, leadership and management, education programmes for young people, adult learning programmes, and provision for learners with high needs, and rated 'good' for apprenticeships.

The West Midlands was one of two regions in the UK to see a drop in A Level entries receiving top grades this year – but Shrewsbury College bucked the trend.

It saw top grades increase from 25.1% to 29.1%. This culture of excellence and improvement was partly why Ofsted judged the college to be outstanding in the inspection earlier this year.

Working in partnership with

 Shrewsbury College

We offer:

A range of apprenticeships technical and professional qualifications from entry level through to higher education short courses to address specific training needs a variety of learning environments including distance learning.

Ring 01743 653100 to find out how we can help your business.

We work in the following sectors:

- Business & Management
- Construction
- Early Years & Education
- Electrical, Plumbing & Gas
- Engineering & Motor Vehicle
- Hair, Beauty & Therapies
- Renewable Energy



Visit apprenticeships@shrewsbury.ac.uk

 Shrewsbury College





Telford winners Lee Chamberlain (VA Technologies), Lee Trevor (Magna Cosma Castings), Abbie Clinton (Collins Aerospace) and Shiv Sharma (Magna Cosma Castings)



RBSL's Carina Smith received the Apprentice Champion Award

Making positive impacts

A Telford-based apprentice has turned around his fledgling career to be named as Most Improved Learner at the In-Comm Training Awards.

Magna Cosma Casting's Lee Trevor recovered from a shaky start to become a person to go to if you need something doing, helping to improve production and generate cost savings for the business.

He was joined on stage by several other winning Shropshire apprentices, including colleague Shiv Sharma (Engineering & Manufacturing Foundation), Collins Aerospace's Abbie Collins (Engineering & Manufacturing Advanced) and RBSL's Carina Smith (Apprentice Champion).

The ceremony also saw Accura Engineering's Ethan Austin named as the Outstanding Learner of the Year.

Bekki Phillips, executive director at In-Comm Training, said: "This is the 14th year of our awards, and the competition has intensified yet again, with young people and mature learners continuing to deliver positive impacts on shopfloors and businesses across the West Midlands.

"We've got apprentices making a massive difference to SMEs, major automotive suppliers, nuclear businesses and even a water safety specialist. It's so important to tell these individual stories and put apprenticeships on the map for future generations to consider."

The In-Comm Training Awards, which was held at the Eastside Rooms in Birmingham, gave over 100 finalists the opportunity to celebrate their achievements in front of their peers, mentors, and employers.

In addition to the young stars, companies were also in the spotlight for the way they continue to invest in the next generation of talent and how they develop the engineers and professionals of the future.

Assa Abloy and VA Technologies won the Large Company and SME Awards respectively, with the Telford-based shellroom systems specialist impressing the judging panel with its holistic approach to vocational learning and ensuring that there is an apprentice in every part of the business.

Gareth Jones, managing director at In-Comm Training, said: "The excitement in the room was palpable and you can really tell there's a positive vibe around apprenticeships and we want to grow this.

"It was the perfect time to promote our 'I'm Included, I'm In-Comm' campaign, which is all about promoting inclusivity and diversity in engineering. The video went down really well on the evening and I'm sure there will be a lot more ambassadors pushing the message out there for us."



STEM Champions Anthony Orlik, Michael Orlik and Steve Tilsley



The event was held at the Eastside Rooms in Birmingham



The supper club is being held monthly

Great expectations

CARL JONES meets a well-travelled entrepreneur who is cooking up a tasty new business venture

The babbling Rea Brook on the outskirts of Shrewsbury is certainly a far cry from the fast-paced world of musical theatre and drama in New York.

But for well-travelled food and drink entrepreneur Linda Miller, it's become her very special taste of home.

She fell in love with Shropshire during a day trip a couple of years ago, and when a plot of land became available in Hanwood, she snapped it up to build her family's dream home.

It's now home to The Great Catering Company, which offers external catering, private dining experiences, and a 'supper club' to gather around a shared table with fellow food lovers.

"We were on our way to Wales for a trip, stopped for a day in Shrewsbury and we just totally fell in love with it, because what's not to love?" Linda explains.

"It's such a beautiful place – the people are lovely, the town is gorgeous, and it's buzzing; there's always something going on.

"And then we saw this amazing piece of land and property and within a week we bid on it at auction and bought it, which was a bit crazy spontaneous."

Although Linda's journey with food began more than 30 years ago, she has taken the opportunity to diversify her previous business since relocating to the county.

"It's slightly different. Before now, I've always just run a catering business, basically just doing outside catering, of cheffing for anyone that needed a birthday party, wedding, anything like that.

"But after building this really rather spectacular house – designed by my husband – which we are so proud of and love so much, and it's such an amazing entertaining space that I've added two new sections to my business.



Linda Miller fell in love with Shropshire

"One is called the Meadowsweet Supper Club after the name of our house, and the other is At Home With The Great Catering Company.

"The supper club is basically a chance for people to come and sit around a communal table in our house and make new friends – you can come on your own, with a friend or in a group, and be fed by me and hosted by me, have drinks on the deck, and a lovely meal,

"The Great Catering Company is also based around being at my house but on this particular occasion, it's about booking it privately for up to 10 people seated around the table or up to 20 buffet.

"We've got a bar with a dartboard and a roulette table – a real man cave – and you will have a professional waiter serving a menu agreed with you."

Since she's cooking as part of her day-to-day business activities, what does Linda do to wind down?

"Actually, I really love cooking. It always calms me, and I love trying new things. But we



In the kitchen in Hanwood

also love going out to eat and the whole local area is fantastic for foodie people."

As far as future planning goes, Linda hopes the supper club (which is currently being held once a month) takes off.

"It's taken me all this time to build the kitchen of my dreams and I absolutely love it, so I absolutely do want to use it."

Although Linda has worked in top-level catering for many years, that was not her original career choice.

"I am a trained singer," she reveals. "I went to drama school in New York, to the American Musical and Dramatic Academy, and I actually remember ringing my mother at some point when I was about 18, asking her how to make roast potatoes! I had no idea how to cook back then.

"Coming back to the UK, it was when I was a 'resting' actress – as you often are in that business – that a friend told me how I could earn some extra money by working for a caterer.

"I went along, spent a few years cooking

and waitressing and working for this lady, and I realised that I had a real palette for it, and enjoyed it.

"I've worked as a waitress, barista, deli server, kitchen assistant, sous chef, assistant restaurant manager, and front-of-house hospitality lead. In every role, I watched, learned, sharpened my skills... and quietly made plans. I've never had a cookery lesson – I'm entirely self-taught."

Linda's other love is music. She originally sang with a trio performing Andrews Sisters-style numbers, before they were picked up by a big band run by conductor Ray McVeigh.

"We did three great big tours of Japan during those four years we were with him, and it was an incredible experience.

"But I was pregnant with my first child and didn't want to be going away for weeks at a time, away from my children, so I decided to sort of put the whole thing on hold.

"That's when I decided to start the cookery business because it was something I could do and still be at home to look after the kids. When they were old enough, though, I started singing again."

Linda is now involved with Sticky Wicket and his Swing Orchestra, which is based in Bishop's Castle.

"I love serving people and making people happy. Food does that and singing hopefully does that too."

She says she has been delighted by the warm welcome that she and her family have received since settling in Shropshire.

"There's no warmth like this when you're down in London. Everyone is eyes down looking at a screen.

"We actually got married here in our garden at Hanwood, just before the old house was



'I really love cooking. It always calms me,' Linda says

knocked down two years ago. And the majority of friends and family all came up from London for the weekend.

"Some of them spent time wandering the streets of Shrewsbury, and they came back here and said: 'People are so friendly – they look at you, talk to you and smile at you'. They weren't used to that. People from London just can't believe the difference."

Linda says she appreciates it will take some



Linda says the Hanwood property has given her chance to create her dream kitchen



Getting to know what food appeals to the folk of Shropshire is an ambition

time for The Great Catering Company to become established and well-known in the county – and she knows that growth will be driven by word-of-mouth recommendation.

"In our business, what people want is to hear what someone else has to say about you.

"For my part, I also need to get to know what the people of Shropshire might want, which might not be exactly what you were used to in other parts of the world."

CSCS Cards
MBO is officially approved to deliver CITB Health, Safety & Environment tests, which are essential for obtaining a CSCS card.

Bespoke Packages
MBO provides special bundles that include expert advice, and discounts—making certification more affordable.

CITB Test Centre
You can train and test at the same location, streamlining the entire certification process.

MBO Test Centre
MBO has expanded access to CSCS card qualifications with the launch of its purpose-built ITC Centre, offering a dedicated space for individuals to gain essential certification and begin their journey into the construction industry.

In response to rising demand, MBO is currently offering a limited-time special offer on CITB Health, Safety and Environment tests, featuring a reduced price to make certification more accessible.

Looking ahead, MBO is exploring partnerships with Employment Agencies to support individuals re-entering the workforce—further strengthening its commitment to long-term employability.

MBO Simplifying Your Training Needs
At MBO Safety Services, we make certification seamless—offering CITB tests, expert training, and full application support under one roof. Whether you're new to construction or renewing your credentials, our flexible options, friendly guidance, and industry-recognised status help you get qualified quickly and confidently.

Contact Us
08000 842 297
info@mbo.ltd
mbosafetyservices.co.uk

Simplifying Services
CITB
Simplifying Services
Official CITB Approved
Construction health and safety awareness



Pouring a pint at Strangers' Bar along with Steve Preston and the team from Rowton Brewery



MPs Shaun Davies and Julia Buckley at the 'A Taste of Shropshire' event in Parliament

A taste of success

Shropshire MPs have been exciting the taste buds of colleagues at the House of Commons by shining the spotlight on some of the county's food and drink producers.

Celebrating everything from pork pies to doughnuts, sourdough to vegan chocolate, a mouth-watering event called A Taste of Shropshire was hosted jointly by Telford MP Shaun Davies and Shrewsbury MP Julia Buckley.

The 'taste of' events are a much-loved parliamentary tradition which offer local businesses the opportunity to showcase their products in Parliament to MPs, House of Lords members and parliamentary staff. This is a significant promotional opportunity for local businesses.

Three Telford-based food and drink vendors were invited to present their products including Richard and Tom Eley from Eley's Pork Pies in Ironbridge, Sienna Turner from vegan chocolate producer ChocTilly which has a shop locally in Jackfield, and chef Adam Purnell – The Shropshire Lad – owner of Embers Café.

Shrewsbury-based Planet Doughnut also flew the flag for the county at the event which took place in the Jubilee Room in the Palace of Westminster.

Shaun Davies said: "I've never made it a secret in Parliament just how proud I am of Telford and the incredible local businesses that make our town what it is. I'm so grateful to those businesses who made the trip to Parliament today to showcase their amazing produce."

Richard Eley said: "Our day in Westminster for the A Taste of Shropshire event was truly unforgettable, it was a really great event. I am so happy to be chosen to support Shropshire. Thank you to Shaun for inviting us and for everything he does for our area."

Adam Purnell, The Shropshire Lad, added: "It was such an exciting experience to bring what I do in Telford to Parliament. It was a really interesting day, and I was so glad to be given the opportunity to showcase my own rum along with my food. A big thank you to Shaun for the knowledgeable tour of Parliament too."

Sienna from ChocTilly described it as a great experience, especially in terms of meeting people and making connections. "The event has made small businesses feel seen."

Julia Buckley added: "This was a really fabulous event. I was so proud to host Planet Doughnut from Shrewsbury in the Houses of Parliament. Of all the producers, their hundreds of doughnuts were the first to run out due to popular demand."

"What a great way to showcase our fabulous local producers in Parliament where hundreds of MPs from all over the country came to taste our wares. Now they are keen to visit Shropshire to find out more."

The event came just days after Shaun Davies welcomed Rowton Brewery to Parliament for the opportunity to put their Ironbridge Gold beer into the House of Commons' famous Strangers' Bar.



Shaun Davies on the terrace of Westminster Palace along with The Shropshire Lad, Eley's Pork Pies and ChocTilly



Shaun Davies with deputy speaker Caroline Noakes and Richard Eley from Eley's Pork Pies

Rowton Brewery which has pubs throughout Telford, has brewed their Ironbridge Gold beer in Shropshire since 2008. Telford's MP Shaun Davies was delighted to invite Steve and the team down to Westminster to give drinkers a taste of their very own locally-brewed beer, and the beer was on sale for MPs and VIPS for the week.

Steve Preston, from the brewery, said: "Sitting on the terrace outside Westminster, overlooking the Thames, London Bridge and the London Eye drinking a pint of our real ale will be a memory our family will cherish for a long time to come."

Purchase of headquarters seals the deal

- **Liverpool-based Melius Finance has purchased BPN Commercial – which is headquartered in Telford – enabling the launch of Melius Commercial. Leading the venture is Dan Jones (founder of Melius Finance) whose background spans senior roles at HSBC and more than a decade as an independent mortgage adviser. He said: "We're focused entirely on development and commercial finance – a complex area where deep understanding matters."**
- Radbrook Dental Practice in Shrewsbury is under new ownership. Christie & Co sold the three-surgery practice to Visiting Specialist Services. Previous owner Dr Bruce Grainger said: "With VSS I know the practice will be in good hands." The practice, which was established in 1988, was sold for an undisclosed sum.



Adra has chosen Aico's Connected Home Solution

- **Aico, the European market leader in home life safety with its headquarters in Oswestry, has signed a deal with the largest housing association in North Wales, Adra, which has chosen the Shropshire firm's Connected Home Solution to support the monitoring and management of properties participating in the Optimised Retrofit Programme (ORP) this year.**
- Telford-based DB Roberts Residential Sales and Letting Agents has received an EA Masters Gold Award for Lettings. The recognition places them in the Best Estate Agent Guide 2026 as one of the country's top letting agents. Lisa Edwards, head of Property Management, said it was 'a real testament to the commitment and professionalism' of the team.
- **Farmers facing Inheritance Tax hikes following changes made in the Budget were given access to vital support at this year's Burwarton Show, as the CLA Midlands team joined Aaron & Partners on its stand. Workshops were held, focusing on Inheritance Tax and succession planning, particularly around changes to Agricultural Property Relief and Business Property Relief.**
- A donation from Anwyl Homes is helping young people access valuable work experience at the National Trust's Attingham Park. The grant of £1,040, from the 'Love From Anwyl' Shrewsbury fund, has covered transport and costs for eight students from two schools: Madeley School in Crewe, and Hadley Learning Community in Telford.

Turas Accountants
Moving Forward. Together.

10
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

f i in

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

xero

Turas Accountants

Water bowzers made available to farmers

Severn Trent has been offering free mobile water bowzers to livestock farmers across Shropshire as part of a new initiative to help manage water demand.

Kevin Hatch, from Severn Trent's Network Operations, says a total of 700 bowzers have been made available to farmers across its region, with priority given to those with livestock – particularly dairy farms, to help them store enough water and support animal welfare during hot weather periods.



Kevin Hatch with one of the bowzers

Originally used as part of Severn Trent's emergency fleet, the bowzers are being redistributed as the company upgrades to equipment with almost 12 times greater storage capacity.

During the dry spells of 2018 and 2022, many farmers reached out to Severn Trent for help when water supplies ran low. This shows the importance of having adequate water storage in place to keep livestock safe and healthy during dry periods.

Kevin said: "Shropshire has a particularly high number of livestock farms and is especially vulnerable to dry conditions, which is why the region was the first focus for the giveaway scheme."



Steve Grice of UKSE with James Russell and Tony Greenfield of Webster-Wilkinson, and Mike Lowe of UKSE

Support comes in form of investment

A manufacturer of electrical components says it is ready to expand its business and create new jobs after securing a six-figure funding package.

Webster-Wilkinson Limited – a manufacturer of high voltage transformer components based in Halesfield, Telford – has secured the funding from UKSE to support growth plans through the installation of a new moulding plant.

The funds will also enable investment into new CAD-CAM technologies, expanding the company's sales team and increasing marketing, while supporting the creation of a minimum of five jobs.

Established in 1966, Webster-Wilkinson designs, makes and supplies a wide range of components for use by manufacturers of transmission and distribution transformers, network operators, and utility companies across the UK as well as in Europe, the Middle East, Africa and Asia.

The senior management team identified an opportunity to bring the production of a resin-based moulded product in-house by installing a new plant after a supplier based in Gloucestershire stopped production.

The business, which employs 50 staff, wanted to produce the parts in Shropshire, creating more skilled work in the county and reducing the environmental impact generated through previous levels of transportation.

Managing director James Russell said: "Thanks to the investment from UKSE, Webster-Wilkinson has been able to invest in new equipment which will ensure the business builds on nearly 60 years of operating at the forefront of high-voltage accessory manufacturing for the transformer and distribution industry."

"With new product lines in place, we are now set up for growth and we have reduced our environmental footprint by reducing the transportation of materials while creating more skilled work in Telford."

Quad is perfect launchpad for tech firm's new product

A growing tech company has chosen The Quad in Telford Town Centre's Station Quarter as its UK base to launch a ground-breaking platform designed to help small businesses grow faster and more efficiently.

Aspire Pinnacle, trading under Aspire Vita, uses artificial intelligence to automate the production of tailored business advisory reports. This can help the business support providers such as Invest Telford, growth hubs, consultants, and councils to deliver high value advice to more SMEs more efficiently.

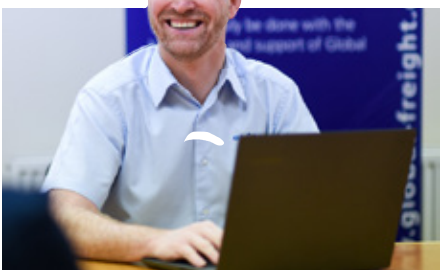
Chief executive Mahesh Pappu said: "We believe we've built a highly impactful product. Aspire Blueprint saves weeks of manual work and gives small businesses the kind of insights that are usually only accessible to larger firms."

"Being based in Telford, and at The Quad in particular, has provided the perfect launchpad to develop and scale the platform with the support of Invest Telford and the UKSPF grant."

When politics takes over business



Anton Gunter



Howzit. Well we are truly in the middle of what some might call a turbulent time. We had a General Election and once again it is fair to say it has not gone as well as people had hoped. But this is a democracy, and no amount of moaning or petitioning will get another.

I am just as guilty as most, and in the beginning of the term of the new Labour Government, I was anti everything they said and did. I was the first person to bemoan freebies, IHT and other policies brought in. And I was the first person to moan about increased taxes for my business.

Over time this increased anger and resentment started to dictate everything I posted about. Rachel from accounts was just

not doing her job. Telford's own MP came under fire for his agreement on allowing the removal of the heating allowance from pensioners. Then there was my continued moaning about VAT on private education and nothing or no-one was convincing me any different.

Even my "Ranton With Anton" posts sought to highlight what we all knew and what we were all witnessing. My social media was being dominated by algorithms that meant I not only commented on political stories, and posted about political stories, but now I was only seeing the MPs who don't engage and those people who constantly berate and say the same old same old.

Then one day it got me thinking. LinkedIn is a business social media platform. It's there for people to know what my business does and to get to know me. It got me looking at algorithms, and it got me looking at how I affect what I see and therefore comment on. It got me thinking about who I have not heard from and why I have not heard from them.

It set me to work. I started to take note of those that only ever post about politics or comment on politics. I started to see who I was connected to and who never ever interacted with me – other than when I made political comments.

We all have our feelings regarding the current Government and the issues they are facing. We also know that we need to change the way we do things, but in order for this country to prosper, businesses both little and large need to prosper. It's so easy for us to get

bogged down in the political nonsense and stop doing what we do.

With this in mind I started to delete. I deleted those that only ever posted political comments. I deleted or unfollowed those MPs on both sides of the political divide who would berate the last Government like a stuck record, or indeed the current one as if they were telling us something we didn't know.

Did they contribute to my business or my social media wellbeing? NO THEY DIDN'T. Then I deleted those that I have interacted with who have not interacted with me. And I tried to get away from politics.

At time of writing, I've deleted 150 contacts.

And guess what happened? My feed was slowly being filled with business posts. My feed was suddenly a lot happier and a lot more positive. Positive stories make you positive... and it showed. My own posts became centred on business and I started to get some work from it.

Don't get me wrong, I love controversy and I love the feeling of being anti-establishment, but political posts were taking over from my day job.

I love my job as managing director of Global Freight Services. I love the industry I am in, and I love the challenges it brings me.

We move amazing products worldwide and we help businesses up and down the country to move products.

Hopefully my social media now reflects what I do. Does yours?

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

TREAT YOUR TEAM TO A PARTY LIKE NO OTHER

Corporate Hospitality Options Available!

Your next work night out with colleagues and clients

HAVE YOUR VIP PARTY!

SHROPSHIRE OKTOBERFEST

3 & 4 OCTOBER 2025

Get your tickets

SCAN ME!

shropshirefestivals.co.uk

AT THE QUARRY PARK SHREWSBURY

Contact **Beth Heath** on **01952 432175** or email **beth@shropshirefestivals.co.uk**

SHROPSHIRE Festivals



Climbing Out Instructors in their new kit



Jane Pritchard, Kelda Wood and Laura Opechowska at Aico with the newly-branded Climbing Out van

Reaching new heights

Oswestry-based home life safety business Aico has helped Shropshire charity Climbing Out with branding for its van and new kit for the team of outdoor instructors.

Climbing Out programmes combine outdoor activities with personal development coaching, which provides the tools to manage mindset and behaviour following a life-changing injury, illness or trauma.

The charity was founded by Kelda Wood MBE, who leads residential five-day programmes around the UK.

“The dedication shown by Kelda and the Climbing Out team is very inspiring,” said Jane Pritchard, CSR and community engagement lead at Aico.

“Their structured programmes make a real difference, helping individuals to move forward in life with strength and purpose. Aico are proud to support such a powerful cause and play a part in creating positive, lasting change.”

Climbing Out has worked with emergency

service workers and members of the military, plus survivors of cancer, abuse, crime, terrorism and bullying, and people with PTSD linked to a traumatic event, and so many more.

Kelda Wood said: “We are very grateful for the support of Aico. Branding our van and having professional kit makes a huge difference to our small charity.”

“It has already had a big impact on our visibility, and it has really enhanced the look and feel of the charity, from the moment our participants arrive. It’s fantastic to have the support of such a successful local business.”



Creating spaces clients dream of

Nikki Jeffery from The Staging Experts has a gift – an eye for what makes a room come to life. This gives her a secret weapon to help clients sell houses via **home staging** – quickly and at the best price. It helps prospective buyers to imagine themselves living there – rather than seeing how you live.

The Staging Experts are able to create custom **mood board** designs for all manner of projects. Office spaces, living areas, whole home designs – Nikki can elevate your space. From the mood boards, we can provide **shopping lists**, allowing you to purchase and source the items located and designed within the mood boards.

Starting from an hour long consultancy, we can assist with any project. We provide a **design consultancy** service for bespoke requests. This service can be provided in person and online.



Visit: www.thestagingexperts.co.uk

01335 667040

office@thestagingexperts.co.uk

[@thestagingexperts](https://www.instagram.com/thestagingexperts)

[@thestagingexperts](https://www.facebook.com/thestagingexperts)



Pictured in 2017 – office manager Amanda Stevens, contracts manager and company secretary Cheryl Rowland and finance manager Louise Hunter

A decade of transformation: How telecoms has evolved and what’s next



Amanda Stevens

Ten years ago, the telecom landscape looked vastly different. As I celebrate my 10-year anniversary in the industry, I’ve had the chance to reflect on the incredible transformation that has taken place—not just in technology, but in how businesses communicate, collaborate, and connect.

When I first started, physical phone systems dominated the market. Most customers relied on ISDN lines, and broadband

connections were almost exclusively copper-based unless you were fortunate enough to have a fibre leased line. Remote working was rare, and communication solutions were designed with the assumption that everyone was in the office.

Fast forward to today, and the shift has been nothing short of revolutionary. The pandemic acted as a catalyst, accelerating the demand for remote working and digital collaboration. Businesses needed more than just voice—they needed integrated platforms that could support video conferencing, instant messaging, and analytics. We deliver Unified Communications as a Service (UCaaS), a game-changer that brings all these elements together into a seamless experience, fully integrated with existing IT systems. Our PCI-compliant call recording solutions also ensure you stay on the right side of data protection laws—critical if your business handles payments over the phone.

Now, we’re entering the next phase: AI-powered communications. Intelligent chatbots and voicebots are becoming commonplace, offering real-time transcription, sentiment analysis, and call summaries. These tools don’t just enhance efficiency—they empower businesses to make smarter decisions and deliver better customer experiences.

At Connexis, we recognise that modern communication is no longer confined to voice calls—it’s about enabling meaningful connections across teams, locations, and time

zones. In today’s fast-paced digital landscape, businesses need agile, integrated solutions that support how people truly work. That’s why we’ve positioned ourselves at the forefront of telecom innovation, helping organisations stay connected, collaborative, and competitive.

From the early days of VoIP, Connexis has led the way—embracing on-premise, cloud, and hybrid technologies to deliver scalable solutions tailored to every business’s needs and budget. But what truly differentiates us is our depth of expertise and unwavering commitment to customer care. While many IT and office equipment providers now offer VoIP as a secondary service, we treat it as a mission-critical component of your infrastructure—worthy of strategic focus and precision. With Connexis, you’re not just adopting a telecom solution; you’re partnering with a team that understands the power of communication to drive business success.

As we look ahead, one thing is clear: the only constant in telecom is change. And with the right partner, that change becomes opportunity.

- Contact Connexis for expert guidance, hands-on implementation, and tailored solutions. Call 01952 528000 or contact by email sales@connexis.co.uk



Amanda Stevens is Office Manager at Connexis, based in Telford

MORRIS PROPERTY CLOSES TRIO OF SUMMER SALES



A trio of commercial sales were secured at Stadium Point Business Park with a raft of further units under offer, signalling investor confidence in the flagship development.

Stadium Point is Morris Property's largest commercial development to date, providing 33 high-quality units across 28-acres on the south side of Shrewsbury.

Summer of sales

The recent deals mark a major milestone for the business park, reinforcing its status as a hub for high-specification industrial and business space in the region.

The three units sold are strategically located within the business park's Phases 1 and 2, were all sold to respected industrial and engineering companies: Börger UK, Warmflow Boilers and fuel biocides and additives supplier, Fuelcare.

Börger UK, a global manufacturer known for its rotary lobe pumps and macerating technology, were first over the line with the purchase of Unit 10, a high-spec 9,027 ft² industrial unit.



Anne Börger-Olthoff and David Brown from Börger UK

The manufacturer is relocating from Staffordshire to Shropshire to support its growing UK operations.

David Brown, Managing Director of Börger UK, said: "We're excited

to be moving into our new home at Stadium Point. Relocating from Staffordshire is a big step, but one that supports our ongoing growth. The quality of the build, the location, and the long-term potential of the site made this an easy decision. We're proud to become part of the Shropshire business community."

"Securing our first ownership deal is a key moment for Stadium Point," said Liz Lowe, Morris Property's Head of Development. "Having a respected brand like Börger UK establish a permanent presence here is a strong endorsement of the quality and potential of the site. We're proud to welcome them to the community and wish them every success in their new home."

Five zones of commercial space

Designed across five zones, Stadium Park Business Park will offer a mix of commercial space, offices and a food outlet which will serve the park and surrounding area. All 33 units on the development will enjoy energy efficient Grade A accommodation, landscaped break-out areas, as well as convenient access to supermarkets, retail park, golf course and gym.



Head of Development Liz Lowe and Toby Shaw

"Stadium Point Business Park has attracted strong early interest from a range of industrial and commercial occupiers", commented Stadium Point's appointed agent Toby Shaw from Towler Shaw Roberts. "With additional units now under offer in phases 1 and 2, demand remains high, and we expect to be reporting more successful deals in the very near future."

Börger's acquisition, represented the first ownership deal to complete at the development, was brokered by Anthony Wiggins of WLT Commercial Property, acting on behalf of Börger UK.

"This move is a great example of how modern, energy-efficient buildings like those at Stadium Point are helping forward-thinking businesses make the shift to more sustainable premises," said Anthony Wiggins, from WLT Commercial Property. "For Börger UK, the relocation provides a newer, greener home with room to expand and innovate – supporting their growth while reducing operational impact. It's a win-win for the business and the county."

Sales Signal Demand

As Shrewsbury continues to attract inward investment and entrepreneurial activity, sites like Stadium Point play a vital role in supporting economic diversification. The development complements existing commercial zones while offering new space for innovation and local employment.

"These early summer sales are a strong vote of confidence in Stadium Point as a growing business hub which offers long-term value," said Morris Property's Head of Development's Liz Lowe. "We've seen a mix of interest from a range

of occupiers looking for high-quality space in Shrewsbury – some relocating, others scaling up – and that's exactly what Stadium Point is built for."



Zone 2, Stadium Point

A Strategic Location

Stadium Point enjoys a location that's hard to beat – just south of Shrewsbury town centre next to Shrewsbury Town Football Club and within easy reach of major transport routes serving the Midlands and North Wales.

With demand for quality commercial property in Shropshire rising, Stadium Point has emerged at just the right time.

"Businesses want modern, flexible space in a location that works – not just for operations, but for their people," says Toby Shaw. "Stadium Point certainly delivers on that," added Liz Lowe.



TPS at Unit 9

For more information or to arrange a site visit, contact Toby Shaw at Towler Shaw Roberts. Mobile: 07967 721745 Email: toby.shaw@tsrsurveyors.co.uk
www.stadiumpoint.co.uk

Built, Owned & Managed by

**MORRIS
PROPERTY**



Managing director of Midland Computers Amy Davies

IT business marks its quarter of a century

Midland Computers – the Telford-based IT business – has been reflecting on huge changes in the sector as it marks its 25th anniversary.

Established in 1999 by Chris Bickerton at Tweedale, the business originally built computer systems which were shipped across the UK at a time when the internet and emails were relatively new, leading to a huge industry boom.

Today the company partners with market-leading vendors such as Microsoft, Hewlett Packard, and Dell.

Managing director Amy Davies said: “Around 10 of our team members are shareholders, meaning they are directly invested in the success of the business, genuinely care about its growth and stability, and continually strive to make it a great place to work. As a result, we have stellar retention rates, with over half of our workforce having been with us for at least a decade.”

HR specialist is not surprised at workplace woes

A drop in the number of businesses taking on new staff is “no surprise” due to hikes in National Insurance contributions and the minimum wage, according to a Shropshire-based employment expert.

Alasdair Hobbs, of HR specialists Human Results in Telford, said recent figures showing a decline in the number of firms hiring staff was worrying but not unexpected.

“According to the Office for National Statistics (ONS), there were 63,000 fewer jobs available in May compared to three months previously.

“That would quite clearly suggest that businesses are getting increasingly jumpy about hiring new staff, and it’s easy to see why.

“This was always going to be a likely outcome of rising employment costs which resulted from the Government’s decisions to increase the minimum wage

and the amount of National Insurance contributions businesses now have to pay.

“A higher minimum wage is of course better for the employee, but as the cost of hiring increases, businesses are now examining whether they really need that new member of staff or whether they can make do without.

“The figures show – and we are hearing from our own clients here in Shropshire – that more businesses are choosing to reduce their staff numbers to save costs.”

The director of economic statistics at the ONS, Liz McKeown, echoed Alasdair’s sentiments, saying she expected the trend to continue throughout the year.

“Feedback from our vacancies survey suggests some firms may be holding back from recruiting new workers or replacing people when they move on.

“It is likely that businesses will look to offset some of the rise in employment costs through a combination of reducing headcount and slowing hiring activity.

Given this, we expect the unemployment rate to edge higher over the coming year.”

The Curious Leader: The unsung superpower of entrepreneurship

BY JOHNNY THEMANS

A successful business leader is not defined by a single role, but by their ability to adapt to different situations. This means knowing when to lead from the front, when to support the team from within, and when to step back and observe.

This adaptability is crucial for maintaining alignment and momentum across all levels of the business. A key to this is having a clear and enduring vision that is consistently communicated to the entire team, not just confined to boardrooms.

This vision, however, needs to be broken down into smaller, achievable steps. Ambitious goals, like reaching a certain revenue target, are meaningless without a concrete plan. By breaking down large goals into manageable milestones, leaders can build evidence of progress, which in turn reinforces self-belief and inspires confidence in the team.

The most successful leaders are often the most curious. They constantly ask “why,” seeking to understand everything from customer feedback to global trends. This curiosity is a



Johnny Themans of Good2Great

powerful tool, not just for problem-solving, but also for sales. By being inquisitive, they can genuinely connect with clients and understand their needs. However, this curiosity must be

disciplined and aligned with the company’s vision to avoid distractions.

Agility is another key trait of a great leader. This is not about processes, but about people. Leaders who can spot potential in their team, react creatively to problems, and adapt quickly to market changes will thrive. But agility without direction can lead to chaos. It’s crucial to empower the team to be agile while keeping them focused on the overall vision.

Ultimately, great leadership is about more than just profits. It’s about creating human value. A growing business has a positive ripple effect on the community, and leaders should always keep this bigger picture in mind. By being curious, communicative, and agile, leaders can guide their businesses to success while making a positive impact on society.

If you’re ready to develop these skills and become a more effective entrepreneurial leader, our upcoming Entrepreneurial Leadership Programme is for you.

This transformative five-month programme is designed to help you build the skills, confidence, and clarity to lead your business and team to new heights. Sign up for our next cohort starting this October and start your journey to becoming a more impactful leader.

● For more information visit: <https://go.good-2-great.co.uk/entrepreneurial-leaders-enquire>

Commercial Property Experts

Sales | Lettings
Acquisitions | Valuations
Management

Featured Commercial Opportunities

Rowan House, Hortonwood 33
Telford | TF1 7EX
Asking rent of £170,000 per annum (EXCLUSIVE)

TO LET: PRIME INDUSTRIAL/TRADE COUNTER

- Two detached units, inc. single-storey offices, trade counter & mezzanine
- Total Gross Internal Floor Area of approx. 20,116 sq ft
- Set on 1.3 acre self-contained site with large service park & parking

Former Bayfield Vehicle Hire Site
Bayston Hill | Shrewsbury | SY3 0ET
Offers in the region of £375,000 (EXCLUSIVE)

FOR SALE: COMMERCIAL/SHOWROOM SITE

- Strategic location - key route between Shrewsbury & Hereford
- Total Gross Internal Floor Area of approx. 910 sq ft (84.53 m sq)
- Valuable, large forecourt area

Taste of Shrewsbury
70 Mardol | Shrewsbury | SY1 1PZ
Offers in the region of £45,000 (EXCLUSIVE)

FULLY FITTED OUT RETAIL/CAFE LEASEHOLD BUSINESS FOR SALE

- Trading from well positioned three-storey lock up shop unit
- Total Gross Internal Floor Area of approx. 1,084 sq ft (sales & cafe area)
- Loyal client base, genuine reason for sale

01743 450 700 commercialmarketing@halls.gb.com halls.gb.com/commercial

Tues 30th September, Bridgnorth Rugby Club. 8:45am

THE LONG EXIT SEMINAR

Build a Business That's Worth More — And Needs You Less

Thinking of selling someday?
Start planning now to maximise value later.
Presented by a select panel of business growth and exit specialists.

BOOK NOW



Rural message seems to have fallen on deaf ears



James Farrell

In keeping with a now familiar pattern of sudden and short-sighted announcements, the Government has published draft legislation confirming its planned reforms to Agricultural Property Relief and Business Property Relief.

First proposed in the Autumn 2024 Budget, these changes will see relief fall from 100% to 50% on any qualifying value above £1 million, effectively opening up farming families and diversified rural businesses to a level of Inheritance Tax exposure unseen for generations.

And let's be clear, a £1 million threshold is all but meaningless in the context of modern farming. The capital required to operate even a modestly-sized agricultural business far exceeds that figure. This is not a tax on excess; it is a tax on resilience, on succession, and ultimately, on viability.

Many had hoped the Government would

reconsider. As we saw with Winter Fuel Payments and disability benefits, it has proved willing to change course under pressure.

Rural communities were right to expect the same recognition for the essential contribution they make to national life – securing our food supply, improving public health, sequestering carbon and reversing biodiversity loss. These aren't peripheral goals, but foundational to the UK's ability to withstand and adapt to global pressures and the existential threats that we face today.

Our call in October 2024 was that ministers would grasp the scale of these implications ahead of the reforms taking effect in April 2026, and use the time to deliver a more coherent policy framework – one that supported the farm businesses at the heart of delivering solutions to so many of society's big issues, provide investors with confidence and ensure that land managers were equipped to meet the multiple, and often competing, demands of food production, climate action, environmental enhancement and community value. This publication suggests otherwise.

The protests seen across the UK – tractor convoys in Westminster and widespread public support – made it clear that this was not a niche concern. They helped the country pause and reflect on the vital role our farmers play. Unfortunately, that message seems to have fallen on deaf ears.

We do not underestimate the Government's task in balancing the books. But it is particularly surprising to see the lack of response to the business community, which has made plain the impact on jobs and the broader consequences of this policy. The reality is that BPR, not APR, is the true timebomb here.

That ministers have ignored the wider business lobby, at a time when they are also

championing growth and innovation, is a contradiction they have yet to reconcile. These were, after all, Labour-originated reliefs, introduced during periods of national economic stress to help family businesses underpin the recovery. It is disheartening to see that history forgotten.

The impact will be uneven but serious. Long-standing family businesses, encouraged to diversify, to modernise, to innovate and lead on environmental delivery, now face a triple bind: higher tax, reduced support and rising operational pressure.

And while tenant farmers will not face Inheritance Tax on land they farm, they will be hit by the changes to BPR and pensions, and the knock-on effects on landlords and future tenancies cannot be ignored.

At a time when the sector is already struggling (due to rising costs, labour shortages, and policy volatility) this legislation risks being the final straw for some.

Looking forward, the timeline for action is narrowing. While we will continue to advocate for a more balanced and supportive approach, landowners must now focus on preparation.

That means understanding the value of their holdings and financial implications of the tax charge; stress-testing succession plans and the business restructuring that may be necessary as part of these; assessing practical options, such as the use of conditional exemption and lifetime gifts; reviewing trust arrangements; and understanding how life insurance might help.

While this may prove to be the biggest generational shift in rural business planning for decades, there are options which Knight Frank is supporting clients to navigate. For those not already focused on this issue, now is the time to act. Being prepared for what is coming is essential.

James Farrell is head of rural consultancy at Knight Frank

Skills shortage is real concern across the UK

A new study of business leaders has revealed major concerns around the widening skills gap in the UK.

The report, conducted by Telford-based branded workwear supplier MyWorkwear, revealed 64% of the 107 companies surveyed are suffering from an acute skills shortage and only 45% of them believe the Government will be able to solve the crisis.

The results revealed that over half (55%) admitted that they are struggling to recruit or retain existing staff, while – going against popular opinion – nearly three quarters of respondents thought the Employment Rights Bill will have a positive impact on the current skills landscape.

Other findings from the survey suggested that more industry-specific training would help, and this was closely followed by nearly a third of firms calling for an increase in funding support.

MyWorkwear, which partners with businesses across 15 different sectors, says it is seeing the impact of the skills shortage first-hand through customer ordering patterns and day-to-day conversations.

“Having been in business since 1976 and working with so many industries, we often pick up trends across a wide variety of sectors, and the skills shortage is definitely something impacting a large majority of our customers,” said James Worthington, co-managing director.

“There is little confidence from businesses that the Government's approach will solve the crisis we're seeing, and this is undermining



James Worthington of Telford-based MyWorkwear

confidence with 60% feeling the situation has worsened over the last six months.

“You can't really make the most of new opportunities if you don't have the talent in place to meet customer requirements.

“A lot of the measures introduced have fallen on deaf ears so far, and I believe there's a lot of scepticism around the latest Industrial

Strategy and whether it will actually benefit small to medium-sized companies.”

The MyWorkwear report did show some positivity for the workwear industry, with almost 80% of businesses stating that branded workwear boosts employee pride, and 68% indicating that it helps them to retain staff in what is a very volatile jobs market.

45% OF BUSINESSES TRUST THE GOVERNMENT TO SOLVE THE SKILLS SHORTAGE

55% OF BUSINESSES ARE STRUGGLING TO RECRUIT OR RETAIN STAFF

64% OF BUSINESSES IN THE UK ARE BEING IMPACTED BY THE SKILLS SHORTAGE



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@purplefrogsystems.com

purplefrog
data analytics consultancy

Beyond the transaction

Inside the commercial property journey – from purchase to management



In the modern commercial property world, value is no longer created at the point of transaction alone – the client relationship doesn't end there. From a vendor-focused perspective, successful outcomes hinge on a strategic, end-to-end approach that spans acquisition, leasing and active management.

Research from CBRE has shown that tenant retention is a key driver of profitability in commercial properties, and at Halls Commercial, taking a full-lifecycle view helps us navigate long-term client relationships, ensuring each relevant end-to-end property journey is managed. Inter-departmentally speaking.

Acquisition to Asset Management Strategy: 101 Longden Road

A new client of ours, a business seeking to expand its operational footprint in the Shrewsbury area, approached us to identify and acquire suitable premises that aligned with their requirements, enabling us to match client criteria with off-market properties.

As office requirements matched, our first step of this journey was negotiating the sale of 101 Longden Road, a detached commercial property offering over 24,000 sq ft of mixed office, manufacturing and warehousing accommodation – sold to the client via best bids.

Following exchange and completion, it became clear that the client would not require the full extent of the space. Building a relationship during the purchase of the site, we were immediately able to assist in preparing the surplus space for letting. Ahead of public marketing, we approached prospective occupiers from our database with requirements closely aligned to the available space.

This enabled us to generate early interest from a tenant who had previously discussed office needs with us. The match was efficient, accelerating the leasing process and minimising the potential for voids.



Having the right conversations early, with purchasers, landlords and tenants, is a key strength of our commercial property team, evidenced by the end-to-end property journey of 101 Longden Road

Studies by JLL indicate that effective property management can increase a building's value by as much as 20%. This can be attributed to better tenant management, timely maintenance, and ensuring regulatory compliance. Therefore, finally with the lease secured, our commercial property management services were onboarded to manage tenancy agreements and oversee day-to-day operations to ensure the investment continues to appreciate.

Our integrated strategy delivers vendor value across multiple stages of the commercial property journey, from property purchase to maximising bricks-and-mortar investment. 101 Longden Road, Shrewsbury, serves as a clear illustration of this principle in practice.

Key Services in the Commercial Property Journey

Let's break down the key commercial property services in the transactional to long-term relationship journey for 101 Longden Road:

- Agency Services: property sales, lettings and market insights, delivered with a tailored approach across Shropshire, Worcestershire, Mid Wales and the West Midlands.
- Acquisitions: expert sourcing of opportunities, investment advice and negotiating favourable terms to meet business or investment goals.

- Property Management: full-service property management, including tenant sourcing, asset management, maintenance, compliance and financial oversight.

Full Service in the Commercial Property Landscape

According to The Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors, commercial property remains one of the most stable investment vehicles over the long term, particularly when strategically managed.

Thereon, beyond the transactional nature of property purchase, the management aspect adds an additional layer of client cares to help maximise the value of their assets.

Our property sales environment has evolved – a client no longer wants to feel like a transaction, more trusting in a long-term commercial property partner who understands the importance of protecting investments and growth.

Having the right conversations early, with purchasers, landlords and tenants, is a key strength of our commercial property team, evidenced by the end-to-end property journey of 101 Longden Road.

By retaining us from the outset, the client not only found the right property but also retained a partner capable of unlocking value in every phase of ownership.

Simon Cullup-Smith is a commercial property agent at Halls Commercial

CONNECTIN BUSINESS EXPO

Thursday 16TH October 2025

Connect, Contribute, Collaborate!

BOOK YOUR FREE TICKET



Want to know more? Contact us:
events@shropshire-chamber.co.uk
01952 208200





The WR Partners offices in Shrewsbury



The new-look Shrewsbury offices include breakout areas

Gold award for WR Partners

WR Partners has proudly achieved both the ‘Gold Award’ and ‘A Company That Cares Award’ from Investor in Customers (IIC), in recognition of their commitment to delivering outstanding client experience.

IIC, an independent authority in customer experience and recognition, praised the achievement, with managing director Tony Barritt saying: “Congratulations to WR Partners on achieving both IIC Gold and A Company That Cares on their first attempt.

“This reflects their outstanding commitment to clients and staff, and their dedication to creating a culture where service excellence and genuine care are part of everyday business.”

At the heart of WR Partners’ success lies a deeply rooted, authentic dedication to putting people first: both their employees and their clients.

“We have built a culture that values relationships, trust, and long-term thinking, enabling us to consistently meet and exceed client expectations,” says Paul Littler, director of business development and marketing.

“This people-first mindset is embedded into every level of the firm, translating into consistently positive interactions and a proactive, empathetic approach to service.”

One of the standout qualities highlighted by the IIC assessment is the company’s structured and transparent approach to capturing client feedback.

“We actively listen to our clients through personal engagement, reviews, and, in recent years, regular surveys, using this input to shape continuous improvement,” Paul says.

“Feedback isn’t just collected; it’s analysed, acted upon, and used to refine the firm’s services and communications, creating a responsive and agile client experience.”

For example, following feedback from their first client survey, WR implemented a new telephony system to make it easier for clients to contact individual team members directly to ensure queries are dealt with as efficiently as possible.

Paul added: “Client experience training, centred on the principle of ‘putting yourself in the clients’ shoes’, has been delivered firm-wide



Creating a great office environment helps WR Partners to attract and retain top talent

and is now an integral part of our induction programme for all new starters. Our goal is to ensure that every interaction with us is as seamless and effortless as possible for our clients, ensuring they feel valued and cared for at every touchpoint.”

Open communication is a cornerstone of WR Partners’ ethos. The aim is to ensure clients are kept well-informed, expectations are clearly managed, and advice is delivered with honesty and clarity. Internally, team members are engaged, creating a culture where employees feel heard, supported, and aligned with the firm’s client centric approach.

Fair dealing and ethical behaviour underpin every client relationship at WR Partners.

“We take pride in operating with integrity and transparency, ensuring clients feel valued, respected, and confident in the advice they receive,” Paul says. “Long-term relationships, not short-term gains, define success for WR Partners, an approach that builds deep trust and client loyalty.

“While we’re proud to have received the Gold Award, we are not stopping here. We are

fully committed to continuously enhancing our client experience and striving for even greater excellence.

“We believe that by creating a great environment for our people, they will be happy, engaged and deliver excellent service and build strong relationships with our clients.”

Aligned with this ethos, they have recently refurbished their head office in Shrewsbury to create a fantastic, engaging, and collaborative environment for both their employees and clients.

“Creating a great office environment helps us retain and attract top talent who will deliver the excellent service our clients expect. It also creates a welcoming environment for our clients to visit,” Paul said.

From strong internal systems and an engaged team to transparent processes and a genuine concern for client outcomes, WR Partners are committed to going beyond good service, continually improving, and consistently delivering a truly excellent client experience.

WR Partners: Protecting the future of our clients, our people, and our communities.



Redefining the word “accountant”

Business and Strategic Growth Specialists.

We do a lot more than crunch numbers.

Contact us today to see how we can help you and your business grow.

hello@wrpartners.co.uk
wrpartners.co.uk
08000 664 664



Accountants, Tax & Business Advisors

On the road to European destinations

A family-run Shropshire coach tour company is expanding into European travel, driven by customer demand for sustainable options and personalised experiences.

Wisteria Tours, which has built its reputation on UK coach tours and breaks showcasing historic properties and English gardens, is now launching European itineraries which emphasise art, culture and beautiful countryside.

The move comes as the UK sustainable tourism market – valued at £20.5 billion in 2023 – is expected to grow at over 9% annually through 2028.

Sue Burnell, who runs the business alongside her sister Jacky Burnell and mother Jackie Crick, said: “We were driven primarily by customer feedback and changing market preferences.

“Many of our loyal travellers who enjoyed independent European adventures in their earlier years now seek the convenience and security of our guided approach.”

The company’s first European adventure in 2025 is a trip to Luxembourg in September. “We did a trial run to Normandy in 2024. We put it out to our customers on our newsletter and by 5pm the same day all the places had been reserved,” said Sue.

While expanding into Europe, Wisteria Tours continues to offer its UK experiences as it heads into its tenth year in business in 2026.

Its domestic day trips and short breaks featuring royal residences, stately homes and particularly English gardens remain core to their business.



Sue and Jacky are expanding to European destinations

Taking a deep dive into future potential of AI



Delegates at the Innovating with AI event in Telford

Business leaders, educators and technology experts came together in Telford for an ‘Innovating With AI’ event.

Harper Adams University collaborated with IT company Stiperstone to stage the event at The Quad – the digital innovation hub in Telford’s Station Quarter.

The event offered a deep dive into the transformative potential of artificial intelligence, with a particular focus on

Microsoft Copilot and its real-world applications for SMEs and charities alike.

It featured keynote sessions, breakout discussions, and panel debates, all designed to demystify AI and help attendees understand how to implement it safely, securely, and effectively within their organisations.

One of the standout messages was that AI is no longer a futuristic concept – it’s here, and it’s already reshaping how we work. Tom Sykes of Stiperstone said: “AI transformation and business growth go hand in hand.”

The event made it clear that with the right guidance, tools, and mindset, organisations of all sizes can harness AI to drive innovation, improve efficiency, and stay ahead of the curve.

With support from partners including Microsoft, Infinigate Cloud, Hornet Security, Inforcer, the West Midlands Police Cyber Crime Unit, and lecturers from Harper Adams University, the event offered a well-rounded perspective on both the opportunities and the responsibilities that come with AI.

Back to the future for a firm of accountants



The Turas team: (from left) Kelly Wilson, Will Morgans-Sharples, Joyce Renhard, Zoe Case, Jamie Thatcher and Helen Columb

A Telford firm of accountants has come full circle after taking on a new client that used to be their landlord.

Turas Accountants has been appointed by Maws Craft Centre in Jackfield to look after its accounts and payroll.

It marks a return to her roots for Turas owner Helen Columb who started her business – then called Columb and Gosling – at the crafts centre in 2013.

Helen said: “I have many happy memories of my time as a tenant at Maws Craft Centre and the start being based there gave me in business. We have changed name and grown a lot since then, but it is wonderful to resume a professional relationship with the centre.”

Maws Craft Centre managing director Sabine Townsend said: “I have been thoroughly impressed with Helen and her team from the get-go. Because Helen is a former tenant here, she knows exactly what the business is and how we run it.

“It’s quite a daunting experience finding new accountants but we already have a really good relationship with Turas.”

Turas, which is now based in Hall Court in Telford Town Centre, changed its name five years ago under Helen’s leadership.

It works with clients across the country covering VAT, company accounts, bookkeeping and payroll. It specialises in e-commerce, helping clients who have online businesses using marketplaces such as Amazon, eBay and Etsy.

It’s quite a daunting experience finding new accountants but we already have a really good relationship with Turas.



Adam Cleal of Niche Patisserie. Picture by Graham Mitchell.

Great tastes earn Adam four awards

Shropshire’s Niche Patisserie has clinched four accolades at this year’s Great Taste Awards – regarded as the world’s largest and most trusted food and drink accreditation scheme.

Hot on the heels of its success at this summer’s Shropshire Chamber Business Awards, the Oswestry-based patisserie scooped single star awards for its Dulcey & Sea Salt Fudge, Raspberry Jam, Seeded Loaf, and Rosemary & Confit Garlic Focaccia.

Each product was blind tasted by expert panels comprising of chefs, buyers, food writers and retailers, with the Niche products awarded for their outstanding taste, texture and craftsmanship.

Adam Cleal, executive pastry chef at Niche Patisserie, said: “These awards are a true testament to the creativity, dedication and tireless effort of our entire team at Niche. My mum Samantha and I have grown this business from the ground up, so to see our work recognised on a national level is truly humbling.

“We’re incredibly proud to be acknowledged among the best in the industry and proud to be putting Oswestry firmly on the culinary map.”

Like child's play

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

SALOP LEISURE
For the journey

Time to tap into our county's creativity

Ruth Ross



Government ministers have described Shropshire – and Telford in particular – as being ‘at the heart of UK defence’.

So it comes as a big relief to our economy that the Government has given its unequivocal backing to the Strategic Defence Review's recommendations, and the major role UK firms can have in implementing them.

Having clear procurement plans for many years ahead on tanks, submarines, hardware, and military cyber security safeguards tens of thousands of jobs and creates many new ones.

This is clearly great news for high-profile defence companies we have in our area, like RBSL and Babcock in Telford.

But we need to make sure that the many cutting-edge SMEs in our county can also benefit from new opportunities for expansion, such as drones and AI, to keep us all secure and our economy growing.

Our SMEs bring agility, innovation, and specialised expertise to the table that larger firms may sometimes struggle to match.

By tapping into their creativity and responsiveness, the Ministry of Defence can accelerate technological advancement in areas like cyber security, autonomous systems, and sustainable manufacturing.

Opening up defence contracts to SMEs also strengthens national resilience. A diverse supply chain reduces dependency on a handful of large contractors and ensures that critical capabilities are distributed across regions.

This decentralisation is especially important in times of geopolitical uncertainty, where supply chain robustness can directly impact operational readiness.

Economically, the benefits are profound. Defence spending already supports over 430,000 jobs across the UK – including some 1,000 directly employed in Telford – yet only 4% of MOD expenditure went to SMEs last year.



Shropshire is at the heart of UK Defence

Increasing SME participation means more money flowing into local economies, and the Government's commitment to raise defence spending to 2.5% of GDP by 2027, alongside new SME support hubs and spending targets, signals a shift towards inclusive procurement.

We know that Shropshire's SMEs often operate at the cutting edge of innovation. Their ability to rapidly prototype, adapt, and collaborate makes them ideal partners for defence projects that demand speed and ingenuity.

By integrating SMEs into the defence supply chain, we're not only enhancing our country's military capabilities but also nurturing a thriving industrial base that can compete globally.

At Shropshire Chamber, we're proud to support our Armed Forces, and are delighted to have received a Gold Award in recognition of our support for them.

We are one of just four organisations in the county to be presented with the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme Gold Award this year.

The prestigious accolade is the highest

badge of honour for employers who champion the Armed Forces community, and recognises employers who uphold the Armed Forces Covenant.

To achieve Gold standard, employers must provide at least 10 days of additional paid leave for reservists, and implement HR policies for veterans and cadet force adult volunteers.

They must also advocate for defence across their networks and sectors, and demonstrate sustained commitment well beyond the minimum requirements.

This award reflects the deep commitment of our team to supporting the Armed Forces community – not just in words, but through actions too.

From tailored recruitment pathways to additional leave for reservists, we've embedded forces-friendly policies across our organisation. It's not just good business; it's the right thing to do.

We look forward to continuing our close relationship with the West Midland Reserve Forces & Cadets Association in the future, to support those who serve or who have served our country.

Ruth Ross is chief executive of Shropshire Chamber of Commerce



Violetta Iakovleva, Holly Faulks and Sharon Baines, all from PCB Solicitors, Darcey Roberts (Shakespeare Martineau) Jade Roberts (Wace Morgan), Oliver Trumper (Berrys) and Emily Armstrong (PCB Solicitors)



James Satoor of Cooper Green Pooks with Emily Shenton from FBC Manby Bowdler

Growing professional networks from the off

Shropshire Rising Professionals continues to go from strength to strength following its latest event held at Shrewsbury's Ten & Six cocktail bar.

Launched in 2023 and co-chaired by Aaron & Partners and Azets, it provides early-career professionals with a relaxed, inclusive space to connect and grow their professional networks.

The most recent gathering saw professionals from across the county come together for an evening of conversation, collaboration, and cocktails, making new connections in a friendly, pressure-free environment.

James Satoor, apprentice surveyor at Cooper Green Pooks which sponsored the event, spoke of the importance of building strong local relationships early in a professional's career.

"In an age of easy digital connection, events like this are more important than ever for fostering genuine, lasting networks."

Aaron & Partners' corporate and

commercial solicitor Abigail Murray, who co-chairs the initiative, said she was delighted with the turnout and the positive feedback.

"We're seeing more and more people attending every event. It's fantastic to meet others who are just starting out in their careers and to hear about what they'd like to see from SRP in the future."

"We've seen people build confidence, forge lasting friendships, receive referrals, and even explore new career opportunities through the group. It's incredibly rewarding to see how much the network is helping people thrive – both professionally and personally."

Jake Moses, a private client solicitor at Aaron & Partners, said: "Shrewsbury is lucky to have such a dynamic event fostering professional connections, especially in the age of Teams and Zoom."

Each event is hosted at a different location across Shrewsbury, with a new sponsor and format, helping to keep things fresh and inclusive for returning and first-time attendees alike.

For more details about Rising Professionals events in the future, email events@aaronandpartners.com



Claire Strothers, Kieran Pinches, Seb Preston and Tayler Clarke from DRE & Co



MARTIN & JONES
MARKETING

Marketing that matters...

- **Strategy & planning**
- **PR & social media management**
- **Blogs, features and content creation**
- **Social Value workshops and campaigns**
- **Event promotion**

Get in touch today - 07917 787804

13 Arthur Street, Oswestry, Shropshire, SY11 1JN
hello@martinandjonesmarketing.co.uk
www.martinandjonesmarketing.co.uk



"It feels like we get a personalised service rather than a set plan off the shelf that would be generic or formulaic."





Uber wanted a legal declaration that would have added VAT to all private hire fares outside London

An uber good outcome

A landmark judgement by the Supreme Court has ruled that private hire taxi firms should not be forced to change their business models, which would have resulted in passengers being forced to pay VAT.

The decision has been hailed as a triumph for consumers and the private hire industry – and a Shropshire law firm played a key role in the victory.

Ride-hailing giant Uber had sought a legal declaration that would have added VAT to all private hire fares outside London. Uber was seeking to render unlawful a model they had previously used up to 2022 until they lost a London-focused legal challenge.

But the move was successfully challenged by Liverpool-based DELTA Taxis, represented by the legal firm Aaron & Partners.

DELTA argued that legislation dating back to 1976 allows for multiple business models under the private hire licensing regime, meaning not all operators are required to charge VAT.

While Uber’s model does trigger VAT liability, the Supreme Court agreed that competitors can lawfully operate using alternative structures that do not, and dismissed Uber’s appeal.

It means private hire firms are not legally required to adopt the same model – or contract directly with passengers. As a result, VAT will not be automatically added to fares, avoiding a potential 20%+ price hike across England and Wales.

Layla Barke Jones, dispute resolution partner at Aaron & Partners, represented DELTA and believes the decision has saved the



The victorious legal team outside the Supreme Court

private hire taxi industry – saving thousands of businesses and securing many more livelihoods.

“This is a monumental decision, not just for DELTA, but for all private hire taxi drivers and operators across England and Wales. Had this gone the other way, the cost and complexity of implementing VAT systems would have pushed many firms to the brink.

“This ruling ensures that operators can continue to operate under established, regulated models that have been in existence since regulation was introduced almost half a century ago – such as the agency model – without being forced into a ‘one size fits all’ model.”

The ruling concludes a long-running case that’s been ongoing since March 2022, following an initial judgment in the High Court where the judge found that a private hire operator is required to contract directly with the passenger for providing the journey.

However, that decision was overturned by the Court of Appeal in July 2024 which held that the licensing regime already provided for contractual liability for the operator, without requiring operators to change their business models, in a case jointly brought by DELTA Taxis and fellow operator Veezu.

The Supreme Court ruling now cements the Court of Appeal outcome as the final say in law.



How do you add subtitles to video clips, and why is it important? This is a topic that’s more relevant than ever, especially as video content continues to grow in popularity.



Subtitles – also called captions – do more than just display dialogue; they make your content accessible to a much wider audience. For one, they’re essential for people who are deaf or hard of hearing. But beyond that, many people watch videos on mute – especially in an office setting or on social media in public places – so having subtitles means they can still engage with your content, even without sound.

Subtitles also make your videos more accessible for non-native speakers or people who may struggle with certain accents or fast speech. In fact, research shows that videos with subtitles tend to have higher engagement rates, as people are more likely to stick around and watch the full video when they can read along.

And let’s not forget SEO. Search engines can’t “watch” videos, but they can read subtitles. So, by adding captions to your video content, you’re creating text that can help search engines understand what your video is about, which can improve your search rankings and visibility.

The easiest and quickest way to add subtitles is through platforms that auto-generate them. YouTube, for example, offers automatic captions for uploaded videos. Once you upload your video, YouTube uses speech recognition software to create subtitles for you.

While this is convenient, the accuracy isn’t always perfect, especially if there’s background noise, strong accents, or fast speech. You’ll need to go in and edit the subtitles to make sure they’re accurate.

Facebook and Instagram also offer auto-captioning tools for videos, and the process is quite similar. But again, always double-check the accuracy before posting your video.

If you want more control or need your subtitles to be spot-on, you can manually add them. There are plenty of tools available like Adobe Premiere Pro, Final Cut Pro, or free options like Kapwing or Subtitle Edit. Here’s how it works:

- Upload your video into the editing software
- Create a new subtitle track or caption layer
- Play through the video and manually type out what’s being said, syncing the text with the audio
- Export the video with the subtitles baked in or save them as a separate file (usually in .srt format).

While manual captioning takes more time, it’s the most accurate way to ensure your subtitles are perfect. Plus, it allows you to control

- Three top tips for effective subtitles**
1. Keep them simple and concise. Don’t overload the screen with too much text. Subtitles should be easy to read quickly.
 2. Sync them properly. Make sure the subtitles appear at the right time with the dialogue. Bad timing can frustrate viewers.
 3. Use contrasting colours. Make sure your subtitles stand out against the background of your video, using high contrast text for readability.

the timing and appearance of the text, ensuring it fits naturally with the video content.

If you don’t have the time or the patience to add subtitles yourself, there are plenty of services out there that can do it for you. Services like Rev, 3Play Media, and Amara will take your video, create accurate subtitles, and deliver the finished file to you. This is a great option if you’re working with a lot of video content and need high quality captions without the hassle.

Adding subtitles to your videos is essential for accessibility, viewer engagement, and SEO. Whether you use auto-generated captions, manual editing, or hire a service, there are plenty of options to get your videos subtitled quickly and accurately.

Thanks to Hugh Strickland from Aaron & Partners for sending in this great question!

Shaun Carvill is the founder and managing director of Bridgnorth-based Clickingmad. Check out his podcast series called Website Success In Five Minutes, available online at www.clickingmad.com/podcasts

THINK LOCAL

with a Global Presence



Newport-Shropshire

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 

Get your message across through social media and website promotion.

Call: 07973 385929
Email: Karen@allaboutnewport.co.uk

Find us at...
www.allaboutnewport.co.uk



from **£60** for 12 Months



Stressed? Embrace the EOS ethos

Too much stress, not enough clarity – it's a common complaint in the fast-paced business world



SIMON ADCOCK is a huge advocate of the Entrepreneurial Operating System – and is on a quest to persuade Shropshire businesses that this is the perfect time for them to embrace it

If you'd told me five years ago that I'd be helping business owners across Shropshire and the West Midlands transform their companies using a framework called the Entrepreneurial Operating System (EOS), my response might've been: "What on earth is that?"

But here I am – a professional EOS implementer, promoting EOS across the region and working with business leaders from my dedicated session room just off the M54. Better still, none of this really feels like work.

So, what changed? Contrast this with my life before EOS. I was in the thick of it myself. I was the CEO of a CCTV and security systems business that, like many others, had grown quickly (the first 20 years to £4 million were fun), but this was followed by another ten years of struggling to scale.

We had a good product, a loyal customer base, and a capable team – shelves groaning

under the weight of awards – but also a lot of chaos. Too many meetings that went nowhere. Too many initiatives that started strong and fizzled out. Too much stress. Not enough clarity. And too much dependency on me.

Discovering EOS (for me it was reading Traction by Gino Wickman) felt like someone had handed me a manual for running a business. Not theory. Not another book to sit on the shelf. But a complete, practical set of tools that actually worked.

We didn't just get more organised – we became aligned. We knew where we were going, how we were going to get there, and who was responsible for what. Accountability went up. Energy went up. Confidence went up.

Everything went up, except my working hours, which went down... by over 90%.

With my new-found freedom, I trained to become an EOS implementer myself. I'd experienced first-hand the difference it makes, and I knew I wanted to help other owners feel that same clarity and control.

EOS stands for the Entrepreneurial Operating System – a complete system for running a better business. It's not software. It's not a coaching programme. It's a way of

operating that gives business owners and leadership teams everything they need to:

- Get aligned on a clear vision
- Gain traction through real accountability and execution
- Build a healthy, open and honest leadership team

It's designed for entrepreneurial businesses (typically those with between ten and 250 people – but it works for two to nine just as well) who are growth-minded but feeling stuck. Maybe the team has hit a ceiling? Maybe things have got messy? Maybe the founder is starting to feel like the bottleneck? EOS tackles these issues head-on.

It's built on six key components: Vision, People, Data, Issues, Process, and Traction. Each component has a simple set of tools, and my job as an implementer is to teach, facilitate, and coach leadership teams through them. We work together in full-day sessions at my EOS session room in Wolverhampton, tackling the business from the ground up.

It is leadership and management training – but with one big difference. We don't waste your time trying to get you to think differently. We give you a set of tools that work together as

a complete and elegant system, teach you how to use them well, and using those tools causes you to think differently.

Unlike most training – the benefits of which decay over time – the change is permanent, because once you're using the tools, you will always use them. Even, perhaps, in your next business.

I could talk all day about the businesses I've worked with that are now more focused, more profitable, and frankly more fun to run – but the results speak for themselves.

I've worked with Richard Crunden of Vistech Cooling since October 2023, and it's been great fun watching their business progress.

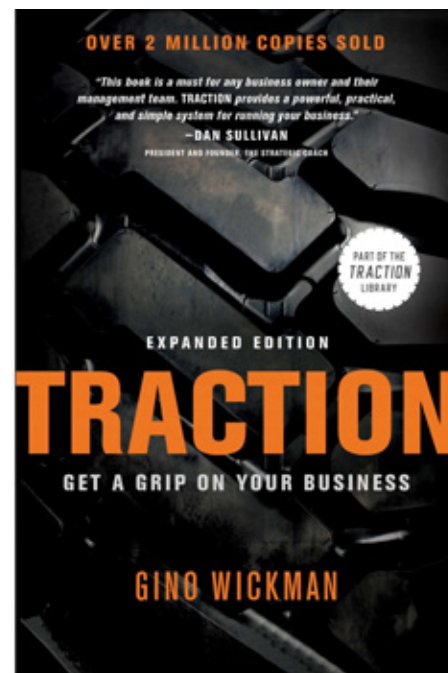
Richard said: "Since implementing EOS, we've experienced an incredible transformation in our business. Our leadership team is now more focused, accountable, and confident, with clearer roles and better communication.

"We have a system that keeps us on track to achieve our goals, leading to stronger processes, better problem-solving, and a more engaged team. Looking back, I can't imagine running our business without EOS – it has helped us take everything to the next level."

More recently I've been working with Shropshire Chamber of Commerce. Ruth Ross, Shropshire Chamber chief executive, says: "We've been on our EOS journey here at the Chamber for several months now, and it's already having results.



Simon Adcock leading an EOS workshop with the Shropshire Chamber senior leadership team



Traction by Gino Wickman

"By aligning everyone around a shared vision and ensuring the right people are in the right roles, it can help a business to build a strong foundation for sustainable success."

If you want to see EOS in action, join me on September 5 at the Shropshire Chamber for a free masterclass.

What commitment does it take?

This isn't a quick fix. EOS works, but it only works if you work it. The businesses that see the biggest transformation are the ones that commit fully. That means:

- A two-year journey typically including ten or 11 full-day sessions
- A leadership team willing to be open, honest, and vulnerable
- A readiness to change old habits, tackle issues, and embrace accountability

I always say: EOS is simple, but not easy. The tools aren't complicated – but applying them consistently takes real discipline.

That's why my role exists. I'm there to guide, challenge, and support the leadership team every step of the way.

What's the best time to do EOS? Similar to the old saying about planting a tree: the best time was ten years ago. The second best time is now.

You can self-implement EOS. Most businesses with fewer than ten people do just that, and you can join my free workshop series designed to support self-implementing teams.

Why am I so passionate about it?

Because I've lived it. I know what it's like to lie awake at 3am worrying about sales numbers, cash flow, or people. I know the frustration of watching your team spin its wheels. I know how lonely leadership can feel.

And I know what it's like on the other side. The sense of calm. The clarity of knowing what matters most. The thrill of watching your team step up and lead with confidence. The knowledge that I could take a six-month sabbatical and come back to find my business in better shape.

That's what EOS delivers – and being able to help others experience that is deeply fulfilling.

I'm not a general business coach. I don't parachute in to fix things. I teach. I facilitate. I coach EOS. I do it with the whole leadership team. And I do it in person, in my session room, with leaders who are serious about improving their business and their lives.

If any of this resonates – if you're feeling stuck, overwhelmed, or just ready for a better way of running your business – EOS is a great option.

Reading Traction by Gino Wickman is an excellent place to start and it's on Audible too. Or if you're a business owner in Shropshire, I'll happily send you a copy.

Better still, join me in person at one of my sessions and see EOS in action: because you don't have to run your business on hope and hustle. There's a better way. And it starts with clarity.

- If you want to find out more, email simon.adcock@eosworldwide.com or see www.eosworldwide.com/simon-adcock



The British Chambers of Commerce says it is seeing a clear shift towards more firms requiring full on-site working, but it's by no means a uniform picture

An end to hybrid working?

Are the days of hybrid working numbered? New research reveals a growing number of businesses are expecting their staff to spend more time in the office.

The flexible working model which grew in popularity following the pandemic is being eroded, with nearly half of businesses expecting all working days to be 'in person' over the next 12 months.

The findings are contained in a British Chambers of Commerce survey, which says more than 40% of businesses have increased their requirement for on-site working over the past year.

The majority of businesses that responded were small and medium-sized businesses – and more than a quarter of them predicted their staff would be fully in-person over the next five years.

Ruth Ross, chief executive of Shropshire Chamber of Commerce, said: "These findings reflect the complex and evolving nature of workplace dynamics across different sectors.

"While it's clear that some industries – particularly manufacturing and consumer-facing businesses – are leaning back towards full on-site working, others continue to embrace the flexibility that the hybrid models offer.

"We've seen first-hand how important it is

for many of the county's businesses to strike the right balance between operational needs and employee wellbeing.

"Flexibility can be a powerful tool for attracting and retaining talent, especially in a competitive labour market.

"But equally, we understand that for some roles and sectors, being physically present is essential to productivity and collaboration."

Ruth added: "As we move forward, it's vital that Shropshire businesses are supported in making decisions that work best for them. There's no one-size-fits-all approach, and we'll continue to champion policies that allow our members to adapt and thrive in a changing world of work."

The BCC survey revealed significant differences in sectoral attitudes towards hybrid working, with manufacturers most likely to be expecting all working days to be on-site in the next year.

In contrast, just over a quarter of business-to-business service companies say they'll be expecting all shifts to be in person over the next year.

Views are mixed over the productivity impact of remote or hybrid working. Half of manufacturers say it decreases productivity, compared to 41% of all firms reporting a negative impact.

While most of the firms who require on-site working say it hasn't impacted

recruitment or retention, one in ten relevant businesses do claim to have seen staff leave in response.

The Chamber network says it is seeing a clear shift towards more firms requiring full on-site working, but it's by no means a uniform picture.

The trend is being led by manufacturers and consumer-facing businesses, while around two thirds of B2B service firms continue to operate hybrid models.

Jane Gratton, director of public policy at the British Chambers of Commerce, said: "With the cost of doing business continuing to escalate, firms are looking to boost productivity.

"Hybrid working can help firms attract and retain a skilled and engaged workforce. However, some employers are identifying significant benefits of bringing all staff together again on site.

"A flexible working approach makes good business sense, but to drive economic growth, managers also need the flexibility to do what's right for their business."

- What's the situation at your business? Has hybrid working made a positive difference to recruitment and retention or damaged productivity and profitability? Email editor@shropshirebiz.com with your views





Cedarwood

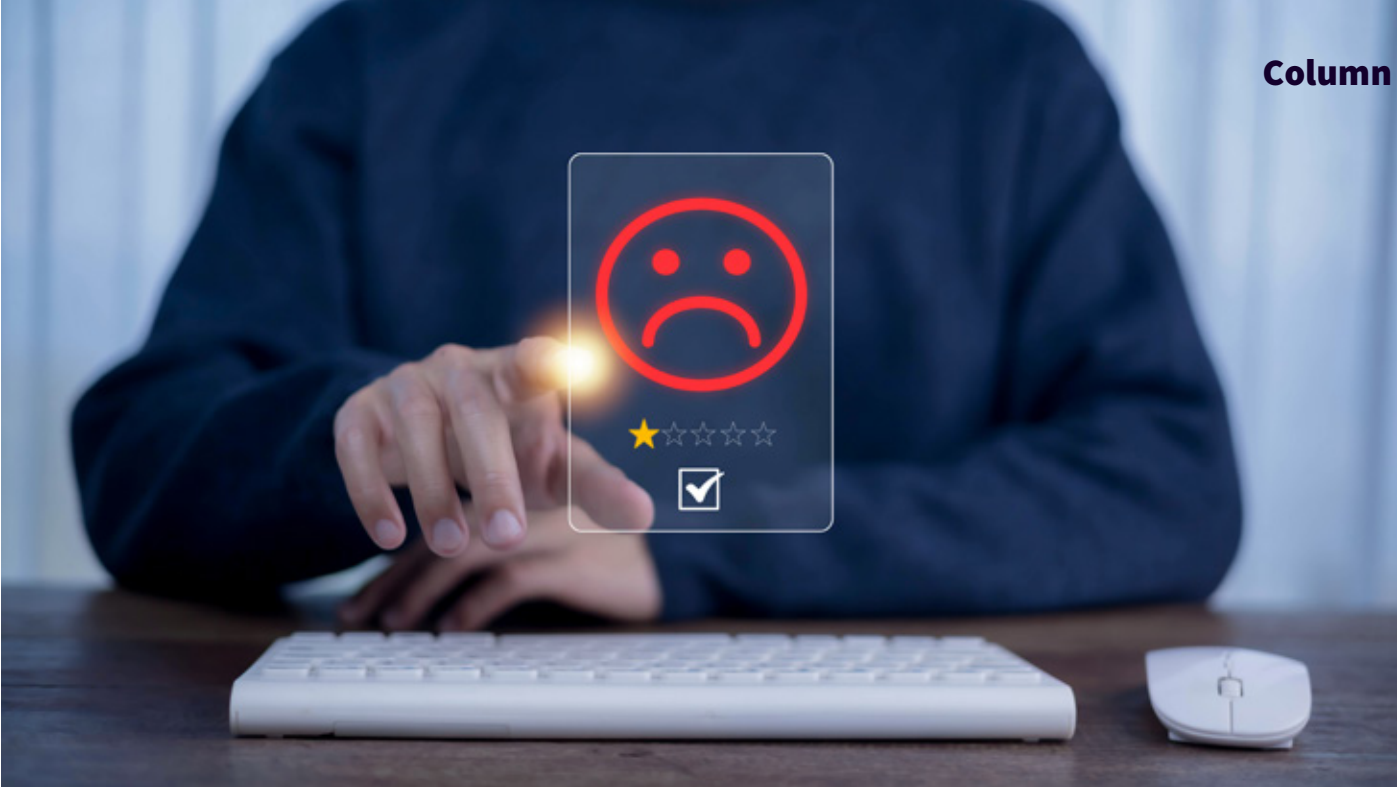
TREE CONSULTANTS

- Tree Safety Assessments
- Trees & Planning
- Help with Planning Appeals
- Expert Witness Support
- TPO Submissions and Advice
- Planting Schemes Designed
- Amenity Tree Valuations
- Help with Boundary Disputes

Telephone: 01981 570426

E-mail: enquiries@treeconsultants.org.uk

www.treeconsultants.org.uk



Sick of poor service?

Martyn James



Sometimes life can seem a bit of a never-ending battle, can't it? From bank branches vanishing on the High Street to retailers running roughshod over your rights, it's easy to think you can't fight back.

But you can. If we all take a little time to push back against bad services and poor business decisions, we can make a difference. Here's my guide on how to stand up for your rights and make businesses listen to you.

Refuse to use the automated checkouts
The news that both Sainsburys and Tesco are using AI technology to spy on shoppers using their automated checkouts to see if you are 'forgetting' to put all the items through correctly has caused much outrage and amusement. But this masks a very real problem.

Automated checkouts are among the most despised of all services. Yet other supermarkets are reducing their use and reverting to people on the checkouts.

So when you go shopping, before you start

ask if there is anyone on the till and make sure you use them, even if it means a slightly longer queue. The campaign to restore the humans starts here!

Ditch the disruptors

Are you annoyed by the sight of spoiled businessmen interfering in the democratic process and firing off super expensive rockets into space? Don't give them your money.

I've been trying to wean myself off the big online shops lately and it's not as hard as you might think. Separate out the things that you buy in to sectors. For example, purchase your books from an independent online bookseller (you can get special or signed editions for the same price too).

Have a look at your last few months of orders and have a think about if you can buy the items from smaller, independent shops. You don't have to ditch the mega companies completely – but you can dramatically reduce your reliance on them.

Don't share your data

If you've downloaded an app on your phone or subscribe to a website, a button will pop up at some point asking if it can 'track your activity'. Click 'no'.

If you don't, your private information, from your interests to your location, will be harvested. This can be sold to other businesses so they can market more aggressively to you.

Make someone's day

Lots of businesses ask you for feedback on their service – however, they often link individual good service to how they perform as a business: so people don't bother.

If you hate the company but love the

person, ask how you can send a compliment about them as an individual. That way you are rewarding someone who provided excellent customer service without endorsing a business that you don't like.

Was it something I said?

Why would you give money to a business that has no intention of speaking to you? Incredibly, some of the biggest companies in the UK have no customer phone number or email. Before you buy anything, find the contact details of the business.

If there isn't a human option, ask yourself what you'd do if you need to complain. Give your cash to businesses that prize good customer service.

Shop ethically

I'm not a believer in boycotts or xenophobia, but if you don't want to give your money to a business from a particular country – or one that holds views you disagree with – then don't.

You can download a range of free apps that will tell you where the goods you buy come from if you want to be a little more informed. You'll also find loads of guides to ethically-sound businesses if you want to reward rather than avoid.

Loyalty sucks

Most effective of all: vote with your feet. It's very easy to switch everything, from bank accounts to energy or broadband companies. Mark in your diary when your contract expires and if you aren't happy, walk.

The business will contact you to ask you why – then you can tell them with the minimum of inconvenience!

Martyn James is a leading consumer rights campaigner, TV and radio broadcaster and journalist. <https://martynjamesexpert.co.uk>

Creative hub will be a lasting legacy

Media agency Reech is preparing to move into a new purpose-built creative space on Shrewsbury Business Park. Local entrepreneur Rob Hughes and his wife Jo have project-managed the building known as The Barn at The Hay Yard.

Rob said: "I've spent over 15 years building a business here in rural Shropshire because this is my home and a county that I'm immensely proud of. To now be able to invest in a permanent office space in the area is a huge achievement for me, and a long-term goal that I've had from early on in my career."

"Owning my own piece of corporate Shropshire is more than a business decision for me. It's about creating a lasting legacy, and a first-of-its-kind creative hub for our town."

At over 4,700 square feet, The Barn is more than three times the size of Reech's current rented offices. It has meeting room space, an events area for hosting conferences and workshops, and a dedicated media studio for photo, audio, and video production.



Rob Hughes says the move fulfils a long-term goal

Caravan and camping site is awarded five gold stars

An award-winning Shropshire touring and glamping resort is celebrating after striking gold following an AA Hotel and Hospitality Services inspection.

Love2Stay resort at Emstrey, Shrewsbury, has been awarded Five Gold Stars in the AA Star Grading Scheme for Caravan and Camping parks after achieving a quality score of 95%.

"In terms of the AA Quality standards, Love2Stay Shrewsbury continues to merit the award of Five AA Gold Stars for 2025," said Stephen Wilkinson, AA inspector. "It was a pleasure to visit this site."

Charlie Ward, Love2Stay's joint manager, said: "The five star grading from the AA is fantastic news and recognition of all the investment and hard work that has gone into our wonderful resort."

"We are very proud of the standard of our facilities and the quality customer service that we provide to our guests. We are a destination where guests of all ages can relax, enhance their wellness, and enjoy a wide range of activities."

The recognition came at a particularly busy time for the resort, which is located next door to parent company Salop Leisure's headquarters.

Earlier this year, Love2Stay invested a further £750,000 in five new holiday lodges on the hugely popular glamping village to meet growing demand for short breaks in the United Kingdom.

This investment has paid off, as the new lodges are proving very popular with guests. The resort now has five luxury lodges, 11 safari lodges and 11 Woodland lodges.

Guests also have full access to the bio swimming pool, splash pool and beach, the cinema, wellbeing services, and a wide range of outdoor activities for all the family.



Love2Stay joint manager Charlie Ward with the new AA Five Star grading plaque

Circular agriculture innovation in action

Bosses at a Shropshire fertiliser producer welcomed MP Helen Morgan to see first-hand how a local company is pioneering a circular, sustainable future for farming with a globally significant technology.

The North Shropshire MP visited Lohas Fertiliser in Oswestry where she was welcomed by co-founders Carlos Kao and Lian Lin, who shared the company's journey from their initial £1 million investment to becoming a recognised leader in sustainable agri-tech.

The business has recently showcased its technology at Horizon Europe in Poland and is gaining attention across the UK and Europe for its contribution to nutrient recycling, soil health and climate-conscious agriculture.

During the visit, Helen Morgan was shown Lohas's patented NutriCycleX process in action – a rapid enzyme-based fermentation system that transforms poultry manure into high-quality, pathogen-free organic fertiliser in just three hours. With no odour, zero emissions, and full nutrient retention, the process is a model for circular innovation in agriculture.

Carlos Kao said: "We've always believed in the power of waste-to-resource innovation. What we do here is more than processing manure – we're transforming a problem into a solution that benefits the land, the farmer, and the climate. There's so much potential to replicate this model across the UK and Europe, and it's exciting to see growing support for it."

Currently producing up to 60 tonnes per month from their West Farm site in Crickheath, the Lohas team demonstrated how their fertiliser is already delivering results in vineyards, horticulture and regenerative farming, with strong trial outcomes from partnerships with Harper Adams University and early adopters such as Rowton and Hencote Vineyards.

Lian Lin said: "What sets us apart is how quickly we can process organic waste into a consistent, high-performance fertiliser that actually improves soil health long-term. Our technology directly supports the kind of changes farmers want to make but often don't have the tools or support to do."

"We are so pleased Helen came to visit us and can now take what she has learned to the Government and continue to support our movement." The discussion also covered current policy challenges, such as the



Lohas Fertiliser director Carlos Kao, North Shropshire MP Helen Morgan, director of Lohas Fertiliser Lian Lin and Shropshire councillor for St Oswald's Andy Davis

recent High Court ruling that classified poultry litter as industrial waste, and how Lohas's solution can help address nutrient pollution in sensitive catchments like the River Wye. The team is already collaborating with poultry farmers across the region to help reduce runoff and add value to by-products that might otherwise be lost.

Lohas also shared its future ambitions as part of a Horizon Europe consortium bid, which includes establishing three demonstration projects – food waste in urban environments, green waste for municipalities, and manure waste in intensive farming regions.

Helen Morgan MP said: "It's always great to see a business investing in North Shropshire – particularly one that is innovating in solutions that help farmers and help the environment."

Lian added: "We're proud to call North Shropshire our home. We've proven that big ideas can grow in rural areas, and with the right partnerships, we can make a real impact on national and international levels. This is about delivering real solutions, not just talking about them."

Lohas Fertiliser is already supported by APHA, DEFRA and the Environment Agency and is a regular presence at national industry events including the RHS Peat-Free Transition Conference, the Four Oaks Show and Tesco's Agri T-Jam. The team is also actively involved in DEFRA's Farming Innovation Programme.

● For more information, visit www.lohasfertiliser.co.uk or contact lian@lohasfertiliser.co.uk

Distributor Opportunities

LOHAS Fertiliser is an organic fertiliser manufacturer based in Shropshire.

We are seeking **local, regional and national partners** to expand access to our premium organic fertilisers, and to build strong business opportunities across Shropshire and beyond.

Scan QR code to find out more on our website.

JOIN US IN GROWING A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

07878 346 050 | lian@lohasfertiliser.co.uk | www.lohasfertiliser.co.uk



Rudells' new flagship store is located in the second city's New Street



The Patek Philippe brand stands out at the Birmingham location

A jewel in Birmingham's crown

Shropshire Business director Henry Carpenter examines the bond between iconic watch maker Patek Philippe, and jeweller Rudells, whose new store in New Street has one of the UK's largest retail areas devoted to the luxury brand.

In the summer I was fortunate enough to be invited to a special evening at Rudells' new store in New Street.

It's quite something, with a great deal of thought – and no doubt money – invested into creating a thoroughly chic, luxurious, and comfortable space for discerning clients to browse for watches, necklaces, rings, earrings, pens and all manner of other jewellery, either as gifts for others or treats for themselves.

If there is one brand which stands out at Rudells' flagship in New Street, it is Patek Philippe, the family-owned Swiss watchmaker which has gained almost mythical status and is a byword for exclusivity and precision.

While there were scores of Rudells' clients perusing the shop on that summer's evening, there were also representatives from Patek Philippe, not least the brand's UK managing director Adrian Lurshay.

Rudell's managing director, Jon Weston, was also on hand in between chatting to customers, and I was able to put various questions to them both which go some way to explaining the importance of relationship between brand and retailer.

First of all, Adrian, could I ask you to explain the mystique behind the Patek Philippe brand?

There are many solid elements that can explain the aura of the company, and which can be discussed throughout its history.

Patek Philippe, founded in 1839, is the oldest and only remaining family-owned Geneva watchmaking company. It was founded by Antoine Norbert de Patek and Jean Adrien Philippe and in 1932 was acquired by the Stern family.

Today, the company is led by the president



Adrian Lurshay, UK managing director for Patek Philippe

Thierry Stern, who is the fourth generation and who has been working focused on Patek Philippe's values: independence, tradition, innovation, quality and fine workmanship, rarity, value, aesthetics, service, emotion and heritage. With them as foundation, he has been leading Patek with a long-term strategy, guiding the constant innovation of the company in conjunction with its remarkable tradition.

The result is a constant improvement in the quality and accuracy of the timepieces, that are

always attracting interest from connoisseurs, clients and future ones.

Patek Philippe's "Advanced Research" team keeps investing in new materials and technologies. At the same time, the tradition of ancestral watchmaking, the know-how and the savoir-faire within the company is maintained and passed through generations of watchmakers and artisans.

Every year, an exceptional new Rare Handcrafts collection, composed by unique timepieces including pocket watches, wristwatches, and clocks, is created and exhibited.

Another element that makes Patek Philippe so unique it is museum, open to the public in Geneva in November 2001.

The honorary president of the company Philippe Stern created a space to showcase and share with the public an extraordinary and unique collection of nearly 2,500 watches, musical automata, and miniature enamels from the 16th century to today.

At the museum, visitors can also find an extensive library focused on the art of timekeeping.

The museum is exceptional, so it is not a surprise that it attracts a significant number of visitors yearly.

I could be here speaking about so many more elements, but I will highlight two more before I go as I consider them quite impressive.

The Patek Philippe Seal, introduced in 2009 for our mechanical timepieces, has the industry's strictest quality control standards. This hallmark is applied to the entire watch.

Finally, I would like to mention our advertising campaign. It is almost 30 years since Patek Philippe launched the 'Generations' campaign: "You never actually own a Patek Philippe. You merely look after it for the next generation", a strong campaign with an emotional and universal approach.

Jon, what you were trying to achieve when designing the interior with Patek Philippe in mind?

The simple answer is we wanted to create the best Patek Philippe showroom in the UK, and I think we have achieved this with by how well it all flows.

The Patek Philippe area fits seamlessly in with our finishes, which complement each other very well.

There was a huge responsibility to get it perfect, but with Geneva assistance we had the industry best for both the 'white boxing' as they call it, and the finishing elements of furniture; they all came together perfectly.

From the very beginning Patek Philippe was to be the most prominent aspect of the showroom, and the beautiful internal area and external signage reflects this.

I also think the range of our high-end jewellery ranges sit very well with the world's premier watch house.

And Jon again, how has the Birmingham and West Midlands market reacted to having Patek Philippe on its doorstep?

It's been incredible. I looked at this site several years ago, and I should have pushed the green light then to be honest.



Rudells' managing director Jon Weston is proud of the bond shared with the Patek Philippe brand

Big city, big brands as they say, so the partnership is very natural. Bringing in a world-renowned partner like Patek Philippe and indeed Rudells to Birmingham has been truly warmly received.

We have been welcomed by other businesses and especially by our clients, both existing and new. It's a great community in Birmingham and we are very proud to be part of it. Thankfully, demand remains very strong with collectors and those aspiring to begin a luxury watch collection.



A luxury brand deserves luxurious surroundings

Adrian, how important is the bond between the brand and its retailers?

We have been working with our authorised retailer network for many years.

With Rudells, we started the relationship with Tony Rudell in 1997 and then with Jon since he took over as managing director. In all these years, our relationship has been developing, getting stronger, and we are now very proud to be at their new location in Birmingham.

Finally Jon, how much pleasure does it give you to have that responsibility of being one of the chosen few retailers for Patek Philippe?

I could go on for quite some time on this question Henry. We are immensely proud and sincerely excited to be partnered with Patek Philippe – it's a wonderful responsibility to be given.

We demonstrate great mutual trust and support for each other. Our core family values of excellence align perfectly, and it's a real honour to be part of their exclusive family.

Our enthusiasm is also second to none, the Rudell team are fanatically dedicated to ensuring our client experience is the best there is.

We all admire the engineering and creativity that goes into the development of the timepieces, the grand complications are just awe inspiring!



Diane Brown at the Sweets Galore stall in Wellington Market

Sweet opportunity

Refurbishment work is set to get under way on Wellington Market in a move which has received a warm welcome from traders.

Telford & Wrekin Council has secured Government funding for investment in the fabric of the buildings, and improvements to the look, feel and operations of the historic 12th century site.

Family-run business Sweets Galore has been based at Wellington Market for 50 years, and owners John and Diane Brown say they are excited about moving into a new unit.

“There’s always an element of risk with change, but we are really grateful to have a future and realise that if the refurbishment of the market isn’t done there won’t be a future – the market will die,” they said.

“The market is a very important part of the community in Wellington and we’re pleased that the historic features of the building, which has stood here for centuries, are being maintained.”

The plans include a redesigned layout, plus improved covered outdoor space for events and an enhanced food court.

Telford & Wrekin Council is ensuring that all traders can continue to trade during the refurbishment programme, and is supporting those impacted by providing a rent-free period for the duration that any trader is temporarily moved during the works.

Rules for leaders receive a rewrite

A marketing agency director will be exploring ways of ‘rewriting the rules of leadership’ as a woman in business at Shropshire Chamber of Commerce’s next Network of Women event.

Amelia Redge from Reech will be the guest speaker at the meeting on September 17 at Stockton House, in Norton, near Shifnal. The meeting starts at 11am.

Kelly Riedel, the Chamber’s head of member success, said: “Amelia will be sharing her own experiences and giving an insight into how her career has progressed so far, and how our delegates can use her advice to benefit their own professional lives.

“She will be reflecting on her route to the top, from high pressure roles in London and Birmingham, to joining Reech initially as head of growth and marketing, then at director-level in just 12 months.

“Amelia will be speaking candidly about overcoming imposter syndrome, building influence, and staying resilient while pushing boundaries.”



Amelia Redge from Reech

Kelly said the Network of Women was all about creating a relaxed group where women could connect and forge mutually beneficial relationships with like-minded individuals from across the region.



Mark Savill of BCRS Business Loans with Ruth Martin of Martin & Jones Marketing

Loan will help to support future strategy

Oswestry-based marketing agency Martin & Jones has increased its headcount after securing funding for growth from community lender BCRS Business Loans.

The company has recruited a new account and campaign manager, Rowena Grundy, after receiving a five-figure loan to support its expansion strategy.

Rowena brings over 25 years of experience in strategic planning, integrated marketing, and copywriting across both digital and traditional channels.

Based in Shropshire for 40 years, she has a diverse background working with agencies and businesses across a range of industries,

including jewellery, education, and pet care – most recently working at Oswestry School.

Prior to this, her career included roles at digital agency Hunter Bevan, CJ Wildlife (a major supplier of garden bird food), and a luxury jewellery chain manufacturer.

“I’m excited to be part of a growing local business that wants to support other local businesses with their marketing, and I’m looking forward to working on the great projects we have planned for our clients,” she said.

Led by founder and director Ruth Martin, the business provides strategic marketing and public relations services for a range of companies including manufacturers, and not-for-profit organisations and charities.

Now employing five people, Martin & Jones Marketing approached BCRS Business Loans when it was looking for a loan to fund the creation of a new role to expand its customer account management resource.

Launched in 2019, the business, which has its premises in Arthur Street, delivers a range of services including news writing and social media management through to merchandising.

Ruth said: “We wanted the opportunity to scale up to meet the client demand but needed funds to support our cashflow during the recruitment process, especially as there were new clients who wanted to work with us.

“Now we have the skills in place to take on more clients, giving us a platform to grow and take on more employees in the future.”



Account and campaign manager Rowena Grundy

A fresh new sound for Shropshire

shropshirelive on air

online

smart speaker

mobile app

Tailored advice from legal experts

Aaron & Partners Solicitors

aaronandpartners.com

Chester | Shrewsbury | Greater Manchester | Wirral

Short stories with impact

● **The Falcon Hotel in Low Town, Bridgnorth, is up for sale. Specialist business property adviser Christie & Co is marketing the historic 17th century hotel in the heart of Bridgnorth, which is on the market due to the retirement of the current owners. Harry Coughlin, business agent at Christie & Co, said: “From day one, this presents a strong opportunity for an experienced restaurant operator to establish their own brand within a busy hotel environment. The operator will act as the exclusive food provider for the hotel, with the ability to generate revenue across breakfast, brunch, lunch, and evening service.”**

● **Oswestry-based home life safety specialist Aico has completed its Social Housing Professionals Network (SHPN) Roadshow for 2025. The nationwide initiative, in partnership with international law firm Trowers & Hamlin, brought together housing professionals from across the UK to discuss the pressing challenges and innovations shaping the future of social housing. The roadshow welcomed over 1,000 attendees from 400 organisations across the UK, making a total of 16 stops, including Stoke, Manchester, Belfast, Dundee, London, Bristol and Cardiff. Each session featured expert presentations and breakout discussions focused on upcoming housing legislation, a region-specific overview, data strategies, and future-proofing homes.**

● **Living Space, the affordable housing specialist, has secured planning approval for a 38-home scheme off Cedars Drive in northern Shrewsbury, as the national shortage of affordable and social homes continues to dominate the housing agenda. The £10 million development is a mix of shared ownership, affordable rent and social rent, in partnership with Housing Plus Group. The development will feature a range of sustainable features, including air source heat pumps, solar panels and EV charging points.**

● **Three wealth managers from Shrewsbury are taking on an epic 50km challenge across the mountains of Switzerland to raise money for Hope House children’s hospice. James Wilcox-Jones, Billy Shaw and Max Beardmore from RBC Brewin Dolphin start the Wild 50 mountain race across the Swiss Alps on September 20, and have given themselves a target of completing the challenge in eight to ten hours. Max said: “We all decided that we wanted to support a local charity, and we all knew about the amazing care that Hope House gives to local families. Two of us have volunteered and visited the hospice and have seen first-hand all the support and care offered to children and their families, and we are honoured to raise money for such a worthy cause.”**

● **Independent power producer Enviromena has acquired the Rock Farm solar project near Ludlow from Anglo Renewables. The project, which also provides the option for the co-location of battery storage, will generate enough clean electricity to power the equivalent of over 16,000 homes annually and will avoid over 7,500 tonnes of carbon emissions each year. Scheduled to connect to the grid in 2026, the owners say the site will deliver lasting environmental enhancements, including the planting of new trees and hedgerows, wildflower meadows and the continuation of sheep grazing.**

● **Shropshire Community Foundation has been recognised for the excellent work it does as a third sector organisation with the award of the Trusted Standard Level 1 by the National Council for Voluntary Organisations. It recognises the group as well run, well managed and committed to providing effective services for internal and external stakeholders. Selina Graham, who chairs the Foundation, said: “This is a fantastic result in just under three years of our existence. I am extremely proud of the whole team.” The Foundation raises and distributes funds to charities and community groups across Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin. It works in partnership with organisations, individuals and companies across the county to raise money.**



RBC Brewin Dolphin trio James Wilcox-Jones, Billy Shaw and Max Beardmore



The Aico roadshow in Leeds



The Hortonwood development is another success story for Telford Land Deal



Thorne Works at Dorington

County expects hundreds of new jobs

New warehouses are being built at Hortonwood as part of a £35 million investment.

Led by Total Developments, the project will provide 350,000 square feet of high quality industrial space, meeting the borough’s increasing demand for flexible manufacturing and distribution facilities.

Part of Telford & Wrekin Council’s successful Land Deal, the development – known as Total Park – will provide four modern units of varying sizes, creating flexible opportunities for expanding businesses.

Expected to create hundreds of jobs,

the scheme will support Telford’s expanding industrial base, further cementing the borough as a key location for commercial investment. All units are now completed and ready for occupation.

The Hortonwood development is another success story from the Telford Land Deal – a partnership between Telford & Wrekin Council and Homes England. Since its establishment, the Land Deal has created more than 2,400 jobs, transformed over 200,000 square metres of commercial space and generated over £60 million in sales income.

Meanwhile, a large prominent and versatile commercial property near Shrewsbury is now on the market with Halls Commercial.

Thorne Works at Dorington offers a range of workshop, storage and office accommodation on a site of nearly two acres fronting the busy A49.

It had been the home of Bulkrite, a commercial vehicle body manufacturer and repairer for around 40 years. The company closed this summer.

The property is available to either purchase with a guide price of just under £1.5 million or to let for an annual rent of £90,000.

Commendation for credentials

Bishop’s Castle-based Jesmonite has been recognised in a national awards final for its worldwide business credentials.

The company was highly commended in the Government’s 2025 Made in the UK, Sold to the World Awards.

The accolade, handed out by the Department for Business and Trade, was given in the Creative Industries category, recognising the work the company does to produce eco-friendly materials for use in the creative industries across the globe.

Managing director Piran Littleton said: “We are very proud to have a worldwide business which sends our product to more than 80 countries from our base in Shropshire.

“It is an honour to be given highly commended in this category and I am pleased the Government is impressed with the way our business has grown over the years.

“We believe there is much more to come in the future and will continue to work hard to provide this popular material to people in the creative and architectural industries across the world.”

Jesmonite materials are water-based eco-friendly concrete alternatives that are used by creatives to make jewellery, coasters, home decor, furniture and much more.

Having launched in Shropshire in 1984, the company has seen huge growth in recent years and now works with businesses on every continent of the world.

A spokesperson for the DBT said: “The quality of entries we received was extremely high, and many of the shortlisted entries demonstrated excellent detail around how business growth and success is intrinsically linked to international sales.

“Jesmonite submitted an entry that was well-crafted and engaging, which made the selection process incredibly difficult for the judging panel.”



The winning team from SE Computer Services

Fundraising event

Severn Hospice’s first ever corporate golf day saw local businesses come together for a day of friendly competition, networking and fundraising – all in support of the hospice’s specialist care.

Top honours on the day at Hawkstone Park went to the team from SE Computer Services who took the team title – while one of its team members, Matt Simmonds, also won the individual title.

Corporate fundraiser Jenny Bean said: “We couldn’t have asked for a better day – beautiful weather, brilliant company, and an incredible show of support for Severn Hospice. It was fantastic to see so many businesses from across Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin, and Mid Wales come together, have fun, and make a real difference.”



Eddie Allan, Nicola Edwards and Ed Firth



Kerry Williams, Vanessa Postle and Rebecca Blount

Relaxed summer social

Business growth specialists Good2Great welcomed clients, associates, and connections to a relaxed Summer Social at its Bridgnorth headquarters, designed to bring their professional community together in an informal setting.

It was an opportunity for meaningful conversation, networking, and a moment to reflect on the strong relationships that underpin the company's work. Guests enjoyed drinks, nibbles, and the chance to connect outside the usual business context.



Johnny Themans and Rebecca Blount



Roger Boyle



Helen Spickernell



HR without the headache

- ✓

Employment support and advice
- ✓

Employment contracts
- ✓

Employee engagement
- ✓

Policies and procedures
- ✓

Absence management
- ✓

Award-winning support

Trusted, friendly, expert HR support for every business

07728 606222 Ishbel@hrsolutionsshropshire.co.uk www.hrsolutionsshropshire.co.uk

Setting sail for barbecue



A trio from R1 Construction – Andy Evans, Ed Dean and Josh Coleman



Simon Adcock, Jenny Bean, Nicky Ingram, Helen Walker, Colleen Mullarkey, and Pippa Tait

Shropshire Chamber of Commerce members set sail on a sunset cruise as they came together for their annual summer barbecue.

Sabrina Boat in Shrewsbury hosted the annual event which brought together Chamber members, staff and supporters for an evening of good food and networking. The celebrations included a hot barbecue buffet served from the Sabrina Boat pontoon.



A relaxed evening of networking on Sabrina Boat



Emilie Kerr, Helen Columb, Anna Williams, and Ruth Martin



Helen Knight, Diane Brown, John Smallman and Piran Littleton



Richard Hughes, Matt Small, Ruth Ross and Carl Jones



Ruth Ross checks out the captain's cabin on Sabrina Boat



Sarah Tennant, Kirsty Smallman, and Hannah Taylor



Benjamin Botfield, Matt Beaumont-Perry, and Laura Beaumont-Perry



Her Royal Highness The Princess Royal enjoys meeting key staff members at the Field Studies Council



Talking to Matthew Hawes, nature recovery and estates manager for Field Studies Council

Royal visit for charity

A Shropshire charity which provides outdoor education to thousands of schoolchildren has officially welcomed The Princess Royal as its new patron.

She toured the Field Studies Council's Preston Montford field studies centre near Shrewsbury and met with young people who were on site for outdoor learning.

The environmental education charity operates a network of field study centres and works with schoolchildren right across the UK – engaging some of the most deprived young people in outdoor learning and giving them access to nature.

During the visit, The Princess Royal also met charity trustees, senior management, centre managers from across the UK, education team leaders, hospitality, catering, office and maintenance staff who play a pivotal role in keeping the charity's centres fully operational.



Princess Anne unveils a plaque to mark her visit and official patronage



The Princess Royal meets students from the Marches Academy Trust who regularly visit Field Studies Council for outdoor learning



The Princess Royal meets civic dignitaries and Field Studies Council president Timothy Burt and chairman Jeffrey Sissons



The royal visitor learns about fundraising efforts from Gemma Edmonds



Meeting and greeting Field Studies Council trustees



Staff and governors with the long service award recipients and their guests at Weston Park



Shirley Pugh and Linda Pugh

Long service is acknowledged

Telford College presented long service awards to 17 members of staff – with a combined service of 478 years. They were invited to afternoon tea in the orangery at Weston Park, where they received an engraved trophy.

Cleaning supervisor Shirley Pugh was the longest serving staff member to be recognised, with 37 years of service, followed by engineering technician Evan Evans who has been with the college for 34 years.

Other long-serving staff members recognised were Trish Harris, Suzanne Wilkes, Julian Dwane, Carol Watts, Tracey Bailey, Elaine Corbett, Gosia Dawe, Karen Ciuro, Claire Routledge, Diane Adams, Shirley Osborne, Caroline Welson, Anthony Austin, Lynn Hemming and Michaela Jinks.



Karen Ciuro with Michaela Jinks



Afternoon tea in the orangery at Weston Park



Justine Allen and Suzanne Wilkes



Caroline Bastow with Darren Bailey and Tracey Bailey



Gail Bleasby, Trish Harris, and Lawrence Wood



Service taking place at the afternoon tea



Managing director Andrew Davies (front centre) with the recently promoted colleagues

Promotions througout firm

Shropshire law firm mfg Solicitors has announced the promotions of 13 lawyers across various specialisms and offices, including the appointments of five legal directors.

Stepping into legal director roles are private client expert Rachel Summers and tax and succession planning specialist Scott Vanes, while agricultural and rural affairs solicitor Hannah Taylor, Lynsey Cater from the commercial property team, and personal injury lawyer David Lydon, also become legal directors.

At senior associate level, commercial property solicitor Laura Moore and Stephanie Rushfirth from the firm's property litigation team have also been handed promotions.

The firm has also announced six solicitors being promoted to associate. The promotions are Lucy Harrold from the corporate department, residential conveyancing duo Claire Ross and Danielle Fenn, the family team's Kennedy Langley, and private client solicitors Katie Hardwick and Sam Davis.

Equestrian role suits Hayley



Hayley Jay takes on the role of business development manager at the Cavalier Centre in Much Wenlock

Hayley Jay is the new business development manager at the Cavalier Centre, based near Much Wenlock.

The equestrian facility runs specialist programmes for people with disabilities, including riding, vaulting and carriage driving.

Hayley has been the local business specialist at motor dealership Furrows since 2018, specialising in helping corporate customers with electric vehicles.

Prior to that, she spent many years running her own business – Hayley J Couture – a fashion and bridalwear brand that was sold in the UK and internationally.

Egyptian-born Wael enhances opportunities



Wael Saied takes a break with Paddington

An Egyptian-born businessman who has made a new home in Shropshire says the human resources course he studied at Telford College has helped him to achieve promotion.

Wael Saied is originally from Cairo, where he was raised around 20 miles from the famous Pyramids. He settled in the UK in 2009 and has worked in recent years for dairy giant Muller, and automotive company TI Fluid Systems.

He enrolled on a part-time CIPD evening course at Telford College to help him progress his career – and has now been appointed HR manager at TI Automotive, based at Stafford Park.

He said: “I wanted to develop myself, gain a recognised qualification to back up my experience, and enhance my career opportunities.

“I used to enjoy the Thursday nights on campus – although it was hard work, our tutor Ann Dollaghan was always there to help and support us, and to make the course interesting and engaging.

“This qualification has already helped me. Without this qualification my promotion to HR manager would never have been possible. I am now considering doing the CIPD level 7.”

The CIPD (Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development) is the UK's professional body for human resources and learning and development.

It is recognised as the ‘gold standard’ for people professionals, offering qualifications, resources, and membership that help shape better work and working lives.



Tom Dainty, Halls Oswestry manager

Going back to his roots

An experienced residential estate agency professional, who has held senior leadership roles in London and Dubai, has swapped city life to return to his Shropshire roots.

Tom Dainty has been recruited by Halls to run the company's estate agency office in Oswestry, with a mission to grow and modernise the business.

After leaving Shifnal for London at the age of 18, he climbed the ranks to become head of department and director at two of the capital's largest estate agents before moving to a management position in Dubai.

The pandemic persuaded Tom to return to London where he took up a senior leadership position with a company which was later acquired by Druce.

“As lovely as it has been working in the fast-paced city environment, we have opted for a slower pace of family life here in Shropshire,” said Tom. “I am delighted to join Halls – a legacy brand with great growth potential and an agenda to modernise. The industry is going through a period of change and technological revolution where estate agency is being remodelled.

“My aim is to grow Halls’ business in Oswestry from a stable base and to ultimately seek a leadership position within the company.”

Meanwhile, another of Halls’ branch managers has qualified as a chartered surveyor.

Alex Forber, who manages the Barker Street branch in Shrewsbury, joined the company in 2006 after graduating in sports



Alex Forber, based at the Barker Street branch in Shrewsbury, has qualified as a chartered surveyor

science and business management and became an associate director eight years ago.

“Becoming a chartered surveyor is the pinnacle of the profession and the most respected membership and qualification within the industry,” said Alex.

From investment banking to lead on diversification



Jason Henley is the newly-appointed vice chair of Friends of Telford Town Park

The Friends of Telford Town Park has a new vice chair who is championing a campaign to diversify its pool of volunteers and attract younger members.

Former investment banker Jason Henley wants the group to attract people from a wider ethnic background ‘that celebrates our community diversity within Telford’.

He believes it is important to get away from the idea that volunteering is only carried out by retired people or where there is a reward to be gained, such as the Duke of Edinburgh Award.

The 50-year-old moved to Telford from London in November and lives in Muxton with his wife Kerry and sons George and Teddy.

He has also worked in the community sector, first volunteering at the age of 21, and spent 25 years as a professional operations director travelling all over the world. His last job was with the London Lions basketball team.

He said: “Like a lot of people I got into gardening during lockdown, which helped me through the pandemic. Then, after moving to Telford, I saw a sign about FOTTP, went along the following week, and now I’m delighted to be the group’s vice chair.

“It’s great to give back but I like to ask, what are you giving back to? With FOTTP, it’s a free-to-use community garden for people to come in and interact with the space.

“There is certainly a stereotype that volunteering is for older people, so we have to change the stigma.”

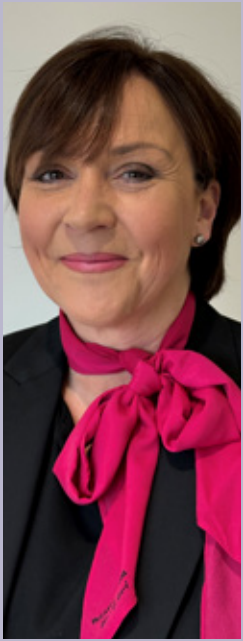
Brewing happiness for retirement living

After 12 years of brewing up success as the owner of a beloved coffee shop and delicatessen in Aldridge, Sarah Anderton is embarking on a new chapter with McCarthy Stone as a sales consultant of Webb Grange – a retirement living development coming soon to Telford.

Sarah's career has been diverse. From working in finance as a mortgage advisor, to running her very own coffee shop. She opened the coffee shop and delicatessen during the 2008 credit crunch.

"From brewing the perfect latte to helping retirees find their dream homes, my career really has been a bit of everything," she said.

"But my commitment to creating communities and fostering happiness has remained the same throughout. Seeing the difference McCarthy Stone makes in people's lives and helping them find their perfect forever home to suit their wants and needs is incredibly rewarding."



Sarah Anderton has joined McCarthy Stone as a sales consultant

Solving problems

Alex Smith is the latest high profile hire brought in by Telford-based automation and control specialist iconsys.

He will support companies operating in food and beverage, fast-moving consumer goods, and the aerospace supply chains.

The new head of sales for consumer goods and aerospace and defence believes the fast-moving consumer goods sector has seen unprecedented pressure from labour constraints, supply chain disruption and increasing regulations – and there is now a growing demand to introduce more automation, robotics and systems that can harvest real-time data.

He brings 15 years of global technical sales experience gained at Emerson, Cimlogic and Eyelit, with acute knowledge of IT and operational technology deployment across highly-regulated sectors, including aerospace and defence, consumer goods, medical, and automotive.

"It's all about solving problems and delivering value, and that really resonates when you are talking to the customer about automation solutions," Alex said.

"In essence, we can make consumer goods and aerospace companies digital-ready. From our technology partner independence and ability to carry out site assessments and functional safety consultancy, through to system integration and full turnkey automation lines, it's a tailored solution from start to finish.



iconsys has taken on Alex Smith in a high profile role

"The approach is to partner with our customers over the entire lifecycle of their assets, from initial consultancy and automation project design, to delivery, implementation and ongoing maintenance."

Nick Darrall, managing director of Iconsys, said: "As a management team we've identified several key industries where our expertise, solutions, consultative and 'lifecycle' offers can be applied to deliver immediate and long-term benefits.

"Consumer goods and aerospace are both sectors that need a lot of support towards digitisation, and, in Alex, we have the perfect lead to help support our expansion in this market."

Joe returns to company in a managing director role

A new managing director has been appointed at Persimmon Homes West Midlands.

Joe Turner has taken over the reins at the Telford office, where he will be responsible for the 102-strong team and will oversee all of the company's regional operations throughout Shropshire, South Staffordshire and the Black Country.

Joe, who lives in Telford, returns to Persimmon Homes having last worked for the company in 2018 as head of technical in the company's

South Midlands office. He joins from Vistry where he has held the position of managing director since 2021.

Joe said: "I'm incredibly people-orientated and my aim is to build a high-performing team with a strong positive culture while delivering our financial metrics."

Regional chairman Stephen Cleveley said: "Joe is known and well-respected throughout the industry and we are delighted he has returned to Persimmon to take over the helm of our West Midlands business."



Joe Turner is the managing director for Persimmon Homes West Midlands

Career progression for seven lawyers

Seven lawyers at Lanyon Bowdler are celebrating promotions – reinforcing the law firm's commitment to fostering career progression.

The move sees three promotions to senior associate and four to associate, enhancing the firm's capability of meeting the demand of ongoing client growth in Shropshire, North Wales and Herefordshire.

Those celebrating promotion to senior associate are Martin Hood of the clinical negligence team in Shrewsbury; David Hughes, costs manager in Shrewsbury; and Katie Baker of the dispute resolution team in Conwy.

Joining the ranks of the firm's associate solicitors are private client solicitor Sophie Burgoyne who covers Shrewsbury and Ludlow; Gemma Williams of the residential property team in Ludlow; clinical negligence specialist Amy Bills in Hereford; and Toni Reeves of the Court of Protection team in Shrewsbury.

Brian Evans, Lanyon Bowdler managing partner, said: "It is a tribute to their hard work and dedication and I am delighted to see so many people growing their careers within the firm."

"We pride ourselves on creating an excellent environment for career progression, and have a clear ethos as a firm to see staff thrive. Our diverse client base means our

lawyers can gain the necessary experience for advancement without the need to move to large city firms.

"A senior associate needs to have demonstrated a range of skills and competencies, including technical expertise as well as teamwork and supervision abilities,

while the appointment of our new associates is further evidence of our staff flourishing as they grow into senior members of our team.

"The promotions confirm our standing as a leading training provider that ensures a recognised career path for our talented staff to make progress in their careers."



Top row from left: Katie Baker, Gemma Williams, Amy Bills, Sophie Burgoyne. Bottom row: Martin Hood, Toni Reeves, David Hughes.

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 Call: 07914 304 504 Visit: www.mediaandyou.co.uk



Five minutes with . . .

ISHBEL LAPPER is the managing director of HR Solutions Shropshire, supporting people and business performance through fair, strategic, and compliant HR practices. She has been running the business for more than seven years.

HOW IS YOUR JOB IMPACTED BY FLUCTUATIONS IN THE ECONOMY?

Economic shifts affect recruitment, retention, and the need for organisational restructuring. When money gets tight, people get messy – and that's when HR gets loud.

WHAT'S YOUR VIEW ON THE CHANGE OF GOVERNMENT FOR YOUR JOB?

New legislation and employment law changes will require rapid adaptation and policy review. New faces, same chaos – but I'm ready with my people policies and popcorn.

HOW DO YOU VIEW ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE – AND HOW MIGHT YOU AND YOUR BUSINESS USE IT?

AI offers huge potential to streamline HR admin, improve analytics, and enhance recruitment processes. AI's great for grunt work, but you still need a human when things get awkward.

HOW DO YOU HOPE YOUR COLLEAGUES WOULD DESCRIBE YOU?

Approachable, fair, pragmatic, and quietly driven. The fearless fixer with a wicked sense of humour and a no-nonsense edge.

YOUR GREATEST STRENGTH IN THE WORKPLACE?

Balancing people-focused empathy with business-focused decision-making. I say what everyone else is thinking – but better dressed.

BIGGEST CHALLENGE IN YOUR JOB?

Managing difficult conversations and change while maintaining team morale. Turning chaos into clarity without losing my cool... or my coffee.

YOUR PROUDEST ACHIEVEMENTS?

Building trust in HR by transforming it from a reactive function to a strategic partner. Helping people rediscover their value – and walking out of a tribunal like it's a catwalk.

PET HATES?

Poor communication and last-minute panic planning. Excuses, egos, and people who say "let's circle back" with no intention of doing so.

IF YOU COULD GO BACK AND GIVE YOUR YOUNGER SELF SOME WISE ADVICE, WHAT WOULD IT BE?

Back yourself, stay curious, and don't wait for permission to lead. Trust your gut – it's never wrong, even when your boss is.

HOW DO YOU RELAX AWAY FROM WORK?

Loud music, strong wine, and a complete refusal to check emails.

FAVOURITE THING ABOUT SHROPSHIRE?

The sense of community and the countryside that's never far away. It's beautifully unsuspecting – just like me.

SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORM OF CHOICE?

LinkedIn – useful, professional, and occasionally inspiring. WhatsApp for the gossip.

FAVOURITE MOVIE AND/OR TV SHOW?

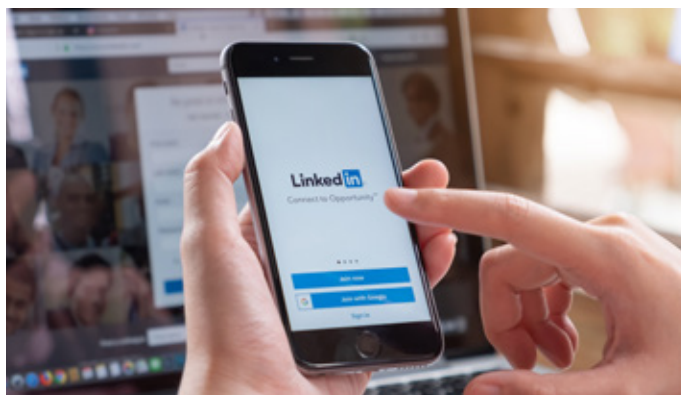
St Elmo's Fire / The Breakfast Club

EARLY BIRD, OR NIGHT OWL?

Early bird – most productive before 9am, I'm a 3am thinker and a 7am doer – chaos, basically.

DREAM DINNER PARTY GUESTS, DEAD OR ALIVE?

Leonardo da Vinci, Angela Merkel, Johnny Depp, Martin Luther King Jr.



Ishbel says LinkedIn is useful, professional, and sometimes inspiring



Johnny Depp would be a dream dinner party guest



Leonardo da Vinci



Ishbel Lapper



St Elmo's Fire – a film favourite

TELL US SOMETHING ABOUT YOU THAT MOST PEOPLE PROBABLY WOULDN'T KNOW.

I once considered a career as an actress before finding my niche in HR.

AND FINALLY . . . WHAT DO YOU THINK THE NEXT 12 MONTHS HAS IN STORE FOR YOU, PROFESSIONALLY AND PERSONALLY?

Professionally, navigating change and growth; personally, prioritising balance and new adventures. A few risks, lots of laughs, and maybe finally remembering to take my own advice.

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:

Chapter House North, Abbey Lawn,
Abbey Foregate, Shrewsbury SY2 5DE
Tel: 01743 280280

info@lblaw.co.uk
www.lblaw.co.uk



Shrewsbury • Bromyard • Conwy • Hereford • Ludlow • Oswestry • Telford



HALO

Exclusively designed by

Rudell

The Jewellers

97 Darlington Street, Wolverhampton WV1 4HB.
Telephone: 01902 423308 / 427199

89 High Street, Harborne, Birmingham B17 9NR.
Telephone: 0121 427 1904

1 The Burlington, 127 New Street, Birmingham B2 4JH.
Telephone: 0121 289 7149

www.rudells.com