

# SHROPSHIRE BUSINESS

March/April 2025  
FREE

# 50<sup>TH</sup> SPECIAL EDITION



Award-winning news, views and analysis





#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.**

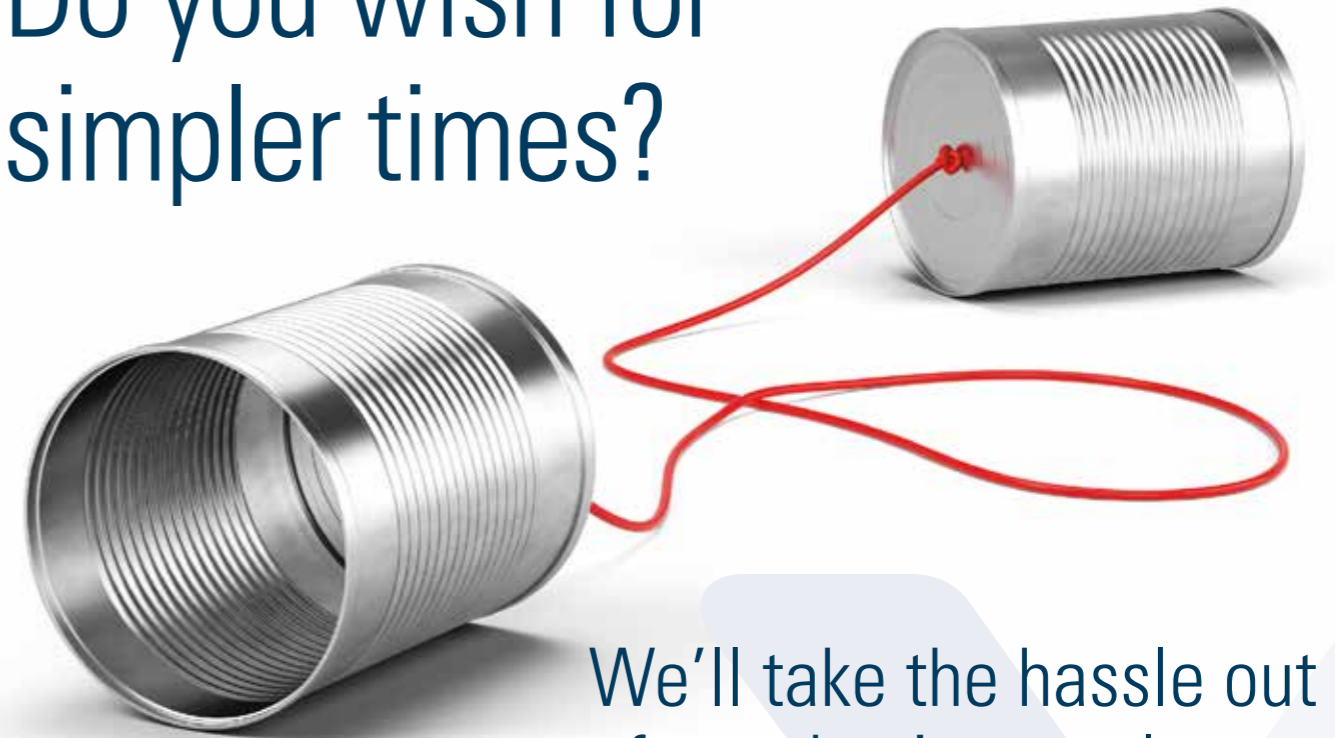


Scan here to learn more

an  Company

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

# Do you wish for simpler times?



## We'll take the hassle out of your business telecoms

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



# Call 01952 528 000

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



ISSUE 50: MARCH/APRIL 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 CHAMBER AWARDS Best New Business (SBLTV)

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

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

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

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

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

**INSIDE**

**CYBER SECURITY**  
How safe are your digital defences? Learn from the experts in our 12-page special report – P12

**EARNING AND LEARNING**

Three pages of apprenticeships news, including the launch of the 2025 Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin awards – P26

**THE GREATEST SHOW**

Roll up, roll up . . . for the 25th anniversary of the Shropshire Chamber Business Awards – P30

**GOLDEN MEMORIES**

Looking back at half a century of Shropshire Business magazines – P36

**CREATIVE ACCOUNTANCY?**

Could salary sacrifice help to mitigate the rising costs of NI for employers? – P44

**ENVIRONMENTAL LEGACY**

Spring water supplier believes sustainability should be at the very core of its business – P58

**ADVERTISE WITH US**

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



# SHROPSHIRE BUSINESS

## Welcome

### Happy golden anniversary to us . . . welcome to our milestone 50th edition.

It's been a real treat looking back through the archives at all the stories we've produced, the events we've attended, and the amazing people we've met since launching the magazine nearly a decade ago.

And as you'll have seen from our special front page, we've covered an incredibly broad range of topics as our cover stories over the years.

But let's not get too caught up with nostalgia... the world of business is all about looking forward, staying ahead of the competition, and trying to capitalise on the most sustainable direction of economic travel.

On a global scale, this is something

which has certainly become trickier to second guess since the arrival of Donald Trump in the White House.

What does Trump 2.0 mean for Shropshire businesses? We've been canvassing a wide range of views for our talking point feature, which also reveals the results of our online poll.

The biggest threat to many of our businesses, however, is coming from a very different kind of disruptor that we can't vote out of power.

Cyber crime now accounts for more than £30 billion a year in lost revenue across the UK, which means that taking steps to protect your company's most sensitive data has never been more important.

In our 12-page special report, we've brought together some of the county's sharpest cyber experts to share their top tips – and emphasise the perils of complacency.

Your IT doesn't stand still; it's being accessed by new people and used in new ways all the time. So it's important that your strategies don't stand still either.

The countdown is now officially on to the 2025 Shropshire Chamber Business Awards, with organisers promising to lay on a Greatest Showman-themed spectacular to mark the competition's 25th anniversary.

It's a brilliant way to raise the profile of your business, and for us all to celebrate the incredible companies we have in our county. Entries close on April 4 and it's free, so why not throw your hat into the ring?

On the subject of awards, the Shropshire Telford & Wrekin Apprenticeship Awards is also returning this year after

the success of its debut last year. There are categories for employers and apprentices, and it's also free to enter. You'll find more details on page 26.

Economic surveys continue to suggest that times are tricky for lots of businesses right now, as they struggle to protect their profit margins.

When it comes to mitigating the impact of the employer's National Insurance contributions which come into force in April, it's been reported that more than a quarter of firms in our region are looking at salary sacrifice schemes. Is that you? And if not, could it help?

As usual, we have brought together a wide range of expert columnists to tackle the issues that matter.

For example, as the debate rages on about the merits of home or hybrid working, how do you ensure productivity and compliance with company policies when you can't keep an eye on what your staff are up to? Turn to page 40 to find out.

We also pay tribute to several well-known Shropshire business people sadly lost in recent weeks – and bring you another four pages of business people on the move in our regular Appointments section.

Thank you for being with us through our half century of editions, and thanks to the loyal advertisers and supporters – many of whom have been with us since day one. We never take your support for granted.

Here's to the next half century of Shropshire Business magazines, continuing to celebrate the creativity, entrepreneurialism and success of our brilliant economic community.



By Carl Jones  
Shropshire Business Editor

Visit: [www.shropshirebiz.com](http://www.shropshirebiz.com) @shropsbiz

facebook.com/shropsbiz

Shropshire Business Magazine





# Fake news . . . or real concern?

Should the quest to 'Make America Great Again' be viewed as a matter of financial concern for the Shropshire business community? CARL JONES canvasses a range of views on the impact of Donald Trump 2.0

### Whatever your political persuasion, it's been hard to take your eyes off the astonishing Donald Trump roadshow since his triumphant and belligerent return to the White House.

With the almost daily media scrums, the endless procession of executive orders, and the tub-thumping 'America first' message, he's running the country more like a bruiser of a business wheeler-dealer than a diplomatic politician.

Shropshire may be more than 3,500 miles away from Washington DC, but there's no doubting the fact our businesses are wary of just how much of the president's disruptive decision-making could ripple down to our level.

Although most of his tariff-related displeasure is aimed at the likes of China, Mexico, Canada and the European Union, it's been claimed that the UK economy could see up to £24 billion wiped off its gross domestic product over the next two years.

The claims are based around Trump's executive order that could hit UK exports with tariffs of up to 21% as part of a bid to counteract the VAT that most of our overseas traders charge.

Home delivery firm Parcelhero believes it



Donald Trump has certainly been busy of late

could create new sales opportunities for SMEs looking to broaden their customer base on the international stage.

The argument is that sellers from China, Mexico and Canada have been thrown into the greatest turmoil by the tariff announcements so

far – opening the doors for our businesses to fill the gap.

Parcelhero's head of consumer research, David Jinks, a member of the Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport, says: "Chinese e-commerce imports are suddenly more expensive for American consumers after Trump nixed the 800 dollar de minimis threshold on packages entering the US from China. Now there's a minimum 10% tariff to pay on all Chinese products."

Previously, Chinese marketplace traders used the minimum limit to ship millions of low-value packages to the US, escaping any fees. Close to half of all parcels entering America under this exemptions threshold were sent from China.

"UK-sourced products costing less than \$800 will now be a little more competitive for US buyers against Chinese imports than they were," David Jinks says.

"Meanwhile, Mexican and Canadian sellers have been thrown into turmoil by President Trump's on-and-off tariff plans. Whatever the final outcome, these threats have certainly poisoned the well as far as many SME sellers from Mexico and Canada are concerned. They will be looking to concentrate more of their sales efforts on alternative markets, which could again give UK traders an edge."

Post Brexit, the USA is Britain's biggest trading partner. In 2023, the UK imported £57.9 billion of US goods and exported £60.4 billion of goods there, making it pretty much honours even.

We carried out a poll on LinkedIn during



So far, financial centres such as Shanghai are top of the tariff list

February asking how companies in Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin viewed the Trump tariffs.

Only one in 10 businesses felt there would be no impact, compared with a third who said it was a serious worry. The remainder – and majority – felt it was too early to tell.

Whatever emerges over the coming months, William Bain, head of trade policy at the British Chambers of Commerce, believes it is vital that the UK Government keeps a cool head in assessing its response and does not get sucked into a trade war of tit-for-tat tariffs, which could easily spiral out of control.

New research by the British Chambers of Commerce revealed almost two thirds of exporters are worried about their impact.

"Not only do they fear the direct effect of these costs being passed on to them, but they are worried about the implications for global demand if a full-scale trade war erupts.

"The UK will need to adopt a flexible and agile response, while assessing the reaction of other major players.

"There are also the added complications of trade diversion to consider, where goods once destined for the US are dumped on the UK market.

"And there are the question marks that US policy raises for the UK's trade relationships with the EU and China."

If the US sees sustained retaliatory action from other countries, there is a risk that a global trade war could unfold, resulting in strong headwinds that would impact everywhere.

All of the current uncertainty is certainly not doing the supply chain any favours. Businesses are being urged to prepare for potential supply chain disruptions and rising trade costs, as uncertainty looms over future US trade policies.

A recent BDO survey of 500 mid-market businesses revealed that supply chain disruptions are amongst the top challenges UK businesses face – and it is expected that mitigating supply chain risks will become a key priority in the coming 12 months.

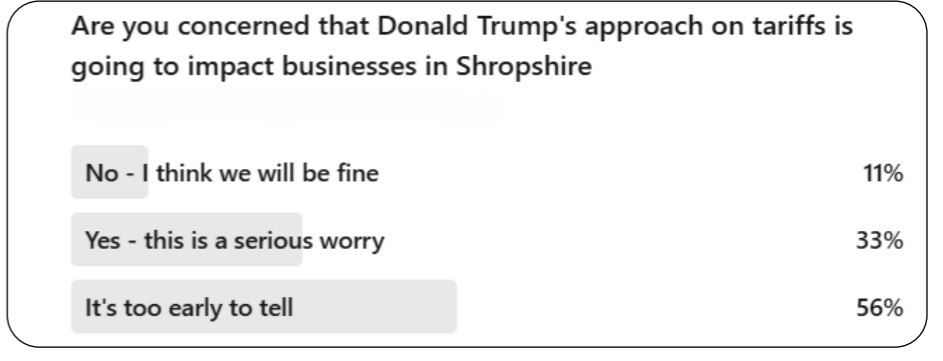
Jason Whitworth, mergers and acquisitions partner at BDO, says: "With this continued uncertainty and challenge comes opportunity for those building on effective and quality service, and we anticipate that capital rich investors and trade will continue to drive increased investment activity as the focus shifts to increased technology enablement and consolidation of supply chain services to drive efficiencies."

The CBI agrees that Donald Trump's actions on tariffs have a ripple effect on the UK economy, by reducing demand for UK exports, particularly if US-EU tensions increase.

"While tariffs are likely to weigh on UK GDP growth, the impact on inflation is less clear, as prices could face both upward and downward pressure depending on how other countries' trade policies evolve, the potential for trade diversion and broader movements in interest rates and exchange rates," it says.

"Assuming the US did seek to raise tariffs against the UK, some sectors would likely be more exposed than others.

"For example, exports of pharmaceuticals, mechanical power generators and automotive products display both above-average reliance on the US export market and are also large, accounting for more than 5% of UK goods exports."





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



The new group will be responsible for 33,000 properties

# Social housing merger

**The Wrekin Housing Group and Housing Plus Group have completed a merger to create one of the largest social housing providers in the West Midlands.**

The newly-combined organisation will have a portfolio of 33,000 homes serving customers across Shropshire, Staffordshire and Telford & Wrekin.

Wayne Gethings, former chief executive of Wrekin Housing Group which had its headquarters at Old Park in Telford, has taken on the new role of group chief executive.

The new Housing Plus Group says it plans to invest an additional £55 million in existing homes and be a key developer of new homes over the next five years.

More than 3,500 customers responded to a merger consultation, which is now legally complete having achieved the relevant consents.

Key priorities which emerged for customers were repairs, improvements to their homes, building new homes and feeling safe in their homes.

Wayne said: "This merger represents an exciting new chapter, bringing together two outstanding organisations with a shared commitment to improving lives and communities."

"By uniting our strengths and expertise, we are building a housing association that is stronger, more resilient, and better positioned to deliver quality landlord services and homes for all our customers."

"As the new Housing Plus Group, we're ready to create lasting, positive change for the people and communities we serve."

During the first year, former Housing Plus Group board member Catherine Dass will serve as the transition chair of the new group, joined by Debbie Griffiths, former board member of The Wrekin Housing Group, as vice-chair.

Catherine said: "Together, as the new Housing Plus Group, we are stronger. We are taking the best from each organisation and creating greater capacity to invest more in homes and services, strengthen our customer voice and support people impacted by the cost-of-living crisis."



The new Housing Plus Group will be led by group chief executive Wayne Gethings

"Both organisations have a proud history of putting people at the heart of everything we do."

"By bringing together our strengths, resources, and strong community focus, the new group will be a great place to work for our people and provide better services to our tenants and customers."

Debbie said: "Bringing our two organisations together will enable us to invest more in our existing homes, as well as creating more new homes for our future customers."

"This is a big moment for all our customers, employees and partners as we look to the future and deliver on our customers' priorities."

With 1,800 employees, 33,000 homes and a turnover of more than £250 million, the team say they will create additional regional economic impact and have a powerful voice within the industry.

Housing Plus Group has registered offices at Acton Gate in Stafford. Sarah Boden, chief executive of Housing Plus, has decided to retire after 38 years in the housing sector.

The boards of The Wrekin Housing Group and Housing Plus Group announced in October last year that they had decided to take the next steps towards a formal merger.



The Boxer is unveiled at the International Armoured Vehicles Conference

# The heart of UK defence

**The first British-made Boxer military vehicle has been proudly unveiled, signalling the return of large-scale armoured vehicle manufacturing to the UK.**

The ground-breaking vehicle has been produced at Rheinmetall BAE Systems Land in Telford, and made its public debut at the International Armoured Vehicles Conference.

Built as part of the UK's Mechanised Infantry Vehicle Programme, the Boxer's journey to British soil began in 2019, when the Ministry of Defence awarded the contract to ARTEC GmbH – a partnership between Rheinmetall and KNDS.

Rheinmetall's £56 million investment in its Hadley Castle site in Telford has transformed the facility into a world leading production capability, complete with modern fabrication lines for armoured steel, advanced surface treatment systems, and integrated assembly lines for both Drive and Mission Modules.

John Abunassar, chief executive of Rheinmetall in the UK, said: "The unveiling of the first British-made Boxer is a historic moment for UK defence manufacturing.

"Boxer is more than a vehicle – it's a Future Force Enabler, ensuring the British Army is ready to meet tomorrow's challenges while delivering real benefits today."

The Boxer programme is creating over 1,000 highly-skilled jobs across engineering, development, and complex systems integration, with over 100 UK suppliers involved. Around 75% of Boxer's components are sourced domestically.

RBSL says this investment strengthens the UK's defence strategy while ensuring collaboration with NATO allies, positioning Boxer as a key player in regional security and interoperability.

The UK trials programme for Boxer is advancing successfully, with prototypes passing all tests on the first attempt. These trials have included Electromagnetic Compatibility assessments, live firing at Lulworth Ranges in Dorset, and extreme climatic evaluations at Millbrook Proving Ground in Bedfordshire.

The British Army has also successfully tested the Boxer's water-fording capabilities, demonstrating its stability and control in unprepared water crossings.



Maria Eagle tours the Telford manufacturing site

Maria Eagle MP, Minister for Defence Procurement and Industry, visited the RBSL site a few weeks ago celebrating the return of the UK's world class defence manufacturing capabilities.

In addition to the Boxer, the Telford site is also involved in the production of the Challenger 3 Main Battle Tank, the most lethal tank ever operated by the British Army.

The minister met with RBSL's workforce, thanking them for their dedication to the programmes.

Maria Eagle said: "Telford is at the heart of UK defence, and I was pleased to witness first-hand how our defence industry is equipping the armed forces with 21st-century armoured fighting vehicles.

"In the face of global threats, the Government's new Defence Industrial Strategy will drive economic growth, boost British jobs, and strengthen national security."

Will Gibby, managing director of RBSL, said: "Through programmes like Boxer and Challenger 3, RBSL is committed to providing sovereign capability for the UK, supporting the British Army, and investing in the workforce of tomorrow through our apprenticeship and graduate schemes."

# Tailored advice from legal experts



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



Aaron & Partners  
Solicitors

# CYBER SECURITY

in association with

**connexis**

**How easy is it for cyber criminals to break through your digital defences? With cyber crime accounting for more than £30 billion in lost revenue across the UK last year, taking steps to protect your company's most sensitive data has never been more important.**

**In this 12-page special report, we turn the spotlight on cyber security and digital best practice, and speak to some of Shropshire's leading experts about safeguarding against potential financial losses – and the subsequent reputational damage which today's increasingly sophisticated cyber attacks could cause.**

# The only certified cyber security experts in Shropshire

Certified by the *National Cyber Security Centre*

Backed by 25 years of experience.  
We don't just manage your IT - we support your growth.

**Why choose anyone else?**



Apply for a **FREE** cyber security audit

We'll assess your current cyber security posture, identify potential risks, and provide a clear, actionable report to help you prioritise the steps needed to safeguard your business against evolving threats.

Available for the first 10 businesses to apply!

T&Cs: Subject to Start Tech availability. This offer may be withdrawn at any point. Deadline to apply is 30th April 2025. The audit must be booked by 30th June 2025.

[www.start-tech.co.uk](http://www.start-tech.co.uk)

9 Sweetlake Business Village, Longden Road,  
Shrewsbury, Shropshire, SY3 9EW

 01743 298611



Start Tech is Shropshire's only NCSC certified firm of cyber security experts

## Prioritisation of business safety



IAN GROVES, managing director at Start Tech, shares key advice from Shropshire's only NCSC certified cyber security experts.

**Why does cyber security matter? Cyber security protects your business's digital assets from online threats such as ransomware, phishing, and data breaches. Cyber attacks are becoming more sophisticated, putting businesses at risk of financial loss, reputational damage, and operational downtime.**

Effective cyber security involves more than just installing antivirus software; it requires a comprehensive, proactive approach to identify vulnerabilities and prevent attacks. As businesses grow, so do their risks and business owners are responsible for protecting their customers' data.

At Start Tech, we are proud to be Shropshire's only National Cyber Security



The Start Tech team, based in Shrewsbury

Centre (NCSC) certified Cyber Advisors. This certification means we have been independently assessed on our ability to provide practical, hands-on support and deeply understand Cyber Essentials' technical controls.

Simply put, we are certified experts who can keep your business safe.

In November 2024, the NCSC found a three-fold increase in the most significant cyber attacks compared to the previous year. The message is clear: having a solid cyber security strategy is no longer optional - it's essential for any business that wants to succeed.

**Key Cyber Security Advice for 2025**

It's all about implementing good cyber hygiene for a proactive defence against threats.

With cyber attacks rising, businesses need to embrace a zero trust approach that treats all access requests as malicious until verified. Your employees should have awareness training so they know how to spot and deal with phishing attacks.

We recommend Cyber Essentials certification, a UK government-backed scheme, which will strengthen your defences and ensure compliance. This will put practices in place like multi-factor authentication.

Your IT doesn't stand still, it is being accessed by new people and used in new ways all the time. Having a managed service provider like Start Tech means you will get regular security assessments to help uncover vulnerabilities before attackers exploit them.

With increasing ransomware and phishing attacks, having a robust incident response plan is essential too.

**A Strategy for AI**

AI is poised to revolutionise the way businesses work. It's not going to replace your employees; it's going to empower them. It will become a key tool in every business so don't fall behind by ignoring it now.

As amazing as AI is, you need a strategy for how to use it, and help to implement Copilot and integrate it with other Microsoft 365 Services. You can't just turn it on and see what happens. Your data needs to be set up in a way that AI will only access and provide data to certain people, to ensure compliance.

At Start Tech, we guide you through the process of integrating AI into your operations. From setting up secure access protocols to training your team in the most effective prompts and practices. We'll help you unlock AI's full potential.

Imagine Copilot analysing your customer data to pinpoint leads, generate tailored sales pitches, and automate reports that deliver actionable insights. With AI, your team can spend less time on repetitive tasks and more time driving innovation and growth.

**Why choose Start Tech?**

Choosing an IT provider who understands your business is critical. At Start Tech, we're not just an IT provider claiming to be your partner - we're strategic collaborators backed up by accreditation committed to driving your business forward through intelligent, secure, and innovative IT management. Our cyber security expertise is multi-award-winning.

When you partner with Start Tech, you gain a dedicated team of experts committed to your success, equipped with cutting-edge cyber security knowledge, who are passionate about transforming your technological capabilities. It's why after 25 years of operating, we still have clients who have been with us from day dot.

Start Tech doesn't just support your business - we help you lead in your industry.

If you'd like to find out more about working with Start Tech, email us on [enquiries@start-tech.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@start-tech.co.uk)



# It's time to get philosophical



In a year that is being dominated by talk of artificial intelligence, CHRIS MEAH, founder and chief executive of School of Code, asks if it's time to take a step back and consider some fundamental questions

**If you've made it this far into 2025 without hearing the phrase "AI is the new electricity" at least once, congratulations. But as we charge forward into the future, I think this is the year we step back and ask some bigger questions.**

The rapid growth and adoption of AI tools brings us to the brink of profound shifts – not just technological, but deeply philosophical. Here are some thoughts for the future:

**Renaissance of meaning**

People will step back from day-to-day drudgery and get more philosophical about what it means to be human. As AI systems take on more tasks and become increasingly capable, we're forced to reflect: if we will no longer be defined by work, what defines

us? Creativity? Relationships? The pursuit of purpose?

Whether you think this shift is due to "silly AI hype" or something deeper, it's a net positive to reflect on our humanity. Reassessing meaning and purpose might just be the most human thing we've done in a while.

**Progress in AI: capability, UX, and the privacy trade-off**

AI applications will keep improving their base capability, but also the product engineering and UX around them will keep improving too – both will increase usefulness and adoption. Tools that once felt generic and clunky will deliver tailored, intuitive experiences.

But there's a catch: AI gets better the more it knows about you. Want a perfectly tailored health plan? Bespoke financial advice? That requires sharing your data – your habits, preferences and even personal conversations.

This creates a stark trade-off: privacy versus performance. Opting out will feel like racing a Formula One car with a horse and cart. How much will we demand in return for our data, and can privacy-protecting solutions keep pace?

**Robotics' ChatGPT moment**

You thought the hype around generative AI was big? Wait until robotics has its "ChatGPT moment". We've seen robotics advance steadily over the years, but we could soon see robots leap into the mainstream.

Self-driving cars are a long-awaited transformation that will change and save lives. But the biggest (and least admitted) demand? Parenting robots and sex robots – two of the most emotionally charged, high-stakes areas of life. I hope they'll be different robots, but I'm not sure they will . . .

**Education evolves (or at least it should)**

Education is due for its moment of reckoning. Our 'just-in-case' approach – teaching students things they might need someday – is woefully out of sync with the pace of change. Instead, we should embrace 'just-in-time' learning, equipping people with the skills to adapt, think critically, and collaborate effectively.

Large language models (LLMs) like ChatGPT could become the ultimate personal tutors, offering tailored guidance to every student. But the risk is you're most vulnerable to incorrect

information when you're learning. If we don't teach collaboration and critical thinking first, we risk just automating worse education.

**Governments face the economics of automation**

Governments have avoided conversations about automation's impact for years, but they will soon (finally) take it seriously. For every time AI could help alleviate the pains of the NHS, there's also potential for mass lay-offs. This isn't just an economic issue – it's a social fabric issue, a fabric which is already feeling thin.

What happens when millions lose jobs and purpose? AI will speed up a trend that's been bubbling under the surface for a while.

This is the moment for bold, imaginative policy making. Anything less risks leaving large swathes of society behind.

**Copyright, creativity, and context**

One of 2025's thorniest debates will be about creativity. AI doesn't 'create' in the way humans do – it absorbs and combines vast amounts of data.

But is that really so different from how

people work? Artists draw inspiration from everything they see, hear and experience. Does AI do the same, but maybe it just seems less... quaint?

If an AI listens to every song ever written and produces a hit single, who owns it? The programmer? The dataset? No one?

And while we argue those questions, AI will keep producing – not just music, but films, books, and art that might rival the best humanity has to offer.

For better or worse, this is the year creativity gets messy – and with the improvements in rendering videos, real-time movie and game production might be closer than we think.

**AI goes cosmic**

AI is undoubtedly what will bring consciousness to the universe (let's leave the 'what is consciousness' for another time). Machines can go where humans can't – across vast stretches of space, into hostile environments, helping us colonise the galaxy.

What if AI becomes the vessel for preserving and sharing human culture across the stars? AI isn't just a tool; it could be the legacy we send out into the universe.

**Defining AGI: a moving target**

Finally, let's talk about artificial general intelligence (AGI). If you're waiting for a clear definition of AGI this year, don't hold your breath. The goalposts will keep shifting as popular culture and mainstream exposure clashes with academic history.

Terms like AGI mean one thing in academic papers, another in tech circles, and something entirely different on social media. As AI systems get better at tasks once thought to require 'general' intelligence, the lines will blur even further.

For me, it's always about the learning potential instead of the performance. We have superhuman capability already in narrow examples, but what about a machine that could learn to solve any problem by just pointing it at it?

**Looking ahead**

2025 will be a year of growth – technological, philosophical, and creative. The challenges are real, but so are the opportunities. AI might not have all the answers yet, but it's pushing us to ask the right questions. And that, more than anything, is what excites me.

# The many perils of online complacency

How likely is it that your business could be targeted by cyber criminals? And if they have you in their sights, are you geared up to fight back?

ADAM PRINGLE reports

**The world's greatest cyber criminals don't need passports or permits to cross international borders.**

If reports are to be believed, sinister attempts from the likes of China and Russia to infiltrate our UK economic infrastructure are now being located and thwarted on an almost daily basis. But these faceless international criminals surely wouldn't focus on companies in little old Shropshire, would they? Our county can't be at the same sort of risk as our biggest towns and cities?

That's where you are wrong. From Clun to Cressage, Munslow to Market Drayton, Ellesmere to Ellerdine, geographical location is completely immaterial. If you have a chink in your digital armour, it's never been more likely to be exploited.

The purpose of this feature is not to scaremonger though – merely to emphasise the perils of complacency.

Ransomware is now the most acute cyber threat for most businesses in the UK, and the impact of an attack can bring a company of any size to its knees.

This includes disrupting operational delivery, hitting finances, compromising customer data, eroding trust and damaging a reputation that has taken years to build.

The ransomware threat is borderless, and with criminals constantly adapting their techniques to gain efficiencies and maximise profits, it is an issue that senior leaders in all Shropshire organisations should take seriously.

Are you allocating sufficient time and resources to robust cyber security measures? That's the question.

Here are some of the main issues experts say businesses should consider when it comes to cyber security:

**1. Data Protection**  
One of the most critical aspects of cyber security is protecting sensitive data. Businesses store a vast amount of confidential information including customer data, financial records, and intellectual property. A data breach can result in severe consequences such as financial loss, legal liabilities, and damage to your reputation. Implementing robust data protection measures – such as encryption, access controls, and regular data backups – is essential.



*Phishing attacks can be very convincing and are often designed to exploit human psychology and trust*

**2. Employee Awareness and Training**  
Employees are often the weakest link in your cyber security defences. Phishing attacks, social engineering, and other forms of cyber crime often target employees to gain access to sensitive information. Providing regular cyber security training and awareness programmes can help employees recognise and respond to potential threats. Encouraging a culture of cyber security within the organisation can significantly reduce the risk of cyber attacks.

**3. Network Security**  
Securing your network is crucial to preventing unauthorised access and cyber attacks. Businesses should implement firewalls, intrusion detection systems, and regular network monitoring to detect and respond to potential threats. Additionally, ensuring that all devices connected to the network are secure and up-to-date with the latest security patches is essential to maintaining a robust network security posture.

**4. Third-Party Risks**  
Many businesses rely on third-party vendors and partners for various services, such as cloud storage, software development, and IT support. However, these third parties can also pose cyber security risks. Conducting thorough security assessments of third-party vendors and ensuring they adhere to your cyber security standards is essential to mitigating these risks. Establishing clear contractual obligations and regular security audits can help ensure that third-party vendors maintain adequate cyber security measures.

**5. Incident Response Planning**  
Despite the best efforts to prevent cyber attacks, businesses must be prepared to respond effectively when an incident occurs. Developing a comprehensive incident response plan is crucial to minimising the impact. The plan should include steps for identifying and containing the breach, notifying affected parties, and restoring normal operations.

Regularly testing and updating the incident response plan can help ensure that the company is prepared to handle any cyber security incident.

**6. Compliance with Regulations**  
Businesses must comply with various cyber security regulations and standards, depending on their industry and location. Failure to comply with these regulations can result in significant fines and legal consequences. Staying informed about relevant cyber security regulations and implementing measures to ensure compliance is essential to avoid legal issues and maintain a strong cyber security posture.

**7. Cyber Insurance**  
Cyber insurance can provide financial protection in the event of a cyber attack. While it cannot prevent cyber attacks, it can help mitigate the financial impact of a breach. Businesses should carefully evaluate their cyber insurance needs and ensure that their policy covers potential risks, such as data breaches, ransomware attacks, and business interruption.

**8. Continuous Monitoring and Improvement**  
Cyber threats are constantly evolving, and businesses must remain vigilant to stay ahead of potential risks. Implementing continuous monitoring and improvement measures, such as regular security assessments, penetration testing, and staying informed about the latest cyber security trends, can help businesses maintain a strong cyber security posture.

## Are *you* the weakest link?

One of the most common forms of cyber security breaches comes through phishing, where attackers will use deceptive tactics to trick you into providing sensitive information such as usernames, passwords, credit card details, or other personal data.

This is often done through emails, messages, or websites that appear to be from legitimate sources, such as banks, social media platforms, or other trusted organisations.

Phishing attacks can be very convincing and are often designed to exploit human psychology and trust. To protect against phishing, it's important to be cautious with emails and messages from unknown or suspicious sources – verify the authenticity of links before clicking on them, and use security measures like two-factor authentication.

compelling reason for you to feel you must respond.

2. The Hook: The message often includes a link to a fake website that mimics the appearance of a legitimate site. The link might be disguised to look like it leads to a trusted site. Or there may be an attachment included in the email which you're asked to download.

3. The Trap: If you click on the link or the attachment and enter any of your information on the fake website, the attacker captures this data, and before you know it they have a foothold into your digital world.

4. The Consequence: The attacker can then use this information for malicious purposes, such as stealing money, committing identity theft, or gaining unauthorised access to your accounts. And often, you won't even know about it until it's too late.

### FOUR STEPS OF PHISHING

1. The Attack: The attacker sends an email or message that looks like it's from a reputable source. The message might contain a sense of urgency or a

## Hackers LOVE Your Business. It's Time to Change That. Think your business is too small to be hacked? Hackers don't.



Meet your worst nightmare: a hacker who finds small businesses like yours far too easy to break into. Why? Weak passwords, outdated software, and email scams are their best friends.

But here's the good news, you can stop making their job so easy.

"You've Been an Absolute Joy to Hack" is a cybersecurity guide you'll actually enjoy reading—no jargon, no fluff, just **hilarious, practical tips** to keep hackers out.

- Spot scams before they spot you
- Turn your email from a hacker's playground into a fortress
- Lock down your business without breaking the bank

Get your copy today! Available on Amazon.



[www.roundcyber.co.uk](http://www.roundcyber.co.uk)



Written by Joseph Hormenoo - Certified Ethical Hacker, Penetration Tester, and Cyber Essentials Assessor. Founder of Round Cyber.

# How data analytics is reshaping cyber security



**Hollie Whittles**

**Data analytics is everywhere, shaping everything from entertainment to healthcare to space exploration. It's not just about numbers, it's about uncovering insights that drive the world forward!**

With all the data that we are creating, AI can assist us to analyse it, but businesses should be cautious when uploading sensitive data to AI tools like ChatGPT or Copilot because these models do not offer end-to-end encryption or dedicated data protection guarantees for confidential business information.

Once data is inputted, businesses may lose control over how it is processed, stored, or potentially accessed. Additionally, regulatory frameworks such as GDPR, HIPAA, or industry-specific compliance standards may prohibit the sharing of sensitive data with third-party AI systems.

To mitigate risks, organisations should implement clear data governance policies, anonymise sensitive information when necessary, and use AI solutions that offer enterprise-grade security and compliance assurances.

**Cyber threats**

Cyber threats are evolving faster than ever, and traditional security measures often struggle to keep up. Firewalls, antivirus software, and strong passwords are important, but they are no longer enough. The real game-changer in cyber security today? Data.

Every login attempt, network request and system alert generates data, and hidden within that data are clues about potential security threats. Organisations that harness data

**It's a data-driven world**

- 90% of the world's data was created in the last two years
- Google processes over 8.5 billion searches per day
- Your phone collects more data than you realise
- Netflix saves \$1 billion per year using data analytics

analytics can detect breaches faster, predict vulnerabilities, and respond more effectively to stay ahead of cyber criminals.

**Finding threats in the data**

Cyber attacks do not happen in isolation. There are always warning signs like unusual login attempts, spikes in network traffic, or users accessing files they normally would not. The problem is that security teams are often overwhelmed by the sheer volume of information coming from multiple systems.

Data analytics helps by identifying patterns and anomalies within this vast sea of data. For example, if an employee account suddenly starts downloading massive amounts of sensitive files at odd hours, analytics tools can flag this behaviour as suspicious.

This is one of the reasons that we developed our Power BI Sentinel product to give organisations that oversight of their Power BI and fabric estate to see what data users are accessing to create their reports.

**Learning from past attacks**

One of the biggest advantages of data analytics is its ability to learn from past incidents. By analysing historical attack data, businesses can identify trends such as which phishing scams are most effective, what vulnerabilities attackers exploit most often, or how certain malware spreads.

This kind of insight allows organisations to proactively strengthen their defences. If a certain type of malware tends to target outdated software, security teams can prioritise patching those vulnerabilities. If attackers often gain access through weak employee

passwords, companies can implement stricter policies or multi-factor authentication.

**Faster and smarter incident response**

When a cyber attack happens, speed matters. The longer it takes to detect and contain a breach, the more damage it can cause. Data-driven security systems help teams respond faster by providing real-time alerts and actionable insights.

For example, if a system detects a potential breach, it can immediately analyse logs to determine which accounts were affected, what data was accessed, and where the attack originated. This allows security teams to take quick, informed actions whether that means isolating compromised systems, blocking malicious IP addresses, or alerting users about a phishing campaign.

**The future of cyber security is data-driven**

As cyber threats become more sophisticated, the role of data analytics in cyber security will only grow. Organisations that embrace a data-driven approach will be better equipped to detect, prevent, and respond to attacks.

Cyber security is not just about technology, it is about using the right data in the right way. By leveraging data analytics, businesses can move from a reactive security posture to a proactive, intelligent defence strategy.

**Talk to the experts**

What you need is guidance from the right people. A data analytics consultancy like Purple Frog Systems focuses on helping businesses extract insights from their data to improve decision-making, optimise operations, and drive growth. We specialise in areas like predictive modelling, business intelligence, and data visualisation, turning raw data into actionable strategies.

A cyber security consultancy, on the other hand, is dedicated to protecting an organisation's digital assets from threats such as hacking, data breaches, and malware. They assess security risks, implement defence strategies, and ensure compliance with security regulations.

Whatever you do, you need to ensure that you protect your data... so talk to the right experts to drive your business forward.



## Aren't I cute?

**Most cyber-attacks start with something that appears harmless. Protect data, prevent financial loss & safeguard your business.**

01743 636300  
bunny@shoothill.com



**Hollie Whittles is a director of Purple Frog Systems in Telford**

# Layering defences for an in-depth approach



**Joe Newton**

**Having recently celebrated my 15th anniversary at Connexis, I've witnessed significant changes in the technology industry, particularly in cyber security.**

When I began as an apprentice telecommunications engineer, security was a minor consideration in new solutions. Back then, phone hacking was a concern, but telecoms were largely isolated from IT infrastructure, making cyber security less of a priority.

The landscape shifted dramatically with the advent of VoIP. In its infancy, I was involved in responding to a major security breach where attackers logged in to remote soft phone accounts and racked up a huge phone bill overnight. This incident was a wake-up call, highlighting the critical importance of cyber security and igniting my passion for the field.

In the years that followed, my experience helped secure our customers' telephony systems. I encountered numerous poor practices from competitors and had to educate customers' IT providers on necessary protections. This realisation led Connexis to focus on providing comprehensive cyber security solutions alongside communication services, addressing the gaps left by other IT providers.

Today, security is paramount for all technology providers. Everything from video surveillance systems to EV chargers are connected to data networks. Ensuring the security of these devices is crucial. Are providers keeping their software up to date? Could your smart fridge be an open door to your network?

At Connexis, we advocate a Defence in Depth approach to cyber security. No single security control is foolproof, but layering defences significantly reduces the likelihood of a successful attack. Here are some key components:



**Beware global attacks – security is paramount for all technology providers**

**Perimeter Firewalls**

Despite the rise of remote working and cloud computing, advanced firewalls remain essential. As a WatchGuard Gold Partner, we use their Fireboxes as a first line of defence for our customers, filtering both incoming and outgoing traffic, decoding encrypted traffic for inspection, and using advanced technology to detect viruses and zero-day attacks.

**Network Segmentation**

Your network should be divided into multiple virtual networks, known as VLANs, to keep your servers and other critical infrastructure separate from your PCs and your mobile devices. This limits access to only what is needed. Guests and smart devices should be on their own VLANs with no access to anything else on the network.

**Endpoint Protection**

With the growth of remote work, devices outside the network perimeter need robust protection. WatchGuard's EPDR (Endpoint Protection, Detection and Response) service combines traditional anti-virus with AI, heuristics and Zero Trust classification of applications, ensuring only known good applications run on devices. This has been recently enhanced by XDR. ThreatSync Core is a WatchGuard Cloud service that provides eXtended Detection and Response (XDR) technology for WatchGuard Firebox and EDR

products. It is part of WatchGuard's Unified Security Platform, and provides centralised alert correlation, workflows, and AI-remediation orchestration services for different WatchGuard products.

**Password Hygiene**

Strong passwords are fundamental. Even the best security systems are vulnerable if passwords are weak or reused. We partner with Keeper to help customers generate and store strong passwords securely. Combined with WatchGuard's Multi-Factor Authentication (MFA) solution, AuthPoint, accounts are protected from persistent attackers.

**Cyber Essentials**

Achieving Cyber Essentials and Cyber Essentials Plus certification validates your cyber security posture and demonstrates your commitment to security to customers and suppliers. Connexis can help identify and address security gaps, guiding you through the certification process with our assessment partner.

To find out more about how Connexis can help to secure your business, call 01952 528000, visit [www.connexis.co.uk](http://www.connexis.co.uk), or email [sales@connexis.co.uk](mailto:sales@connexis.co.uk)



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



**Digital studies at Telford College's new campus in the town's Station Quarter**

## Courses create future experts

Telford College is launching two new cyber security courses to equip people for careers in one of the fastest-growing areas of the IT industry.

The level one and level two courses will be based at the college's Maths & Digital Skills Hub in Telford Town Centre's Station Quarter and will be delivered for three hours a week, over a 12-week period, beginning in September.

Teresa Hughes, director of business, digital and professional, said: "They are for people who want to learn about the accidental and malicious security threats that threaten an IT system. On the level one

course, we will look at cyber crime and the risks and effects it has on individuals and organisations.

"Learners will gain an understanding of routine protective methods used to maintain cyber security including the principles of vulnerability and penetration testing and user access control.

"The level two programme will investigate the security threats that exist to IT systems and data.

"It will explore system vulnerabilities and the tools and techniques used to protect users from risks and potential damage, including loss of data, loss of data integrity and unauthorised access to data."

## Never underestimate the human factor

**While businesses invest heavily in cyber security tools and technologies, one factor remains the weakest link: human error. A single click on a malicious email or the use of a weak password can expose an entire organisation to costly security breaches.**

Mark Pennington, managing director of IT support and cyber security provider EPX Technical Services, believes one of the biggest misconceptions about cyber security is that responsibility is solely the responsibility of the IT department.

"In reality, every employee – from entry-level staff to top executives – plays a critical role in safeguarding sensitive company data," he says.

"Cyber criminals don't just target systems; they target people.

"Phishing attacks, for example, exploit human psychology, tricking employees into clicking malicious links or disclosing sensitive information. Without proper training, even the most advanced security infrastructure can be undermined by a simple human error.

"A robust cyber security strategy must extend beyond firewalls and anti-virus software. It requires building a security-first culture where every employee understands the risks and knows how to respond."

He says employees should learn how to identify suspicious emails, fraudulent requests, and deceptive tactics used by cyber criminals. "Simulated phishing exercises can test employees' awareness and help them recognise real-world threats.

"Theoretical knowledge alone is not enough. Training should include practical, real-world scenarios that allow employees to apply cyber security best practices in simulated environments."

### Tips for keeping your accounts secure – from the Connexis team

- Use Long Passwords: Aim for passwords with at least 15 characters. Simple swaps like "@" for "A" are predictable. Instead, adding more characters increases the time it takes for a computer to guess your password.

- Try using Passphrases: Combine random words. For example, "SunnyChocolateMooseHiking" can be remembered with the story: "It's a sunny day, you and a moose are hiking while eating chocolate."

- Avoid Personal Information: Hackers can use social engineering to guess your passphrase if it includes details like your partner's name, kids' names, pets' names, address, or birthday.

- Unique Passphrases for Each Account: If a service you use gets hacked, only one account is affected. Reusing passphrases across multiple accounts can lead to much bigger problems.

- Utilise a Password Manager: Instead of remembering complex passphrases for every account, use a password manager. This way, you only need to remember one passphrase to unlock a vault storing long, random passwords for all services.

- Enable Multi-Factor Authentication (MFA): Even if hackers guess your passphrase, they'll still need your phone or fingerprint to log in.

- Adopt Passkeys: Where possible, use passkeys stored on your device or phone. They are designed to replace passwords and typically include MFA automatically.



**Be careful how you remember any passwords you use**

## ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE Transform your Business with AI Chatbots

- 🔥 24/7 customer support
- 🔥 Improves engagement
- 🔥 Saves time and costs
- 🔥 Data insights available
- 🔥 Boosts sales
- 🔥 Accurate responses

**50% OFF set up cost with code FROGBOT50!**



**Harness the power of GenAI now and start your journey!**



# An urgent need for more cyber security experts

**The British Chambers of Commerce has warned that businesses face increased cyber security risks without stronger engagement with government.**

Among the recommendations in a new report, the BCC is calling for ministers to:

- Carry out a cyber security awareness programme for businesses, particularly smaller firms
- Update the National Cyber Strategy
- Reform cyber security insurance to provide firms with better protection
- Address the shortage of UK cyber security professionals and support more training in all workplaces
- Engage directly with businesses to strengthen confidence in the UK's digital infrastructure

The report, which has the backing of the Chamber in Shropshire, has been produced by the BCC's Digital Revolution Challenge Group, drawing on expertise from businesses of all sizes and sectors, academia and think-tanks. It

advises that the Cyber Security and Resilience Bill, due to be published this year, must be developed in full consultation with businesses. This is to avoid creating 'an unnecessary burden for businesses' and to ensure that firms are 'actively incentivised to report cyber breaches or attacks'. This will then support the Government's growth agenda by strengthening cyber resilience.

Changes to working environments have created more IT challenges for businesses. BCC research has revealed more than half of firms believed working from home left their computer systems more exposed.

The report highlights an urgent need to tackle the current shortage of cyber security professionals, and the digital safety skills gap facing over half a million businesses.

Alex Veitch, director of policy at the British Chambers of Commerce, said: "Cyber threats against businesses are growing, and without co-ordinated action many SMEs will remain at risk. Our report outlines some immediate actions for ministers to engage directly with firms.

"There's a lack of specialist digital security knowledge in many smaller companies. Government needs to take the lead and proactively engage with business to raise awareness.

"Businesses are keen to see the detail of the Cyber Security and Resilience Bill in the coming months. The legislation must send a signal of confidence to the UK's SMEs and not create unnecessary costs and reporting burdens.

"Cyber resilience isn't just about protection; it's about trust, innovation, and supporting the long-term growth of businesses."

Changes to working environments have created more IT challenges for businesses

# How to stay one step ahead of the hackers



**Shaun Carvill**



**Cyber threats are not just a problem for big companies and governments. Small businesses are just as likely to be targeted and cyber attacks can put your money, data and IT equipment at risk.**

Staying one step ahead of the hackers is an evolving challenge, so we've put together a few tips to help you keep your website safe and secure.

**What is the most serious threat to website cyber security?**

Not keeping website software up to date is by far the largest reason for security breaches of websites. This could be in the software itself, or through a third party plug-in. It's important to promptly install any software updates which contain security fixes.

Once a security vulnerability is exposed publicly, it's only a matter of time until a bad actor starts to look for websites to exploit.

Software that is known to have security vulnerabilities but doesn't offer an update to address any issues within a reasonable timeframe should be classed as abandonware and should therefore be replaced.

**What other security threats are out there?**

- **Phishing attacks**  
Phishing attacks involve sending emails or messages that appear to be from a legitimate source, such as a bank or a company, to trick recipients into revealing their log-in credentials,

personal information, or financial details. Phishing attacks are one of the most common sources of security breaches.

- **Weak passwords**

Weak or easily guessable passwords can be easily cracked, allowing hackers to gain access to sensitive information. Companies and organisations should encourage employees to use strong passwords and implement policies that require password changes periodically.

- **Unpatched software vulnerabilities**

Unpatched vulnerabilities in software and applications can be exploited by attackers to gain access to systems and steal data. Companies and organisations should regularly update their software and patch any known vulnerabilities.

- **Malware**

Malware, such as viruses, worms, and trojans, can infect systems and steal sensitive data. Malware can be delivered via email, infected websites, or through physical media such as USB drives.

- **Insider threats**

Insider threats can come from employees, contractors, or other trusted individuals with access to sensitive information. Insider threats can include intentional theft of data, accidental disclosure, or negligent behaviour that compromises security.

- **Social engineering**

Social engineering involves manipulating individuals to disclose sensitive information or perform actions that compromise security. Social engineering techniques can include impersonating someone in authority, creating a sense of

urgency, or exploiting personal relationships.

- **Physical security breaches**

Physical security breaches can occur when unauthorised individuals gain access to restricted areas or steal physical assets such as laptops, mobile phones, or other devices containing sensitive information. Companies and organisations should implement physical security measures such as access controls, CCTV, and security patrols.

Develop a comprehensive cyber security policy that outlines best practices, guidelines, and procedures for all employees. This policy should cover areas such as password management, acceptable use of technology, data handling, incident response, and employee training.

Educate employees about cyber security threats, best practices, and how to recognise and respond to potential risks. Provide training on topics such as phishing awareness, social engineering, secure password creation, and safe browsing habits.

And keep all software, applications, and operating systems up to date with the latest security patches. Regularly review and apply updates and patches from software vendors to address vulnerabilities and protect against known threats.

Conduct regular security assessments and penetration testing: engage third-party security professionals to perform regular security assessments and penetration testing to identify vulnerabilities and weaknesses in your systems. Address the identified issues promptly.

Develop an incident response plan that outlines the steps to be taken in case of a security incident. This plan should include procedures for identifying, containing, eradicating, and recovering from a breach, as well as communication protocols for notifying stakeholders.

**Shaun Carvill is the founder and managing director of Bridgnorth-based Clickingmad. Check out his podcast series called Website Success In Five Minutes at [www.clickingmad.com/podcasts](http://www.clickingmad.com/podcasts)**

- \* IT networks
- \* Cyber Security
- \* Programming & Coding
- \* Internet of Things
- \* Augmented Reality
- \* Blockchain
- \* Data Privacy
- \* Hardware & Software Design

**Discover Digital at**



**Step into a world of possibilities.**

Learn about our Station Quarter campus

[www.telfordcollege.ac.uk](http://www.telfordcollege.ac.uk)



## Assistant manager was apprentice of the year



Luke Courtnell with his award in 2024

Construction company McPhillips (Wellington) Ltd has announced plans to recruit up to five new apprentices this year, responding to continued growth and new contract wins.

The move comes as the firm continues to secure significant projects such as the recently announced transformation of Addenbrooke House into a new sixth form centre for Telford College, and the £20 million retirement village in Newport for Untold Living.

The company, which directly employs 240 people at its Telford base, has seen around 30% of its current workforce graduate through its in-house two-year apprenticeship programme.

Luke Courtnell, who progressed from apprentice to assistant site manager in less than two years, was named Apprentice of the Year in the 2024 Shropshire

and Telford & Wrekin Apprenticeship Awards.

He said: "The apprenticeship programme at McPhillips provided me with real hands-on experience and the support to progress quickly in my career."

Stuart Bishop, who oversees the apprenticeship scheme, said: "We're particularly proud that such a high percentage of our directly employed workforce has come through our apprenticeship scheme, and many have progressed into senior roles within the company."

The award-winning scheme, delivered in partnership with Telford College, provides comprehensive training across various aspects of construction, including health and safety, plant operation, road construction, and specialist skills such as block paving and pipe laying.

# Awards are back for 2025

### The Shropshire Telford & Wrekin Apprenticeship Awards are back – and looking to build on the incredible success of the debut event last year.

The competition will once again celebrate the brightest and best workers who are 'earning while they are learning' – as well as recognising employers driving ambition and education through their support of apprenticeships.

There will be an overall star apprentice crowned for the Shropshire Council area, and an overall champion for Telford & Wrekin. There are also awards for small, medium and large sized employers.

Individual apprentice of the year categories include Construction & Civil Engineering, Health & Social Care, Engineering & Manufacturing, IT & Digital Industries, Creative & Media, Early Years & Education, and Business Legal & Finance.

The competition is backed by some of the county's biggest and best names, led by headline sponsor Telford College with support from the Marches Careers Hub. Category sponsors include Dyke Yaxley, In-Comm, McPhillips, Pave Always, Purple Frog Systems, J&PR, and Shrewsbury Colleges Group.

The competition is being organised by award-winning Shropshire events company Yarrington, working in partnership with Shropshire Business Live TV which will be filming and streaming the awards for broadcast on multiple platforms.

The awards are free to enter, and nominations are now open. The closing date for entries is June 27th.

To qualify for an individual award, apprentices must be on a current programme



Winners celebrate at last year's sell-out Shropshire Telford & Wrekin Apprenticeship Awards dinner

in the relevant sector, with a company which is based in either the Shropshire, or Telford & Wrekin local authority areas.

To qualify for a company award, businesses must have at least one operational base in either Shropshire or Telford & Wrekin, and employ current or past apprentices.

Shortlisted finalists will be notified in July, and the awards will be handed out at a glittering presentation night in front of the SBLTV cameras on October 2.

Carl Jones, producer and presenter at SBLTV, said: "We had a brilliant response last year, with

nominations exceeding all our expectations, and a sell-out awards dinner.

"Hopefully this year will be even bigger and better."

Mark Allsop, managing director of Yarrington, added: "It's a celebration of the brightest and best apprentices in the county, and the businesses which go the extra mile to support the next generation of skilled staff."

For all the details – including a few remaining sponsorship opportunities – log onto the website [stwaa.co.uk](http://stwaa.co.uk). To watch the highlights from the 2024 event, see the SBLTV YouTube channel.

# University is to open new base in Telford

### Keele University will be launching a new Nursing Associate apprenticeship to be delivered from Telford in September.

It is part of a landmark new partnership between the university, Telford College and the NHS.

The new partnership will see Keele and Telford College working together to deliver a range of healthcare courses, starting with a Nursing Associate apprenticeship launching in September 2025.

Keele University will have its own dedicated teaching space at Telford College's Wellington campus, which will be used to teach college students and deliver online lessons, with a particular focus on training a new generation of health and social care workers.

The new Nursing Associate apprenticeship is set to be delivered from Telford College's Clinical Skills Centre, with regular skills sessions and remote lectures delivered by experts from Keele University.

The course, which is subject to approval from the Nursing and Midwifery Council, takes a practical approach to help students develop the knowledge, skills and behaviours required to be a Nursing Associate.

Students who successfully complete the course also have the option to complete an 18-month "top up" course afterwards to become a fully-qualified nurse.

Professor Christian Mallen, executive dean of medicine and health sciences at Keele University, said: "I am very excited by our partnership with Telford College which will give those in Shropshire the opportunity to study to become nursing associates close to home."

"As someone who grew up in Shropshire, I recognise the vital contribution nurses make to the health and care of people across the county and am proud that the outstanding nursing team at Keele will be at the forefront of this exciting partnership."



Professor Christian Mallen, executive dean of medicine and health sciences

Lawrence Wood, principal and chief executive at Telford College, said: "This collaboration is great news for Telford & Wrekin and for the county of Shropshire as a whole."

"It is a tremendous opportunity for the college to reinforce its support for the NHS and care sector and the local community, helping to address skills requirements."

"We are delighted to have such a prestigious university working with us – it emphasises our partnership approach to the delivery of education and training."

Stacey Keegan, chief executive of The Robert Jones and Agnes Hunt Orthopaedic Hospital in Oswestry, and senior responsible officer for the NHS's people programme across Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin, said the collaboration would 'open up new doors for people in our local communities and give them an accessible avenue into a health and care career'.

## Apprentices to help growth plans

Automation and control systems specialist Transicon is set to expand its successful apprenticeship programme as part of ambitious growth plans for 2025.

The Telford-based firm, which currently employs 45 staff at its Queensway Business Park headquarters, is looking to add to its existing cohort of apprentices following sustained business growth and the successful launch of its mechatronics division.

The firm currently has five apprentices, with four based at its Telford site studying electrical engineering, and one completing a mechatronics engineering apprenticeship at In-comm Training.

General manager Jennifer Hughes said the expansion of the apprenticeship programme was vital to developing the next generation of skilled engineers for the business.

"We have a proud track record of developing talented engineers through our apprenticeship programme, with several of our senior team having started their careers as apprentices with us."

"The launch of our mechatronics division and growth in our service and maintenance offer means we need to continue building our



Transicon apprentice Joseph Jones, trainee Patrycja Pokorniecka and apprentices Matty Rogers and Quinton Mashingaidze

skilled workforce to meet increasing customer demand."

Henry Cooper, now a senior installer at Transicon, started his career as an apprentice with the firm.

He said: "The apprenticeship programme gave me the perfect foundation for my career. Being able to learn on the job while gaining qualifications meant I could develop both

practical skills and technical knowledge. I'm now proud to be helping mentor the next generation of engineers coming through the programme."

The company, which works with major manufacturers including Muller Dairy, BMW and Tata Steel, will be showcasing its apprenticeship opportunities at the In-comm Training open day later this month.



Julia Fitzsimmons of FBC Manby Bowdler

## Help with rise in NI payments

Embracing apprenticeships can help firms to beat the Government's National Insurance rises, it has been claimed.

Julia Fitzsimmons of law firm FBC Manby Bowdler says a little-known measure introduced in November's Budget means employers hiring apprentices under the age of 25 do not have to pay National Insurance Contributions on their wages.

The April 6 move will see employers' NICs increase from 13.8% to 15% at the same time as the payment threshold reduces from £9,100 to £5,000 per year.

Julia said: "The increase in NICs has raised

fears of a recruitment freeze and job cuts across the UK as firms reassess their position in the face of rising employment costs. But there is a key exemption which can really help employers who are striving to achieve growth while managing their budgets.

"Employers hiring apprentices under the age of 25 are now exempt from paying NICs on their wages, giving employers a clear opportunity to bring in new talent without facing additional costs. Degree apprentices under 25 are also included in the exemption broadening the range of talent which employers can access."

# An outstanding night



Ricoh UK Products receiving their award



Mark Brown with overall Apprenticeship champion Kyle Blower



The awards night at Origins Restaurant

**Shrewsbury Colleges Group hosted its annual apprenticeship awards night to recognise outstanding apprentices and employers' hard work, dedication, and achievements.**

The event, held at the Origins Restaurant at the college's London Road campus, brought together key stakeholders, industry leaders, and local businesses to celebrate apprentices' invaluable contributions to the college community and the wider workforce.

It showcased success stories of apprentices across a diverse range of sectors, including engineering, construction, and professional services.

The Overall Apprentice of the Year award went to Kyle Blower

for outstanding achievements in bricklaying. In addition to winning the college award, Kyle has also been crowned SkillBuild Bricklayer of 2025, earning him an all-expenses-paid trip to Las Vegas where he represented the UK at the #MCAASkillsChallenge, finishing in an impressive second place.

Principal James Staniforth said: "We are immensely proud of our apprentices, who continue to demonstrate resilience, passion, and innovation in their respective fields.

"Apprenticeships provide a vital pathway to employment, equipping learners with real-world experience and industry-specific skills."

Mark Brown, the college's vice principal for quality, apprenticeships & information, added: "We extend our gratitude to the local businesses and industry partners who support apprenticeship schemes and play a crucial role in shaping the future workforce."

## Other winners

- Lily Weetman: Hudson LM, Accounting Apprentice of the Year
- Jess Slater: Reconomy UK Ltd, Business Admin Apprentice of the Year
- Joe Shingler: Shingler Homes, Bricklaying Apprentice of the Year
- Kyle Blower: LG Blower, Overall Apprentice of the Year
- Joe Harrison: Pave Aways, Site Supervisor Apprentice of the Year
- Cai Curtis: Tim Frost Carpentry, Carpentry Apprentice of the Year
- Nathan Broster: Penguin Electrical Solutions, Electrical Apprentice of the Year
- Andy Roberts: NHS Wolverhampton, Engineering Apprentice of the Year
- Harry Guildford: JCA Outdoor Adventure, Outdoor Apprentice of the Year
- Harry Barrett: SJ Roberts Construction, Gas Apprentice of the Year

**Several employers were also recognised for their work with apprentices - Seven Salon, Shingler Homes, JCA Outdoor Adventures, and Ricoh UK Products.**



# Get accountancy, tax and strategic advice that's tailored to your business.

## Who doesn't want a perfect fit?

WR Partners are driven on by your success and do everything in our power to help you overcome all challenges, seize opportunities and continually thrive.

WR Partners offer accountancy, auditing and multiple business services including; payroll services, tax advisory and consultancy, strategic business planning, support and advisory.

wrpartners.co.uk  
08000 664 664



Launching the 2025 awards are Shropshire Chamber trio, from left, Ruth Ross, Owen Fyfield, and Kelly Riedel

# The Greatest Show

It's the 25th anniversary of the county's annual business awards this year, and organisers are promising to put on 'the greatest show'.

**Roll up, roll up . . . Shropshire Chamber of Commerce has officially launched its annual business awards – promising to lay on a memorable show for the competition's 25th anniversary.**

Entries are now open for the showpiece awards, which will be presented at a glittering black-tie ceremony at Telford's International Centre on June 20. Details can be found at [www.shropshirechamberbusinessawards.com](http://www.shropshirechamberbusinessawards.com).

The competition is free to enter, and open to any business with an operational base in either the county of Shropshire or Telford & Wrekin – whether or not they are a Chamber member.

It includes the return of long-running categories including Company of the Year, Best New Business, Best Small Business and Outstanding Customer Service.

There are also new categories this year including an Inspirational Adult Learner award



More than 150 people attended the launch event

– and a special Champion of Champions trophy to be contested by previous Company of the Year winners over the past 25 years.

More than 150 business people attended the official launch of this year's event at Hatfields Land Rover in Shrewsbury, where the Greatest Showman-style theme for 2025 was unveiled.

Shropshire Chamber chief executive Ruth Ross said: "It is always a highlight of

the calendar when we recognise the amazing businesses we're so fortunate to have in our county – but it will be even more special this year as we celebrate the event's 25th anniversary.

"Our role at Shropshire Chamber of Commerce is to help businesses of all sizes to navigate challenges, seize opportunities, and celebrate their success.

"The business awards are such an



Awards judges Teresa Boughey and Simon Adcock are interviewed by Chris Pritchard for SBLTV



Andrew Dunham and Stuart Mackenzie of McPhillips



Richard Apps and Pam Hodgetts of Midlands Air Ambulance with the Chamber team

important part of this – championing the incredible businesses we have across all corners of our county. We are determined to lay on 'the greatest show' this year; an awards night that no-one will forget."

The closing date for applications this year is April 4, and the shortlisted finalists will be revealed at Shropshire Chamber's business expo on April 10 at the Mercure Telford Centre Hotel.

Judging will take place in May, and the winners will be announced at the glittering awards night on June 20.

The event supports a local charity each year with the proceeds of its awards night fundraising game, and Midlands Air Ambulance was revealed as the recipient this year.

Pam Hodgetts, from the charity, said the proceeds would make a real difference to the organisation, which receives no Government funding and relies entirely on donations and corporate support.

Shropshire Business editor Carl Jones hosted the launch event, and will be compering the awards night again this year. Tickets are now on sale through the awards website.

Some big-name sponsors are already on board for the awards this year, including WR Partners, Azets, Coforge, Telford College, Aico, Harper Adams University, McPhillips, The Marches Education Partnership, Aaron & Partners . . . plus Shropshire Business magazine.

● **Turn to page 32 for the full list of categories for 2025, and the criteria which will be used by the judging and shortlisting panel. Companies can apply for a maximum of three awards.**



Jenny Bean and Lizzy Ellis



Delia Yapp and Teresa Maden pick up their launch event brochures



Shropshire Business editor Carl Jones hosted the launch event



Nigel West of Fiveways Insurance Group



The launch event filmed by the SBLTV cameras



Richard Hughes and Hugh Strickland



Guests were greeted with cocktails, fizz and popcorn for the launch event



Chris Pallett with the Chamber's Gwynneth Slavin



Kelly Riedel and Rachel Owen from the Chamber with the Greatest Showman-style awards branding



# THE 2025 CATEGORIES AND CRITERIA

## COMPANY OF THE YEAR

The showpiece award for an all-round star performer, flying the flag for Shropshire business excellence. Judged on:

- Evidence of financial success
- Creativity, innovation and ambition
- Leadership and customer service excellence
- Training, people development and marketing strategies
- Giving back – showing a commitment to Shropshire
- Effective response to economic challenges
- Awards, testimonials and accolades
- A commitment to diversity, wellbeing and sustainability

## BEST NEW BUSINESS

For start-ups in any sector, formed since the start of 2022. Judged on:

- Strength and originality of business vision
- Clear and dynamic business plan
- Financial objectives, and evidence of progress
- Creative and ambitious marketing and growth strategies
- Testimonials, case studies and accolades

## OUTSTANDING CUSTOMER SERVICE

For companies which go the extra mile in looking after the needs of their customers. Judged on:

- Ways of consistently exceeding customer expectations
- Measuring customer satisfaction, and acting on feedback
- Training and development in customer handling and service skills
- Awards, accolades and testimonials
- Evidence of going the extra mile to deliver five-star service

## BEST SMALL BUSINESS

For small or micro businesses in any sector, employing up to 10 full-time equivalent staff. Judged on:

- Innovation, and forward-thinking strategies for growth
- Gaining and sustaining a competitive advantage
- Commitment to staff development, wellbeing and sustainability
- Clear and creative marketing and growth plans
- Accolades, testimonials, and evidence of financial success

## EXCELLENCE IN MANUFACTURING AND ENGINEERING

Celebrating the contribution being made by companies of all sizes in the manufacturing and engineering sectors. Judged on:

- Innovation and customer satisfaction
- Quality control processes, and use of new technology
- Effective leadership and management
- Testimonials, and evidence of financial success
- Wellbeing and sustainability policies and processes

## COMMUNITY CHAMPION - BUSINESS IN THE COMMUNITY

For businesses which believe in 'putting something back' into the Shropshire community. Judged on:

- Top-to-bottom 'buy-in' from staff at all levels, above statutory requirements

- Examples of projects which have made a real difference to local people's lives
- Supporting Shropshire suppliers by 'buying local'
- Fostering links with schools, colleges and community groups
- Case studies, endorsements and testimonials

## RETAIL, LEISURE & HOSPITALITY ACHIEVEMENT

For companies making a positive contribution to some of Shropshire's most important sectors. Judged on:

- Established market position and strong financial performance
- Overcoming challenges to gain a competitive advantage
- Commitment to staff development, wellbeing and sustainability
- Clear and creative marketing and growth plans
- Awards, accolades and testimonials

## OUTSTANDING BUSINESS GROWTH

For companies who can demonstrate sustained success over the past three years. Judged on:

- Evidence of strategic and profitable expansion including accounts and payroll growth, new products/services and expansion into new markets
- A dynamic and scalable business model
- Profitability, plus a growth in staff numbers and/or turnover
- Ability to break into new markets, at home or overseas
- A commitment to staff development, wellbeing and sustainability

## THE TRAILBLAZER INNOVATION AWARD

For companies who spot a gap in the market, and think outside the box to fill it. Judged on:

- Your USP: What makes you stand out from the competition?
- Innovation in products, services or processes
- Evidence of profitability and effective leadership
- Testimonials, awards, and potential for future growth
- A commitment to staff development, wellbeing and sustainability

## THE ECO AWARD

For environmentally aware businesses which promote innovative practices, processes or technology. Judged on:

- Embracing green technology to lower the carbon footprint
- Promoting or producing eco-friendly products and services
- A cross-company commitment to 'make a difference'
- Substantial and quantifiable improvements in environmental and commercial performance

- A commitment to staff development, wellbeing and sustainability

## YOUNG BUSINESS PERSON

Open to anyone aged 30 or below in January 2025, who demonstrates flair, commitment and an entrepreneurial spirit. Judged on:

- Evidence of a significant influence on the business
- A commitment to training and personal development
- Entrepreneurial attitude, reliability and work ethic
- Strong people skills and maturity beyond their years
- Testimonials from managers, colleagues, and/or customers.

## INSPIRATIONAL ADULT LEARNER

For anyone aged 19 and above who can demonstrate a positive or life-changing experience from adult learning, and has studied with a Shropshire or Telford & Wrekin training provider. Nominees need to show:

- A passion and commitment for lifelong learning which will inspire others
- A determination to improve by broadening their skills base
- Ways in which the development of essential skills have made a positive impact on job satisfaction and/or employment prospects
- Achievements which will inspire other adults to return to education or take up learning for the first time.
- Awards, accolades or testimonials from training providers and/or their employers

## THE JOHN CLAYTON AWARD

For an individual who has given an outstanding contribution to the Shropshire business community. They need to have:

- Championed the Shropshire business community over a significant number of years
- Made a significant positive impact on the lives of others
- Given back to the county through either mentorship, volunteering or charitable actions
- Been an inspirational role model who has inspired their colleagues or peers

## CHAMPION OF CHAMPIONS

Open to all previous Shropshire Company of the Year winners. Judged on:

- Progress made since being named Company of the Year
- Strong leadership, customer service and financial performance
- Engagement with suppliers and stakeholders to support the local community
- Promoting diversity and inclusion, and commitment to sustainability
- Innovation in products, processes or services to drive the business forward



STEP RIGHT  
UP AND HELP  
CELEBRATE  
SHROPSHIRE

FRIDAY,  
JUNE 20TH  
TELFORD  
INTERNATIONAL  
CENTRE

JOIN US FOR AN UNFORGETTABLE NIGHT

BEHOLD AN EVENING OF MARVELS EXCELLENCE

BOOK YOUR TICKETS

[HTTPS://WWW.SHROPSHIRE-CHAMBER.CO.UK/AWARDS](https://www.shropshire-chamber.co.uk/awards)





Edgbaston cricket stadium in Birmingham



Fans enjoy a Fordhall Farm hog roast during matchday at Edgbaston

# Bowled over by concessions management deal at stadium

**Edgbaston Sports Stadium in Birmingham has signed a new long-term contract with Fordhall Farm Event Caterers to be its official concession management company.**

The deal will see the Market Drayton-based company supply over 50 street food style units around Edgbaston during Vitality Blast cricket games, Blast Finals Day, and international matches.

It extends a partnership between the two brands which stretches back to 2015.

Edgbaston operations director Claire Daniel said: "Edgbaston is committed to sustainability and prioritising sourcing products from local suppliers. Fordhall Farm very much mirror our ethos.

"They are a family-led business, one of the first organic farms in the country, and supply much of the produce to units at Edgbaston from their on-site farm butchery. And other products they don't supply are sourced from suppliers in the region.

"We first met Ben, Fordhall Farm events director, 10 years ago when he popped into Edgbaston to see if we'd be interested in any of their farm products. It started with four units... and I'm delighted the relationship has blossomed since then.

"The food they supply is top quality – a great offering for Bears fans during the Blast and visitors at Edgbaston for England games."

The deal also extends to the Shropshire company providing catering options at Rugby School for Warwickshire's three Metro Bank One Day Cup games in August.

Fordhall Farm Events are tenants to England's first community-owned organic farm, The Fordhall Community Land Initiative.

Director Ben Hollins said: "There is a great vibe on a match day at Edgbaston and our street food offerings blend really nicely into that environment.

"The food kiosks offer a variety of food and drink to meet everybody's needs – from



The Fordhall Farm and Edgbaston teams have been partners since 2015

The food kiosks offer a variety of food and drink to meet everybody's needs – from woodfired pizzas, to Greek gyros and sweet churros, to a range of coffees, drinks and even plant-based curries and samosas.

woodfired pizzas, to Greek gyros and sweet churros, to a range of coffees, drinks and even plant-based curries and samosas.

"There's very much a focus on the street food vibe that is so popular in Birmingham at the moment.

"For the upcoming India Test there will be a fantastic selection of samosas, curries, including plant-based options, masala fries, and fresh naans.

"It feels like a genuine collaboration being part of the Edgbaston team. We're excited about the future working with such an iconic venue.

"The long-term contract gives Fordhall Farm Events the ability to invest in infrastructure to enable us to support Edgbaston on improving customer experience while improving the match day sustainability aspirations."

# Recognition for entrepreneurial Jeevan



Jeevan Punj of Elite Hampers

Telford-based business owner Jeevan Punj has been named one of 2025's 'most impressive female founders' in a national campaign.

Jeevan, owner of luxury gifting business Elite Hampers which she founded in 2021, received the accolade in the f:Entrepreneur #iAlso100 initiative run by Small Business Britain.

She is being profiled among 100 inspirational female entrepreneurs from across the country, as part of the campaign to celebrate the multi-achievements of women running businesses in the UK today.

Jeevan was also a winner of a Woman Who Achieves award in 2024, and a finalist for the National Business Women's Award.

She said: "This is an amazing start to 2025. I'm honoured to be a part of this wonderful

campaign and in a line-up of such brilliant women entrepreneurs."

Launched in 2017 by Small Business Britain – a champion of small businesses in the UK – the f:Entrepreneur campaign aims to raise greater awareness of the impact of female business owners across the country, and provide inspiration and role models.

"It's wonderful to have Jeevan from Elite Hampers feature in this year's #iAlso100 – all of the female entrepreneurs in this year's line-up are simply phenomenal," said Michelle Owens CBE, founder of Small Business Britain.

"It is vital that we recognise the impressive contribution of the UK's female business owners and do all we can to support and encourage them throughout their entrepreneurial journey, from start-up to scale-up."

# Royal warrant issued to a heavenly beauty business

**Heaven Skincare – the Shropshire-based beauty products company founded by entrepreneur Deborah Mitchell – has received a royal warrant.**

Queen Camilla has granted new warrants to the team of beauty and fashion experts that have worked with her for several years.

Heaven Health and Beauty, which manufactures Heaven Skincare products including the hero Bee Venom range, has been recognised as Supplier of Skincare Products and Treatments to Her Majesty The Queen.

The brand, which has its headquarters at Hadley Park in Telford and its flagship salon in Shifnal, is one of seven companies to be named by the Queen on the new list, published a few weeks ago.

Others included Queen Camilla's hairdresser Jo Hansford and her milliner Philip Treacy, as well as vet practice Benson and Babb and three couturier companies.

Deborah Mitchell has been treating The Queen with her bee venom and collagen facials for 18 years and said Camilla was the first to try Heaven's Bee Venom Mask when it was created.

Deborah, who featured as our cover story in Shropshire Business magazine back in issue number four, founded Shropshire-based Heaven Skincare in 1995.

She started in a small room at the Holiday Inn hotel in Telford, and when Beatties opened its new department store in Telford, Deborah took



Deborah showing beauty students from Telford College around her headquarters at Hadley Park

the plunge and took her products into there. Almost immediately, she was turning over £19,000 a week from that single store, and says she felt the 'big boys' looking on with worried expressions.

In total, The King and Queen have granted royal warrants to almost 400 companies that supply the Royal Household.

A Royal Warrant of Appointment is a document that permits a company to use the Royal Arms in connection with its business in an appointed trading capacity.

Warrants are granted for up to five years at a time as a mark of recognition for the ongoing supply of goods or services to the Royal Household.



# Golden memories

We're celebrating a golden anniversary this month with the publication of our landmark 50th edition. It's the perfect excuse for editor CARL JONES to dip into the archives and recall some of our many highlights, and how it all began...

## Half a century of Shropshire Business magazines . . . it's fair to say we've been on quite a journey.

Three General Elections, two economic recessions, one global pandemic, and more amazing business success stories than we can even begin to count.

In our very first edition, published back in the autumn of 2016, we said: "There's something utterly beguiling about Shropshire; the people, the places, and the wonderfully supportive business networking community."

"But don't ever mistake its picture-postcard beauty and the sometimes easy-going demeanour of its people, for complacency, or a lack of driving ambition."

"Because Shropshire is home to some of the UK's most dynamic, innovative, creative, and internationally successful companies – driven by a breed of remarkable people, who are achieving incredible things." All of that remains true.

Our motivation for launching the magazine was the fact that we felt Shropshire was too often being relegated to little more than a post-script in the achievements of the wider West Midlands region. It rarely received the headline-grabbing attention it deserved in regional and national business publications, in our opinion.

Shropshire Business was going to be different. Compiled by a team of media professionals who have all lived and worked in the county for decades, we were only going to be concerned with stories and issues happening right here within the county boundaries, or which had a direct impact on local companies.



Directors Carl Jones and Henry Carpenter collect their first editions of the magazine

From manufacturing to money management, food and drink to farming, technology to training – and many more places in between, we like to think we've turned the spotlight onto the topics that really matter to you; the things you're talking about in your own boardrooms.

Much as it's important to be analysing the issues that matter to the local business community, it's also nice to receive recognition for our efforts of course.

To have been crowned Midlands Magazine of the Year, beating far more established publications from across major towns and cities in the region, has to go down as the biggest single highlight since our launch.

We picked up the trophy in front of esteemed journalists from across the east and west Midlands at Edgbaston Stadium in Birmingham, following a 'highly commended' accolade in the same competition the year before.

The judges said: "Many of the lifestyle magazines were so heavy on adverts – in some cases, they were far more glossy than the content so it was difficult to find anything to read! Shropshire Business had targeted content – a credible mix of hard news, interviews and background information." That was so good to hear.

Speaking to the media after coming off stage with the trophy, I said: "We've got a fantastic team of experienced and enthusiastic journalists and media professionals working at Shropshire Business, and this is just deserts for everyone's hard work."

"Our mission is simple – to celebrate the wonderful businesses doing amazing things in Shropshire, and to lift the lid on some incredible stories about the companies, and their people."

And it's still the case. We owe a huge thanks to everyone who has supported us since our launch, from our loyal advertisers to the team of expert columnists, and everyone else who helps us to keep our finger on the pulse of the local economy.

In an increasingly digitally-obsessed world, we're proud to continue to fly the flag for print.



Huge achievement – the Midlands Media Awards win was a proud moment



At the Shropshire Chamber expo in 2021

Yes, we have a popular website which has gained traffic every single year since our formation, and of course we have active social media channels too.

But there's nothing like the sight (and smell) of a new print edition coming off the presses. Still, after all these years, it's something special. And we know that companies value the chance to take delivery of a product which they can circulate among their staff, and keep in their reception areas.

You won't find any AI-generated content in our pages. That's not to say we're not open to new opportunities, or new ways of approaching traditional media practices.

During the pandemic, we launched a Coronavirus 'bulletin board' on our website to give companies a portal for broadcasting messages either offering or requesting help. It became the most visited feature on our website since our launch.

We also joined forces with local events company Yarrington and online news service Shropshire Live, to create Shropshire Business Live TV.

With networking events, awards ceremonies and conferences thwarted by lockdown, we wanted to give them a platform to maintain their profile – and a monthly B2B broadcast was launched.

The intention was for the show to keep running until lockdown was eased . . . but it's still going today, into its fifth season, with a Shropshire Chamber Business Award on the mantelpiece, as well as a finalist certificate from the Midlands round of the StartUp Awards



Bank of England agent Glynn Jones talks to the team on SBLTV

National Series, for best Creative Start-Up. You can binge the box-set on the SBLTV YouTube channel.

That's not the only collaboration we've entered into, of course. We also became a proud partner in Shropshire Business LIVE!, a collaboration with wealth management company Throgmorton Associates of Shrewsbury, and once again Yarrington.

The idea was to provide business networking

get-togethers with a difference, using our journalistic experience to include panel debates and topical question-and-answer sessions.

Our first event was at Hencote vineyard in Shrewsbury, the second was at Netley Hall, and we were going full steam ahead to complete the trilogy at Hawkstone Hall, near Wem, when we were plunged into lockdown.

Eventually, nearly 18 months later than planned, we did get to Hawkstone as the world



Discussing the cost of living crisis at the Shropshire Business LIVE! event at Weston Park



Nick Jones of Throgmorton Associates partnered with us for Shropshire Business LIVE!



The hosts, and panelists for Shropshire Business LIVE! at Netley Hall



Our Hawkstone Hall event was the first face-to-face networking event since lockdown for the majority of guests



Hollie Whittles and Ishbel Lapper - digital detox debate at the second Shropshire Business LIVE!



Talking to The apprentice winner Mark Wright at Shrewsbury Flaxmill for SBLTV



Lindsay Bury, our first cover story



A montage of the content from SB issue 23

... began to emerge from hibernation, and the first question of the morning was a revealing one: "So, how many of you are attending your first face-to-face networking event since lockdown?"

Nearly three quarters of the delegates put their hands up - we were very grateful that they chose our event as the occasion for their return!

We also hosted a fourth Shropshire Business LIVE! get-together in the orangery at Weston Park.

Naturally, we covered each of the events in our magazines - as we have done with many big business gatherings around the county over the past nine years.

We're always front and centre at the Shropshire Chamber Business Awards, where we're a proud sponsor - events like these are great to keep our finger on the pulse, and be a fly on the wall to listen to what's on people's minds.

With a satisfying symmetry, our first issue and our latest issue have both focused on technology.

There's no shortage of dynamic business people in our county, and our first 'big interview' in issue one featured Corvedale entrepreneur Lindsay Bury, the investor, serial director and a true pioneer of the computer industry who founded Apricot Computers.

Where he led, many others have followed. Our covers have been graced by a procession of

ong and prosper in of the entrepreneur



Shropshire businesses were resourceful during the pandemic often forming enduring alliances



Paul Naylor (layout designer for Shropshire Business) presents Deborah Mitchell with her cover story edition featuring her Heaven brand

inspirational business people including Deborah Mitchell of beauty brand Heaven, wine industry trailblazer Roger Gabb, Café Nero chief executive Will Stratton-Morris, Music Magpie founder Walter Gleeson, and many more.

Sometimes though, it's an issue rather than an individual which has made the headlines. When GDPR changes were in the offing, we brought together a collection of locally-based experts to help guide businesses through everything they needed to know.

When lockdown was over, our 'Fighting Back' edition explored top tips to help get employers back on their feet.

And we've taken similar approaches with topics which continue to be vital today, like the growth of Artificial Intelligence, recruitment pressures, skills shortages, and mental health challenges.

So... have you got news for us? If there's a topic you'd like us to tackle, an event you'd love us to cover, or a fascinating business person you think we really need to meet, drop us a line to editor@shropshirebiz.com.

And remember, if you want to get your company's message out to an average readership of more than 10,000 per edition, we've got cost-effective advertising packages for every budget, starting from £125.



Will Stratton-Morris - cover star, May/June 2019

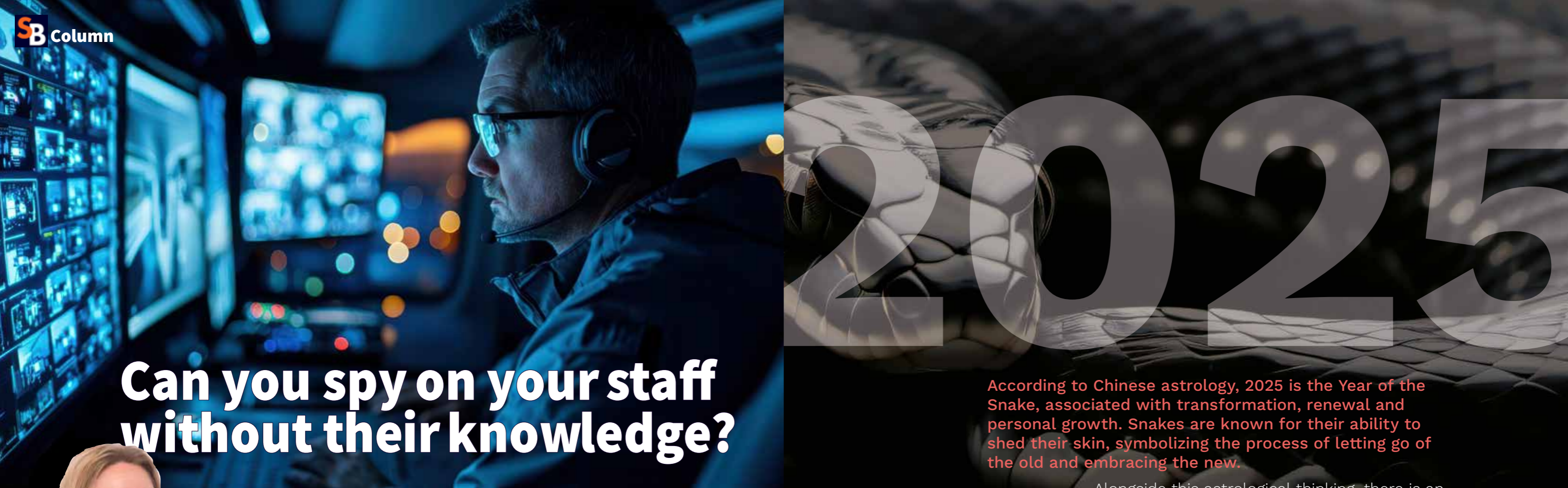
# Shropshire Business - Working for you

By working in partnership with the business community, we believe we can make a genuine difference to the Shropshire economy.

We take time to understand you and your business, creating imaginative campaigns and commercial opportunities to suit all requirements and budgets, across multiple platforms.

The choice is yours. For example, we can:

- Showcase your achievements in our prestigious print publication, befitting of its content and audience.
- Spotlight your success on our dynamic website, which is updated every weekday.
- Explore the story behind your business on our podcast, which is gaining a growing following.
- Make you a TV star, thanks to our involvement in Shropshire Business Live TV.



# Can you spy on your staff without their knowledge?



**Ishbel Lapper**

**Let's make no bones about it. Working from home – either full time or as part of a hybrid arrangement – is here to stay.**

And that has left some employers wondering just how they can make sure their staff are hard at work when they should be, and not nipping off every two minutes to watch Homes under the Hammer or play Call of Duty.

Is it legal to mount a camera on your employees' monitors to watch what they are up to?

Can you install mouse tracking and other monitoring devices to make sure they are hard at it?

How do you ensure productivity and compliance with company policies when you can't keep an eye on what your staff are up to?

They are all questions I've been asked over the past couple of years, and the answers are not always what people expect.

### **Legal Framework**

In the UK, several laws govern employee monitoring, including the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), the Data Protection Act 2018, and the Human Rights Act 1998. Employers must have a legitimate reason

for monitoring employees, such as ensuring productivity, preventing data breaches, or complying with legal obligations. Monitoring must be proportionate, transparent, and respect employees' privacy rights.

### **Permissible Monitoring Practices**

Employers can monitor employees in various ways, provided they comply with legal requirements. Common methods include:

**1. Email monitoring:** Employers can monitor work-related emails to ensure compliance with company policies and prevent data breaches.

**2. Internet usage tracking:** Monitoring internet usage helps ensure employees are not accessing inappropriate websites or engaging in non-work-related activities during work hours.

**3. Phone call recording:** Recording phone calls can be useful for quality control, training, and compliance purposes.

**4. Keystroke logging:** Tracking keystrokes can help measure productivity and detect potential security threats.

**5. Screen monitoring:** Taking periodic screenshots can provide insights into employees' work activities.

### **Prohibited Practices**

While monitoring is permissible, certain practices are against the law:

**1. Covert monitoring:** Monitoring employees without their knowledge is generally illegal unless there is a strong suspicion of criminal activity and no other means to obtain the information.

**2. Excessive monitoring:** Monitoring that

is overly intrusive or disproportionate to the purpose can violate employees' privacy rights.

**3. Monitoring in private spaces:** Employers cannot monitor employees in private spaces, such as bathrooms or bedrooms, even if they work from home.

### **Steps to Avoid Employment Tribunal or Grievance Hearings**

To avoid legal disputes and maintain a positive working relationship with employees, employers should create a clear monitoring policy that outlines the purpose, methods, and scope of monitoring.

But don't stop at just writing the policy – ensure all your staff know just what it is and include it in the staff handbook.

You should also consult with your staff before putting any monitoring into place and conduct impact assessments to weigh up the pros and cons. If it's going to be more trouble than it is worth – for example your best staff walk out in disgust – it's almost certainly time to think again.

Once you are committed to some form of monitoring, make sure you are absolutely transparent about it. Tell staff exactly how they are being monitored, and the precise nature of the data being collected as well as how it will be used.

If you do go ahead with monitoring, make sure you focus on outcomes and not employees. Don't always feel the need to adopt the latest gadget that hits the internet, and remember that building a culture of trust will do more for workplace productivity than any amount of monitoring.

**Ishbel Lapper is an independent human resources consultant based in Telford who runs HR Solutions Shropshire**

# 2025

According to Chinese astrology, 2025 is the Year of the Snake, associated with transformation, renewal and personal growth. Snakes are known for their ability to shed their skin, symbolizing the process of letting go of the old and embracing the new.

Alongside this astrological thinking, there is an economic trend pointing to 2025 being a year of change and new opportunities.

If your business is looking to do things differently in 2025, change up your focus, update your image, be more creative and innovative in how you present your offer, then Yarrington are ready to work with you.

# 'NEW'

## New is what we do best!

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

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

[www.yarrington.co.uk](http://www.yarrington.co.uk)



Yarrington

# It's perfect timing

## A famous Shrewsbury landmark has been given a well-deserved makeover.

The Morris Lubricants' Clock Tower at its Castle Foregate headquarters is back in working order, thanks to repair work from the company which keeps London's famous Big Ben ticking.

Paul Perry, Morris Lubricants' facilities and site services manager, said the clock had stopped working because its hands – which were manufactured from wood – had expanded and retracted over the years and needed replacing.

So the Cumbria Clock Company, which services more than 1,400 clocks throughout the UK including famous landmarks such as Big Ben, Kensington Palace and The Science Museum in London, was called in to help.

The wooden hands have now been replaced by identical, specially-crafted stainless-steel alternatives, and the clock mechanism has also been refurbished.

The clock movement was previously manufactured by famous Whitchurch clock maker J.B. Joyce & Company in 1946.

Cumbria Clock Company technical sales manager Keith Cotton – who used to work for the Shropshire company – said: "We've refitted the hands and dial motion works; the original hands have been left on site for historical reasons.

"The movement was dismantled and cleaned to remove the build-up of old oil and dirt, all the bearings were checked for wear, we polished all working surfaces, and the weight cable was also replaced.

"As I live locally in Shropshire and am passionate about the clock, this was a great privilege having also worked on it when I was much younger."

Morris Lubricants executive chairman Andrew Goddard said:



Andrew Goddard holding the new clock hands with the famous Clock Tower in the background

"The clock and clock tower are an important part of the heritage of Shrewsbury and of Morris Lubricants."

The company bought the former Corbett's Perseverance Iron Works for the princely sum of £6,500 in 1927 – around about the same cost as the current clockworks.

Morris Lubricants makes a wide range of oils and lubricants which are sold across the UK and exported to more than 90 countries.



Plumbing students at Shrewsbury College



Partnerships with business create a mutually rewarding ecosystem

## At Shrewsbury Colleges Group, we believe that education thrives when it maintains strong connections with industry.

Our partnerships with local businesses are invaluable in preparing students for the real world, equipping them with the skills, experience, and confidence they need to succeed. However, the benefits of these collaborations extend far beyond our students – they create a mutually rewarding ecosystem for all involved.

For businesses, partnering with a college offers a unique opportunity to showcase products and services, gain early access to future talent, and demonstrate a commitment to social value.

Meanwhile, the college benefits not only from the donation of tools and materials, but also from valuable industry insights that enable our staff to stay abreast of emerging trends, upskill accordingly, and collaborate on innovative projects. This synergy ensures our curriculum remains aligned with industry needs, fostering a workforce that is both skilled and adaptable.

### A Model Partnership

A prime example of the impact of industry partnerships is our ongoing collaboration with Pipekit, an independent distributor of pipe, valves, and fittings for commercial and industrial pipework. This partnership has proven to be a win-win for the college, our students and the industry as we work together to strengthen the local workforce, ensuring businesses have access to highly-skilled student talent.

As one of two official sponsors of our plumbing and gas department, they have provided a range of top-tier products and resources from leading manufacturers, including Geberit, Albion Valves, Flamco, Georg Fischer, McAlpine Plumbing Products, Floplast and many others.

One of the most valuable aspects of this partnership is the monthly technical presentations conducted in collaboration with industry manufacturers. These sessions offer students first-hand insights into the latest

# The power of industry partnerships

innovations, materials, and technologies shaping the sector.

Martyn Rowlands, owner and managing director of Pipekit, highlights the company's motivation for supporting the programme: "We are delighted to be actively involved in the future of our industry and being able to give something back to our community.

"We were keen to play a part in helping to ensure local students and apprentices are aware of the latest products and technology that is being used within the industry, and significantly deliver that message through leading manufacturers."

He continued: "It's also hugely rewarding to support a college that both myself and our sales director Jamie McQueen attended in our younger days."

Stuart Raine, curriculum director for construction at Shrewsbury Colleges Group added: "This is a fantastic partnership that consistently contributes to some outstanding development of practical skills and knowledge through the generosity of Pipekit.

"It is brilliant to combine the skills and knowledge of staff here, with up-to-date industry tools, equipment, materials, and processes provided by Pipekit. Truly an outstanding local company who are

collaborating with us here to support plumbing and heating engineers of the future."

### The Growing Impact of Industry Collaboration

The success of our partnership with Pipekit is just one example of the transformative power of industry collaboration. As more businesses recognise the advantages of engaging with their local college, we are seeing a growing number of organisations step forward to support education and workforce development.

● *If your business is interested in working with us, we would love to hear from you. Get in touch today to explore how we can build a mutually beneficial partnership that enhances education, supports industry growth, and empowers the next generation of skilled professionals.*

**Shrewsbury Colleges Group**  
Employer enquiries:  
[www.scg.ac.uk/employers](http://www.scg.ac.uk/employers)  
01743 653602

Halls

Commercial Property Experts

Sales | Lettings | Acquisitions | Valuations Management

Featured Commercial Opportunities



### Arden House, Church Stretton, SY6 6JH

Offers in the region of £1,100,000 (EXCLUSIVE)

FOR SALE: BUSINESS & RESIDENTIAL OPPORTUNITY

- Total Site Area of approx 0.5 acres
- Four high-quality apartments set up as owners residence & holiday lets
- Sympathetic restoration completed in 2015 of this Arts & Crafts property



### Ellesmere Hotel, Ellesmere, SY12 0ES

Offers in the region of £1,150,000 (EXCLUSIVE)

FOR SALE: LICENCED FOOD & BEVERAGE BUSINESS

- Long established profitable business
- Total Gross Internal Floor Area of approximately 1,314 m sq (14,145 ft sq)
- Grade 2 listed property with two basement areas



### Battlefield Enterprise Park, 5 Henry Close, SY1 3TJ

Offers in excess of £400,000 (EXCLUSIVE)

FOR SALE: COMMERCIAL OPPORTUNITY

- Available with vacant possession
- Total Gross Internal Floor Area of approximately 4,682 ft sq (434.97 m sq)
- Generous parking provision - 10 car parking spaces

01743 450 700 commercialmarketing@hallsgb.com hallsgb.com/commercial



Ken Harrison (Artifice Creative) and Ruth Martin (Martin & Jones Marketing)

## Sharing a space in office venture

Shropshire marketing firm Martin & Jones Marketing has moved into a new building in the centre of Oswestry as part of its expansion plans. The move to the new offices in Arthur Street is a joint project with creative agency, Artifice Creative, owned by Ken Harrison. The two companies have taken over the entire building and have been joined in the spare offices by photographer and videographer Katy Yates and financial adviser Alasdair Coultts-Britton. Martin & Jones Marketing, which has just celebrated its sixth birthday, previously had offices in Oswestry Memorial Hall. "We needed more space to be able to accommodate all the team and our growing workload. Our new office in Arthur Street is big enough to take Martin & Jones Marketing as well as Artifice Creative and puts us right in the heart of the town," said Ruth Martin. Ken Harrison added: "The two companies already work in synergy together so it made sense to share an office. It's also given us both scope to expand."

# Salary sacrifices to mitigate rise in NI

**More than a quarter of mid-market businesses in the Midlands are looking at salary sacrifice schemes as a means of mitigating the impact of Budget tax changes coming into force from April, a new survey has found.**

BDO's Economic Engine survey found that while the use of salary sacrifice schemes was one of the most popular choices among employers seeking to mitigate the rise in employers' National Insurance Contributions, 40% said they would also look to outsource or offshore work.

Nearly a quarter reported that they would look to reduce or scrap planned pay increases or bonuses, while 29% said they would hire more part-time or contract workers.

Overall, nearly three quarters said they were planning to take at least one action in response to the imminent rise in employers' NIC announced at the Budget.

Steve Talbot, head of employment tax at BDO in the Midlands, said: "The increases to employers' National Insurance Contributions announced at the Budget and the accompanying drop in the threshold at which NIC applies to employee earnings came as a shock to many Midlands businesses. Unsurprisingly, the vast majority have been urgently exploring ways to mitigate this imminent jump in their costs.

"There is no silver bullet, but clearly salary sacrifice schemes for things like pensions, electric vehicles or cycle to work schemes – which offer NIC savings to both employers and employees – are top of mind for employers.

"For those businesses not yet offering a pension salary sacrifice scheme, now would be a good time to start. Those already operating such a scheme may seek to encourage employees, many of whom reduced their pension contributions during the pandemic, to consider the longer-term benefits of raising their contribution levels."



The Shropshire Business Suite is a new meeting space in Shrewsbury

## Banking on a new purpose

The former Santander bank opposite The Square in Shrewsbury has a new lease of life.

Entrepreneur Stuart Woodings has turned it into the Shropshire

Business Suite, a purpose-built, high tech business support facility. He says: "It's aimed for commercial use where people are able to hire this space for corporate events or meetings."

## Are you more than a little green when it comes down to our biodiversity?

In the world of commercial development, understanding the principles of environmental planning has become more important than ever. JAMES EVANS and LYNDSEY FISHER of Halls Commercial explore a major discussion point

**Biodiversity Net Gain refers to a planning principle that aims not only to reduce the impact of development on the natural environment but also to enhance biodiversity.**

It has become a central aspect of planning applications, particularly with the growing pressure from governments and environmental bodies to adopt sustainable development practices.

At its core, BNG requires developers to demonstrate that their projects will result in a net positive impact on local biodiversity. Developers must conduct thorough ecological assessments, identify existing biodiversity, and propose strategies to minimise harm. They must also implement compensatory actions that result in an overall increase in biodiversity, such as creating new habitats, restoring degraded areas, or enhancing existing ecosystems.

In England, the Environment Act 2021 has made it a legal requirement for most new developments to achieve at least a 10% net gain in biodiversity. This must be maintained for a minimum of 30 years. As a result, BNG has become a critical consideration in planning applications, affecting not only the design and layout of projects but also the selection of development sites.

For developers, it means addressing biodiversity concerns early in the design process. Collaboration with ecologists is essential, as failure to comply with these standards can lead to delays or refusals in planning permission.

While BNG promotes environmental stewardship, it can be viewed as an additional cost or "tax on development".

From a commercial property agent's perspective, BNG introduces another layer of complexity to the development process. As we work with developers on commercial projects, factoring in the additional requirements for biodiversity can be a challenge, adding more elements to the development appraisal process.

However, it is an essential step to ensure that projects align with environmental standards while still being financially viable.

Given this, it's crucial for developers to seek professional advice early in the planning process. At Halls Commercial, we strongly recommend consulting with our planning experts to ensure compliance from the outset.

As the industry evolves, developers must stay informed and seek expert advice to ensure they meet the legal and ecological requirements of BNG.

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

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



Turas Accountants



Bright lights, big city – there's something friendly and welcoming about Kuala Lumpur

Look at me at the top of the world from the viewing platform in the Petronas Towers with Jan Franck, an agent from Vietnam

# Love thy neighbour



Anton Gunter

**Howzit – February was the month of love, which got me thinking: why don't we love our neighbours as much as we seem to hate them?**

In a world where it seems there is constant conflict and turmoil, there is a place where foreigners, non-English speaking individuals and strangers meet. It is called International Trade...and it's a murky world where sea freight meets road freight, and where air freight meets rail freight, with a courier lurking just behind.

Currently we have a lot of conflict in the world, and if ever we needed to look at an example of how different cultures, nationalities and races work, we need only consider the worldwide network of independent agents we at Global Freight Services use in order to make international logistics smooth.

In November last year, I was very lucky to attend the AGM for the AerOceaNetwork of agents in Kuala Lumpur. This network gives a small family-run business like Global Freight the ability to ship to and from all of the countries in the world. We have used agents in Argentina, Brazil, Germany, Australia, and the obvious – China.

As for Kuala Lumpur, who cannot but be impressed by this fabulous city? The Petronas

Towers, once the tallest building in the world, stands like a fortress in the middle and is visible all around. The city streets are clean and the people are friendly and welcoming. Although a majority Muslim country, all religions are welcomed and accepted.

But what always strikes me when I attend these conferences is the diversity of the other agents attending. When I say diversity, it's a real meeting of different cultures, different races and different religions, all coming together for the common goal of international logistics.

One minute you are talking to a Chinese agent, and 15 minutes later it's the turn of our Indian agent from Mumbai. Conversations are largely about logistical services, but at some points the common questions are asked: what do you do for fun? How is your family?

It's funny that at no point is politics discussed, nor indeed religious beliefs for that matter, or sexual orientation, because in the logistics world we inhabit there are enough problems with shipping lines, delays, diversions and customs issues.

What's more interesting is that the issues with logistics we have in the UK are the same issues they have in Kenya, and the same issues they have in New Zealand. And that's what created the common ground for the agents' meeting.

Isn't it therefore surprising that over the

course of a three-day meeting, you can have approximately 30 one-to-one meetings with various agents, and yet at the end of it, you are still smiling? Whenever I return to the UK following the meeting, I am always left disappointed by what I then experience. Religious beliefs, skin colour and cultural differences create such a divide that as soon as you land at the airport, people are angry – they're no longer smiling, they are littering, and you can sense a general tension amongst the population. It does not help that politicians, political parties and some individuals drive wedges into society to try to encourage division. It's really sad to say, but as a society we have become poor at caring.

course of a three-day meeting, you can have approximately 30 one-to-one meetings with various agents, and yet at the end of it, you are still smiling?

Whenever I return to the UK following the meeting, I am always left disappointed by what I then experience. Religious beliefs, skin colour and cultural differences create such a divide that as soon as you land at the airport, people are angry – they're no longer smiling, they are littering, and you can sense a general tension amongst the population.

It does not help that politicians, political parties and some individuals drive wedges into society to try to encourage division. It's really sad to say, but as a society we have become poor at caring. We have become obsessed with nationalism – bad nationalism – and become obsessed with not caring about our neighbours.

In my world, I speak to agents worldwide on a daily basis, and the first thing I say to them, is: "Hello how are you?" Because I actually care about that person in the moment that I am speaking to them.

Yes, I need to speak slowly as their English is still better than my (insert language here). Culturally, I can tell you the Germans are actually quite funny, and if you start speaking to someone from Vietnam, you will understand why the world is such a special place to be tolerant.

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

# Staycations on the cards

**Salop Leisure has made a positive start to 2025 after a surge of interest from customers.**

The caravan, motorhome and leisure company, which has its headquarters at Emstrey, says it was delighted by interest in caravan holiday homes and sales leads from The Caravan, Motorhome & Holiday Show in Manchester.

"It was the industry's first major event of the year and we were delighted with the interest in ownership," said joint managing director Mark Bebb.

"We feel that with the difficulties in certain parts of Spain with increased taxation of second homes, caravan holiday homes and lodges in the UK offer an affordable solution to British people.

"We have seen a marked increase in demand for caravan holiday homes, touring caravans and motorhomes in the last three months and believe this will continue throughout 2025. All we need now is the sun to shine in the UK!"

After a challenging year for the caravan industry in 2024, Mr Bebb said he was convinced that it would bounce back strongly as people seek to escape the pressures of everyday life.

"New research is showing that the younger generation has higher expectations of short breaks which our products – from glamping and caravan holiday homes to touring caravans and motorhomes – can meet," he said.

"Our industry represents escapism from technology and stress, which are increasingly impacting mental health and anxiety."



Mark Bebb, joint managing director at Salop Leisure



James Tanner, front right, with the Tanners team

# Corks pop for wine retailer

Shropshire-based wine merchant Tanners has been named Regional Chain of the Year at the Drinks Retailing Awards, which celebrate the finest wine retailers from across the UK and which are held annually at The Dorchester in London. Judges said: "Its reputation remains undimmed almost 200 years later as it constantly reinvents itself to remain relevant to contemporary audiences."



## 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



# Professional relationships

**The Shropshire Rising Professionals group is celebrating its second anniversary in April – and is going from strength to strength.**

It was set up by law firm Aaron & Partners and accountancy group Azets to develop relationships between new-to-industry professionals across a range of different sectors.

The next gathering will mark two years since the first meet-up in Shrewsbury in 2023 and will be sponsored by Aaron & Partners. It will be held at Henry Tudor House at 8pm on April 15. For details, email [rsvp@aaronandpartners.com](mailto:rsvp@aaronandpartners.com).

The events are held every two months, and are designed to provide support, guidance and networking opportunities for professionals in various sectors, including law, accountancy, HR and property development.

Hugh Strickland, partner and head of the Aaron & Partners Shrewsbury office, said: "We helped set these events up two years ago to act as a really strong support network for those who are just starting out in their careers – regardless of age – because we know how important it is to make connections."

"In 2023, we were also still readjusting from the impact of the pandemic and for lots of professionals, there was an awful lot of time when it was very difficult to make genuine connections with other people.

"Two years on, it's amazing to see these events still going from strength to strength, and so it's an honour for Aaron & Partners to sponsor the second anniversary."

Before that, Aaron & Partners is holding the latest stage of its popular Employment Law Roadshow on March 18, at Shrewsbury Town Football Club. Anyone wishing to attend the free event can sign up via the events section on the firm's website.

Speakers will provide a case law update, talk about changing terms and conditions, the new duty to prevent sexual harassment in the workplace, immigration law, as well as other employment law-related topics.

Organisers say it is ideal for human resources professionals, managers and other



The Shropshire Rising Professionals group meets every two months



Hugh Strickland – good to make connections

decision-makers who want to keep up to date with the latest changes and widen their employment law knowledge. There will also be an opportunity for networking before and after the event with refreshments provided.

"Employment law is an ever-changing area of law and this year is no exception. Our aim is to provide employers with valuable insights into a range of different employment



Jennifer Gibson – employment law changes

law topics, as well as providing updates," said Jennifer Gibson, senior associate at the firm's Shrewsbury office.

"We have also been lucky enough to work closely with the Shropshire Branch of the CIPD, who have collaborated with us again this year. Demand for places at our event has increased year on year and we expect this year to be no different."



Matt Small began as an apprentice more than 25 years ago



Aico's headquarters – the company has been based in Oswestry since the start

## 35 years of growth . . . and giving back

**Oswestry-based Aico is marking 35 years in business this year and reflecting on the stellar progress which has cemented its place as the European market leader in home life safety.**

The three-time Shropshire Company of the Year has broadened its range since its formation in 1990, using pioneering technology on a variety of alarms and sensor types to offer full-circle protection for the home.

It also invests heavily in education, running multiple award-winning CPD-accredited training courses to support every stage of the supply chain.

Since the introduction of its Corporate Social Responsibility programme in 2018, Aico has been involved with 249 educational visits, including visits to schools and colleges, and students coming to Aico's headquarters for the day.

This initiative – to inspire students and get them thinking about their future careers – has now supported over 16,400 people.

The CSR team also organises the company's volunteering programme which has accumulated 7,547 employee volunteering hours for 247 different causes.

Aico managing director Neal Hooper said: "It has been an incredible 35 years of growth. We have doubled our turnover approximately every five years while providing life safety solutions to millions of homes.

"Our market leading technology is being developed into new areas, further establishing our position as the dominant European manufacturer.

"The fact that we have colleagues who have been with Aico for the whole of its history, as well as a senior team wholly promoted from within, demonstrates the quality and loyalty that we are blessed with.

"We would like to thank all our clients for the support since 1990, without which we would not be celebrating such a milestone following another record year. It is massively appreciated."

Commercial and finance director Matt Small has been with Aico for almost 26 years, having joined as a warehouse apprentice.

He says: "I've had the privilege of watching the company grow and transform over the last two and a half decades. Looking back, it's incredible to see how far we've come."



Aico in the community has helped around 250 deserving causes

"The technology behind our products has advanced dramatically, with innovations like RF connectivity, launched in the mid-2000s, now commonplace. Today, one in three installations uses RF interconnection, revolutionising how our systems operate.

"Similarly, multi-sensor technology has seen remarkable growth, with one in three alarms sold now being multi-sensors. Both innovations have paved the way for the development and expansion of more connected sensors in the home.

"While Aico has long been the market leader in fire and gas detection, our vision has expanded to position Aico as the leader in home life safety."

He adds: "Beyond the products, it's our people who have driven Aico's growth. I feel incredibly fortunate to have found such a supportive employer 25 years ago and to have seen my career evolve within the company."

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

## IT'S THE PEOPLE THAT MAKE THE DIFFERENCE

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

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

Bosco Brothers

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

Redan Publishing



W: [blueorchidrecruitment.co.uk](http://blueorchidrecruitment.co.uk) T: 01743 612013 E: [mail@blueorchidrecruitment.co.uk](mailto:mail@blueorchidrecruitment.co.uk)



Blue Orchid Recruitment Ltd  
Grow with us.

**These are our five ways**  
Trust • Integrity • Experience • Knowledge • Support

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

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

Newport 01952 812 380    Stafford 01785 251 790

**fiveways** insurancegroup  
www.fivewaysinsurance.co.uk

QR code and social media icons.



Tony Joyce of Sign Services and Kath Howard of Friends of Wellington Station

## Refurbished train station

Wellington station is looking smarter this spring thanks to a £30,000 grant from West Midlands Railway.

"It is making a huge difference to our work," said Kath Howard of the Friends of Wellington Station.

"We have been able to completely refurbish a suite of storage rooms (including fitting a kitchen), replaced large signs, commissioned a new bench for Platform 2 and acquired four large planters that will be filled with colourful bulbs, herbs, shrubs and flowers.

"We also commissioned a series of artwork called the 'Windows on Wellington', asking

local photographers to come up with images of iconic Wellington views and these are being put up on the station in disused window spaces."

The photographers chosen for the project were Alec Connah, Tina Corfield and Kris Sadler – better known as Krisography – and the design work was done by Wellington-based Design Donut.

Sally Themans, of Love Wellington, said: "We are very lucky to have such a dedicated group and it's great news for the town and for the station that impactful improvements can be made as a result of the grant."

# Growth programme adds to new town's businesses

**A business initiative which is helping 100 companies in the Telford area to grow is proving a success.**

The 12-month 'Telford Growth Enabler' programme is part of Telford & Wrekin Council's commitment to nurturing and developing its economy.

Delivered by Bridgnorth-based business growth specialists Good2Great, the free scheme is funded through the Government's Shared Prosperity Fund.

"This exciting scheme, which is now half way through, provides assistance to established clients in all sectors. It is proving to be successful, with many businesses reaping the benefits," said Johnny Themans of Good2Great.

"The programme helps companies identify opportunities for expansion and overcome any possible barriers, enabling them to better understand their operations and develop plans for significant improvement across all areas.

"Participants have access to industry-leading analysis tools backed up by tailored support from our experienced coaches throughout the programme. It's been a tough and confusing few years for businesses, but it is encouraging that local companies remain ambitious to grow and succeed."

One of the businesses to take advantage of the initiative is HR Solutions Shropshire. Owner Ishbel Lapper said the programme was 'an incredibly insightful journey.'

"It provided me with valuable tools, resources, and perspectives on how to drive growth and foster innovation within my business.

"The practical knowledge and support offered throughout the programme gave me the confidence and clarity to implement meaningful changes and, overall, the Telford Growth Enabler Programme has equipped me with a more holistic view of what's needed to ensure sustainable growth and long-term success."

Ali Bagley, of Kindridge Bid Solutions, said that as a start-up they needed support.

"Since the final strategy planning session, we now have a solid business plan in place and know exactly what we need to concentrate on to make our business grow."



Rachael Pallett with her two awards

## Double success for florist

A Shifnal business is blooming after achieving double success in prestigious award schemes.

Rachael Pallett, who runs The Flower Girl in Market Place, has received two accolades – highly commended in the Best Customer Service category of the West Midlands Small

Business Awards, and Best Florist in Shropshire in the England Business Awards.

"I am very, very proud," said Rachael, who has seen her floristry business blossom over the last two years. "I took the plunge and decided to launch my own shop and have not looked back."

# A meeting of minds

**A new event that will look at how town centres can be revitalised is to be held this spring in Shropshire.**

The High Street 'Meeting of Minds' seminar is the latest in a series of events to be hosted by Good2Great – a Shropshire-based consultancy which specialises in helping businesses to grow and High Streets to thrive.

It will be staged on April 24, from 2pm until 4.30pm at The Festival Drayton Centre, in Market Drayton.

Sally Themans of Good2Great, who will lead the afternoon, is an experienced High Street champion who has worked with towns and individual retailers across the Midlands, advising on uniting communities, businesses and authorities to drive change and create healthy local economies.

Sally has been successful with her Love Bridgnorth, Love Wellington and Love Shifnal campaigns, as well as High Street Boost programmes in Stafford and South Staffordshire.

"This event will explore the role community plays in shaping prominent and important assets within a place, and is set to be a useful opportunity to learn and share ideas which will be attended by people from across the Midlands, with key national speakers on the subject," she said.

"We hope that it will be insightful and informative and will assist in boosting our town centres in Shropshire, Staffordshire and beyond.

"Delegates will be exploring community ownership and breaking the deadlock on empty High Street properties which are often poorly maintained and which can prove a real obstacle to the best efforts of High Street regeneration.

"We are delighted to have Theo Heren (head of High Streets policy at the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government) as key speaker, who will be talking about the new High Street rental auctions, and Iain Nicholson, founder of The Vacant Shops Academy, sharing his work.

"Themes will explore innovative approaches to revitalising town centres, strategies for sustainable local development, and fostering community collaboration to create thriving spaces."

The Vacant Shops Academy was launched in 2022 to help town and city centres reduce their empty unit numbers and improve the mix of use types, working with agents, landlords, businesses, communities, cultural organisations, councils, chambers, BIDs and others, using the 'audit, engage, encourage, promote' approach.

By the end of 2024 it was working with 36 different locations from Aberdeen to Poole, and Tredegar to Grimsby.

Iain was previously a city centre manager at Oxford and worked for five years on the GB High Street awards-winning town vitality project in Wantage, Oxfordshire, which focused



Sally Themans is a High Street champion for Shropshire



Charlotte Hollins of Fordhall Farm

on the challenges around bringing empty shops back into use.

He will be joined on the day by Charlotte Hollins, the dynamo behind Fordhall Organic Farm at Market Drayton – England's first community-owned farm.

She is general manager of the Fordhall Community Land Initiative, a published author, consultant on land-based community ownership, and a key leader in the 'We're Right Here' campaign for a Community Power Act.

"Fordhall is a national asset and a pioneering example of what can be achieved when we work collaboratively – Charlotte will be a fascinating speaker," Sally added.

"We will also hear from George Vernon MBE, founder and trustee of the community-



Iain Nicholson. Picture – Zoe Campbell Photography

owned arts centre in Market Drayton, Festival Drayton, and our venue for the day.

"I hope the seminar will be of interest to anyone who cares about or has responsibility for a town or city – or even village – centre and recognises the importance of getting people together to drive change in their places. We appeal to town and county councillors, local authority officers, town clerks, BID managers, business owners and members of the public to attend."

• Anyone interested in attending should contact Jenna Humphreys via email [jenna@good-2-great.co.uk](mailto:jenna@good-2-great.co.uk). The event is free of charge, but attendees do need to register.

# ALL YOUR BUILDING NEEDS UNDER ONE ROOF

## TG Builders Merchants



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

## TG Aggregates



Sand, gravel and wide range of decorative aggregates throughout West Midlands, North West, North & Mid Wales

## TG Concrete



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

## TG Electrical Services



Domestic, Commercial & Agricultural Contractors

## TG Skip Hire



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

## TG Renewable Energy



Premium Wood Fuel for all Biomass Boilers

# Wheels in motion



Deal done . . . Velo Fit owner Mike Jones and Kev Williams

**A husband-and-wife team have invested in creating their own bike brand and secured their first retailer.**

Kev and Michelle Williams, from Shrewsbury, set up Discounted Bikes in late 2023 to help parents buy affordable bikes in the run-up to Christmas.

The business was so successful it became a permanent fixture, and now the couple have launched their own in-house brand, Shyre Bikes. Velo Fit in Coleham is the first retailer to become a stockist.

The couple said they took inspiration from Isla Rowntree of Ludlow, who revolutionised kids cycling in the 2000s.

Kev said: "We're on a mission to improve family wellbeing by getting kids off screens and onto bikes. Our first range

is called the Shyre Hopton, and we have sizes for kids aged four to 11.

"Recent reports show that only 47% of UK children meet the recommended physical activity guidelines of 60 minutes daily, and that one in five children in England are overweight or obese by the age of five.

"Interestingly there's evidence suggesting that a lack of parental knowledge about bike maintenance contributes to lower cycling rates among children in the UK, which we think is impacting the physical wellbeing of children. We're working hard to overcome these barriers."

They are one of 15 local businesses selected for the Work in Shrewsbury Evolving Business Cohort to support their business growth.

## Raising funds for local dog charity



**Pictured at Hilbrae are Adfield telemarketing and telesales manager Charlotte Burgess-Bate and Lisa Barrett-White, head of internal sales at Technik**

Shropshire marketing agency Adfield has teamed up with veterinary equipment supplier Technik to raise funds for a local dog charity.

The 'Share the Love' campaign has been drumming up much-needed support for Hilbrae Rescue Kennels – a Cold Hatton-based charity that provides shelter for stray and unwanted dogs.

In the week leading up to Valentine's Day, employees at Adfield and Technik were encouraged to donate essential items to help the charity continue offering its vital services.

Donors contributed a wide variety of items including bedding, washing detergent and food, while others chose to offer generous monetary donations.



**MARTIN & JONES**  
MARKETING

Marketing that matters...

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

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



Get in touch today - 07917 787804

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





Priorslee Hall, the former TDC headquarters

# End of an era as university campus set to close doors

**The University of Wolverhampton has announced plans to pull out of Telford after more than 30 years.**

It is part of a major revamp of the university which will see it moving out of its Priorslee campus, which includes the historic Priorslee Hall where Telford Development Corporation drew up its blueprints for the town.

The engineering and nursing courses which are currently based in Telford will move to other parts of the university. A new medical school is to be created in Wolverhampton as part of a major renovation of its facilities in the city.

News of the closure of its Priorslee campus – which the University of Wolverhampton said was being under-used and could not justify remaining open – has been met with a mixture of shock and sadness by economic leaders.

Councillor Shirley Reynolds, Telford & Wrekin Council's cabinet member for children, young people, education, employment and skills, said: "We're disappointed, but as a council we are determined to ensure that our residents have access to the best education and training opportunities, and the development of an academic campus in the heart of Telford Town Centre, making Telford the go-to place to gain qualifications, learn new skills and secure great careers, is moving at pace.

"The Quad opened in September 2024 and is home to Harper Adams University, a new Digital Skills Hub and a start-up Business Hub, and another exciting announcement around education provision in the town is coming soon."

Ruth Ross, chief executive of Shropshire Chamber of Commerce, said: "Clearly we don't want to be seeing any education centres leaving Shropshire, so this is disappointing news – particularly on the back of the University of



The university opened its Telford campus in 1994

Chester's withdrawal from Shrewsbury last year. "We were aware that the university had been facing financial pressures, which included the scrapping of its bus service linking the Telford campus to its main base in Wolverhampton last summer.

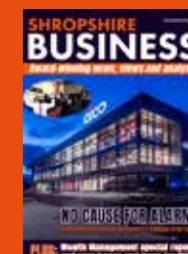
"But we are fortunate to still be blessed with many award-winning educational facilities in Telford & Wrekin, which are thriving and growing.

"Harper Adams University and Telford College have both recently expanded to open

new campuses in a growing academic quarter in the town centre's Station Quarter, and Keele University has also set out plans to deliver some courses at the college's campus in Wellington.

"It means we can continue to work closely with employers, supporting them to access good apprenticeship provision and funding, T-Levels, Higher Technical Qualifications and other vocational qualifications.

"They play a vital role in preparing young people for the workplace and providing employers with the skills they need."



Congratulations to Shropshire Business on your 50th issue

# MEDIA & YOU

INNOVATIVE INTUITIVE COLLABORATIVE

Established in February 2017, MEDIA & YOU really is a one-stop shop for graphic design, layout design and bespoke short-run publishing. Proudly associated with Shropshire Business from day 1.

Email: [paul@mediaandyou.co.uk](mailto:paul@mediaandyou.co.uk)  
Call: 07914 304504

### In brief...

- Holiday home owner Sara Jones is celebrating after winning an award for her property in Shropshire. Sara, who is based in the rural hamlet of Plaish between Much Wenlock and Church Stretton, scooped gold in the Best for Families category of the Sykes Gems Awards for her 16th century Grade II listed barn conversion, The Olde Cow House, on her family's 1,000-acre farm.
- Lyreco has announced the acquisition of Groenendijk Workwear, a leading provider of workwear and footwear solutions based in the Netherlands and operating across the Benelux region. With over 25 years of expertise in the PPE market, bosses say Groenendijk brings invaluable experience to Lyreco's portfolio, with footwear currently the fastest growing PPE product among families.
- A charity which enables children in Shropshire to "thrive, succeed and fulfil their potential" has been nominated for a special award. SYA, which supports more than 9,000 young people by providing activities and training for youth workers, has been shortlisted as a Charity of the Year in the Children of Courage Awards, organised by the St James's Place Charitable Foundation.

- AceOn Group, a Telford-based specialist battery supplier and manufacturer, has been awarded its third government grant from Innovate UK to support energy provision in Ukraine. The latest £1 million grant from the Innovate UK Energy Catalyst 8 fund will accelerate the development of AceOn Group's newly-designed mobile solar energy storage unit to revolutionise energy storage in remote areas that have limited access to conventional power sources.
- Pink Storage has opened a new self-storage site in Telford. The £680,000 investment at Halesfield is the company's 20th facility, and has 189 units. It has transformed the former 35,000 sq ft industrial site.
- Shrewsbury-based marketing agency Reech is launching a dedicated PR service. Amelia Redge, agency director, said: "Over the past few years, we've seen a huge shift in the PR landscape – driven by the rise of the digital sphere, the introduction of AI, and the subsequent growing desire for truly authentic communications."
- Telford & Wrekin Council has appointed Pave Aways Ltd to deliver refurbishment works which will transform the historic Wellington Market following an extensive tender process. Group Ginger Architects, which has designed other successful market projects, will work alongside Pave Aways Ltd.

Wellington Market following an extensive tender process. Group Ginger Architects, which has designed other successful market projects, will work alongside Pave Aways Ltd.

- Students at Derwen College in Gobowen are sailing towards new adventures and learning new skills thanks to a generous donation from Hartey Wealth Management, in Oswestry. The donation will allow a student from the specialist college to take part in the Gold Duke of Edinburgh expedition.
- Aircraft boarding ramp maker Aviramp has seen its investment in the future rewarded with a 300% increase in production. The Telford-based manufacturer, famed for its pioneering step-free low-angle ramps, has invested in new machinery and lean manufacturing principles after a record-breaking 2024, its most profitable to date.
- Law firm Martin Kaye has opened a new office in Wem. The new base at Ashfield House, Foxholes, is headed up by solicitor Lyndsay Barnes and legal executive Alexandra Lusby. The firm also has offices in Telford, Shrewsbury and Wolverhampton.
- Midlands Air Ambulance is offering supporters chance to be part of lifesaving missions by having their names on its new helicopter. For a £150 donation, the charity is promoting the chance to become a 'High Flyer' and have their name – or the name of a loved one, community group, or someone special – flying alongside its dedicated crews.
- Telford & Wrekin Council has launched a new skills strategy designed to ensure everyone has the opportunity to gain new skills which encourage them to work locally. It has been developed in partnership with skills providers, schools, colleges, and employers to meet current and future employer needs.

# Award for making life easier

**A solicitor at a Shropshire law firm has won a national award for the use of a system to 'make life a little easier' for clients.**

Edward Rees, of Lanyon Bowdler, has been presented with the Outstanding Individual Achievement title as part of the Zylpha Innovation Awards.

Amanda Clarke, from the firm's personal injury team, was also shortlisted in the awards, which recognise the legal practices and lawyers who use the software most extensively and creatively.

Edward, who is head of the private client team at Lanyon Bowdler, uses the system to assemble documents for clients to view and sign making the process much easier and more efficient.

He said: "I am delighted to have been recognised with this award, which demonstrates that we are using the Zylpha system in the best possible way to help our clients.

"I use it for all my pricing documentation, schedules, reports – anything which needs to be easily accessible. I think the use of Zylpha shows a commitment to innovation, efficiency and being as paperless as we possibly can.

"The best thing about the system is that it makes life a little easier for clients. For example, I would like to think that they find it easier to review pricing documentation in electronic form rather than paper being sent to them in the post.

"I would also hope that the format of the Zylpha bundle – which allows for easy indexing of the documents contained within the bundle and hyperlinks to the component parts of the bundled documentation – is client friendly and assists in transparency."

The Zylpha Innovation Awards were established to celebrate the developments and achievements of law firms and individuals leading the way in legal document management.

Using internal data from Zylpha's business systems, the finalists and winners are selected in a process which is free from bias and outside interference.



Edward Rees, of Lanyon Bowdler, with the prize for Outstanding Individual Achievement

The Outstanding Individual Achievement award is given to a lawyer who has built the most bundles during the current calendar year, actively engaged with the Zylpha team by providing

valuable feedback, served as an internal champion of Zylpha, and been an outstanding person to work with throughout the current calendar year.

## Outdoor hub planned at visitor attraction



An artist's impression of the hub – a new concept for the Attingham Estate, near Shrewsbury

A planning application has been lodged to create a new 'outdoor hub' site on the Attingham Estate, at Atcham Airfield. The National Trust says the project is part of the ongoing effort to increase public access to the estate, providing facilities for walking, cycling, and creating permissive bridleways.

"This project aims to take the pressure off the existing historic site. We're working closely with local communities and visitors to ensure the plans reflect the needs of everyone who loves this special place."

# Leaving an environmental legacy

One of Shropshire's best known brands is investing heavily in sustainability – while taking advantage of the county's natural geological wonders

**Wenlock Spring has always believed that sustainability should be built into the very core of its business.**

The premium water brand is reinforcing its long-standing commitment to sustainability with plans to further reduce its carbon emissions, increase renewable energy use, and advance sustainable packaging. The family-run company, based at Wolverton in the south Shropshire hills, has spent decades protecting its land and water source and is taking further steps to ensure its operations leave a positive environmental legacy.

From investing in solar power and biomass energy to pioneering sustainable packaging solutions, it's embedding sustainability into every aspect of its business.

It follows a successful 12 months where it has continued to demonstrate its commitment to delivering premium hydration while addressing environmental and social challenges with the launch of its new-look recyclable cans and groundbreaking partnerships.

Matthew Orme, director of Wenlock Spring, says the company's approach to sustainability is not about following trends but staying true to its values.

"Sustainability isn't an add-on for us... it's who we are. As a family-run business, we take our responsibility to the environment personally.

"Our land, our water, and our business are all connected, and every decision we make is about protecting and preserving them for future generations."

Wenlock Spring has expanded its use of renewable energy with the installation of 741



**Bruce and Matthew Orme with their father Robert**

solar panels, cutting carbon emissions by 175 tonnes – the equivalent of planting over 10,000 trees.

Its on-site carbon-neutral biomass boilers now provide the company's hot water needs, reducing energy consumption by 24%.

The business has also focused on regenerative agriculture by growing 25 acres of Miscanthus grass, a fast-growing crop that fuels its biomass boilers and locks away 1,000 tonnes of CO2 in the soil while providing a habitat for wildlife.

A further 1,700 trees have been planted, capturing 35 tonnes of CO2 per year and strengthening biodiversity around the company's protected spring, which dates back to 1086.

Wenlock Spring has also implemented an advanced heat recovery system that has reduced energy consumption by 22%.

It recovers air from its rPET bottle blower to reduce compressed air usage, while also capturing waste heat from air compressors to heat water, which is stored for later use.

Further efficiency gains have been made by upgrading to a single high-efficiency compressor, which uses significantly less energy than the three older compressors it replaced.

"Our responsibility goes beyond simply producing great-tasting natural spring water. It's about how we do it, and that means using renewable energy, protecting biodiversity, and continuously improving our environmental impact," Matthew says.

Sustainable packaging remains a key focus for Wenlock Spring, which was among the first UK water brands to introduce recycled PET (rPET) bottles.

The company has pioneered lighter-weight glass bottles made with 40% recycled



**Wenlock Edge's geology acts as a natural filtering process**



**Director Matthew Orme and sales manager Stephen Tuck**

glass, reducing the raw material required and lowering carbon emissions.

Its aluminium cans, which can be recycled and remade within 60 days, provide an alternative for eco-conscious consumers seeking a sustainable hydration option.

Matthew says the company is determined to lead by example when it comes to responsible packaging.

"We've always believed that sustainability should be built into the very core of our business.

"That's why we've invested in making our bottles and cans as sustainable as possible, whether through lightweight glass, 100% recyclable PET, or recyclable aluminium.

"The industry must keep pushing forward, and we want to be at the forefront of that movement."

Looking ahead, Wenlock Spring is



**Matthew Orme with the bottled water**



**Wenlock water is also available in cans**

continuing to expand its sustainability initiatives.

The company is planning to increase its use of solar power, create more wildlife corridors by planting additional hedgerows, and invest in technology to further reduce its environmental impact.

"Sustainability is not a box-ticking exercise for us. It's an ongoing commitment to doing better, thinking smarter, and making a real difference. We've been looking after this land for decades, and we intend to keep doing so in a way that ensures future generations can enjoy it too," Matthew says.

As the demand for premium, sustainable hydration continues to grow, Wenlock Spring is also setting its sights on expanding its presence in the hospitality, education and travel sectors in 2025.

"Hospitality, education and travel are

## What gives Wenlock its edge?



**Water goes through a natural filtering process and into the bottling hall**

Wenlock Spring water filters naturally through the rock strata of the Wenlock Edge – the geologically famous limestone escarpment created 400 million years ago.

It consists of Silurian Limestone which was originally formed in a shallow, warm, clear, subtropical sea, similar to parts of the Caribbean today.

The natural filtering process provides the water with its unique blend of minerals, including calcium and selenium.

The underground source emerges from 60 metres deep and travels through stainless steel pipes into the bottling hall, where Wenlock Spring is bottled using the latest technology.

critical areas where we see tremendous potential for growth," he adds.

"Our water is already making a difference in schools, onboard trains, and in hospitality venues, but we're eager to do more. By working with businesses in these sectors, we can help make sustainable hydration accessible to even more people."

Matthew expects the no and low-alcohol market to keep growing this year as health-conscious consumers increasingly turn to premium alternatives to sugary soft drinks and alcoholic beverages.

"Consumers are seeking healthier options, and water remains the healthiest and most sustainable choice," he says.

"As this trend continues, we're committed to staying ahead of the curve and providing solutions that cater to evolving consumer preferences."

# Tributes to much-loved business figures

Tributes have been paid to three well-known Shropshire business figures whose deaths have been announced over the past few weeks.

**Dr Peter Starbuck, a former government adviser who lived in Oswestry and became a world-renowned academic after selling his construction business, has died aged 88.**

John Hales, founder of Telford toy company Golden Bear Products, died aged 85, surrounded by his family.

And Peter Roberts, the road transport campaigner whose anti road pricing petition crashed the Government website, has died suddenly at the age of 64.

An entrepreneur and management consultant, Dr Starbuck was an acknowledged world expert on Peter F Drucker, the Austrian-born 'father of modern management'.

Dr Starbuck wrote six books and more than 90 academic papers on Drucker, and was an honorary member of the Drucker Society Europe. Its president Richard Straub suggested to those researching Drucker: "If in doubt, ask Peter Starbuck."

Dr Starbuck trained as a quantity surveyor with Sir Alfred McAlpine, later joining Oswestry builders Walter Watkin & Co Ltd as general manager. He fell in love with Shropshire and would stay for the rest of his life.

He successfully reorganised the company before it was sold. In January 1966 - aged 29 - he launched the company that made his name. WSJ (Watkin, Starbuck and Jones) had Peter as chief executive in partnership with Walter and his son-in-law Brian Rhodes-Jones.

WSJ undertook a wide range of construction projects, including schools, hospitals and 5,000 homes, for which it received national awards. It was one of the biggest building firms in the Midlands when it was sold in 1987.

Dr Starbuck was an avid supporter and former columnist of Shropshire Business magazine.

Mr Hales started Golden Bear in 1979 along with his business partner Christine Nicholls who described him as 'the most amazing business partner and friend for over 45 years'.

John accomplished much over his long career, including the incredibly successful launch of the Teletubbies toy range, winning Toy of the Year in 1997 and a lifetime achievement award from the British Toy & Hobby Association.

He was also a passionate member of the racing world, owning many champions over the years such as 2012 Grand National winner Neptune Collonges.

Mr Roberts, from Lawley Bank, launched a petition in 2007 when the Government announced plans to charge motorists up to £1.30 a mile on the busiest roads and motorways to reduce congestion and tackle climate change.

The anti-road pricing petition generated so much traffic that it briefly crashed the



From soft toys to racehorses - John Hales accomplished much in his career



Peter Roberts - a founding director of the ABD

Government's website and contributed towards the scrapping of the plans.

He said at the time: "It's nothing more than an additional tax that is being levied on people who aren't driving for fun, but driving to get to work. They are doing so because they have to, and the way I see it is that they are being penalised for being taxpayers."

Mr Roberts also set up the Drivers' Alliance in 2008, and went on to become a founding director of the Alliance of British Drivers (ABD)



Professor Peter Starbuck

- a not-for-profit group which campaigns for 'driving sense' and drivers' rights. A strong supporter of Brexit, he was part of West Midlands UKIP MEP Jill Seymour's campaign and research team, and was elected to represent the party on Hollinswood and Randlay parish council in 2016.

Mr Roberts was also a co-founder of 3D printing products company 3D Printz, based at Hortonwood. He leaves a partner Kerry and two children, Adam and Leanne.

# Partnership helped to train more than 100 forklift drivers

**Shropshire-based training providers ANTA Education and Dulson Training are celebrating after transforming the lives of more than 100 jobseekers with free forklift training.**

Their partnership was made possible after ANTA secured funding that helped the organisations join forces and deliver exceptional training and educational opportunities.

Telford-based ANTA Education provides innovative and tailored training solutions, specialising in creating pathways for individuals to develop skills and achieve their goal of gaining employment. By working closely with companies like Dulson Training, ANTA ensures its programmes address real-world needs and empower learners with the tools and confidence to succeed.

Through its partnership with Dulson

Training, ANTA says it has been able to expand on its range of accredited courses, providing learners with access to high quality, industry-specific training programmes.

ANTA Education's managing director Craig Howard said: "I've always said that partnerships in the further education sector are essential. No one provider can do everything.

"Since starting ANTA Education in 2019, my relationship with Steve and the team at Dulson training has been pivotal to the growth of my business."

Steve Dulson, managing director at Dulson Training, said: "I have worked with Craig for almost a decade, and our working relationship continues to strengthen and grow.

"Working in the same industry and continuing to develop ideas and support each other not only helps both of us, but helps many more learners than we could achieve on our own. It has been thrilling to see ANTA launch and grow into what it is today."



Steve Dulson (left) and Craig Howard



LOVEFITNESS



**Stronger teams start here!**

Boost your team's wellbeing with discounted corporate gym memberships exclusive to our readers.

Call: 01743 282 406

**TO CLAIM YOUR OFFER!**

**THINK LOCAL**

with a Global Presence



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

**Do you run a business?**

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

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

We are also on YouTube

Get your message across through social media and website promotion.

Call: 07973 385929

Email: Karen@allaboutnewport.co.uk



Find us at...

www.allaboutnewport.co.uk

from **£60** for 12 Months



Steve Robinson from iconsys

## Steve brings fresh energy to business

The new head of sales for energy transition at Telford-based control and automations specialist iconsys is targeting a multi-million pound clean energy opportunity.

Steve Robinson, who has helped to deliver some of the Middle East's biggest energy projects, has joined the company to drive forward its presence in clean energy and de-carbonisation.

With nearly £22 billion ring-fenced by the UK Government for projects to capture and store carbon emissions from energy, industry and hydrogen, the strategic sales expert believes now is the perfect opportunity for the firm's solution driven approach and 'technology independence' to support all sectors in their de-carbonisation journey.

This includes heavy industry such as metals, pulp and paper, marine and ports, automotive, transport infrastructure, consumer goods, and construction materials.

"What really appealed about the iconsys role is our agility and ability to move quickly on projects, working with clients to identify the optimal solution and technology – without being tied to delivering a particular product," said Steve, whose career includes senior roles with Schneider Electric and Emerson Automation.

Steve has more than 30 years of global experience in sales leadership, with a proven track record in identifying and penetrating new and emerging markets.

This has included high profile projects in Europe and the Middle East, playing a critical role in delivering the world's largest LNG trains at the time, and deployment of some of the territory's first wireless applications.

## Managing director appointed



Marek Tyl, Sheila Middleton, Shane Copeland, and Councillor Ollie Vickers at HCI Systems in Newport

Newport-based engineering and manufacturing firm HCI Systems Limited has strengthened its commitment to collaborating with local businesses with the appointment of Tony Smith as its new managing director.

With over 25 years of experience in the engineering sector, he brings a fresh perspective to the business, renowned for delivering innovative solutions to sectors including automotive, aerospace, and advanced manufacturing.

"I'm excited to join HCI Systems at such a pivotal time," he said. "Telford and Wrekin is home to incredible talent and innovative businesses, and we are eager to work closely with local partners to drive mutual success."

Backed by Telford & Wrekin Council's Invest

Telford team, the company – based on the NiPark estate – is poised for continued growth. In just four years, HCI Systems has seen its workforce grow by an impressive 172%, expanding from 25 to 68 employees.

Tony added: "Invest Telford has been instrumental in supporting our ambitions, and we look forward to playing our part in the borough's growth."

Councillor Ollie Vickers, Telford & Wrekin Council's cabinet member for economy, said: "HCI Systems is a fantastic example of how Telford and Wrekin businesses can grow while supporting the local economy. Through their innovative work and collaboration with local firms, they're helping to strengthen our business community."

# Fulfilling that specialist role

**Radnor Hills, the soft drinks manufacturer on the south west Shropshire border, has appointed consumer goods specialist Jonathan Kemp to its board.**

Jonathan, who joins as a non-executive director, has a long and successful career in brand building within the industry.

For the past 21 years he has been on the board of AG Barr plc as commercial director, during which he led the commercial growth of the business and the development of iconic brands such as IRN-BRU and Rubicon.

He is also involved with the Strathclyde Business School – part of the University of Strathclyde – where he teaches students and conducts research.

He began his career at Procter & Gamble and worked for eleven years across a number of brands in a variety of sales, commercial and marketing roles, including the setting up of the first Customer Business Unit at Tesco.

Radnor Hills, based at Knighton, produces over 400 million units of drinks annually. It recorded revenues of £72.4 million in the year ended May 31 2024 – up from £65.5 million in the year prior.



Jonathan Kemp

## Two key positions filled at historic hotel



Head chef Maggie Naylor

Goldstone Hall Hotel and Garden near Market Drayton has announced two key appointments – Maggie Naylor as head chef, and Nicky Shore as office manager.

Maggie's previous experience includes Langham's Brasserie in London, La Tante Claire under the esteemed Pierre Koffman, and Orso – a trailblazer in modern Italian cuisine. Her international background spans Australia, North America, Mallorca, and Portugal.

With over 25 years of hospitality experience, Nicky honed her skills at Shropshire venues like Hawkstone Hall, Hill Valley and Albrighton Hall, focusing on hotel co-ordination and sales support. While raising her family, she worked at The Hideout in Market Drayton.

Goldstone owner John Cushing said: "We are thrilled to welcome Maggie and Nicky to the team.

"Together, they bring an incredible depth of talent and dedication that perfectly aligns with our ethos."



Office manager Nicky Shore

## Support is in Richard's blood

**The former chief executive of Shropshire Chamber of Commerce has taken up a new role in the county business community.**

Richard Sheehan has been appointed channel director at Shrewsbury-based Reclaim Tax UK, where he will oversee the company's strategic partnerships.

Richard, who retired in March 2023 after nearly 16 years at the Chamber, said: "I consider myself incredibly fortunate to have worked with a truly wonderful group

of people who have supported me over the past 15 and a half years."

But he felt that his mission to support businesses, especially those in Shropshire, was not yet complete.

"We are thrilled to welcome Richard to our team," said Richard Canfer-Taylor, chief executive of Reclaim Tax UK, who said Richard's extensive experience and deep-rooted commitment to the business community would be valuable assets.

"We are confident that Richard's leadership will be instrumental in driving our growth and enhancing the value we offer to our clients."



Richard Sheehan (centre) with Chris Jones and Richard Canfer-Taylor of Reclaim Tax UK

## A fresh new sound for Shropshire

shropshirelive on air



online 

smart speaker 

mobile app 



# Transformation project is in the hands of René

**Filtermist Limited – which has been helping companies deliver cleaner, safer and more productive working environments since 1969 – has welcomed René Joppi as its new managing director.**

The Austrian-born business leader brings with him a wealth of international management experience and a proven track record of leading innovative businesses, having spent time covering full operations in Europe and the Middle East for various global manufacturers.

René will be responsible for the completion of a transformation project Filtermist is currently implementing to secure significant manufacturing efficiencies, as well as developing and growing the local and global footprint of the Telford-based company.

“This is an exciting time to be joining Filtermist. The demand for our products is growing rapidly due to customers needing to comply with legislation and, more importantly, wanting to deliver the best possible work environment for their employees,” said René, who has degrees in

Mechatronics and in International Business.

“We currently deliver our technology in more than 60 countries across the globe, and there is strong potential to increase this number, moving our expertise into potential new territories and new applications.

“We have a great global sales team and will work closely with our partners and distributors across the world to ensure we provide all the support they need to make 2025 a year of growth and new opportunity.”

Filtermist, which is part of the Swedish-based Absolent Air Care Group, provides products and services designed to remove contaminants, such as oil mist, oil smoke, dust, fumes and VOCs from the air in production facilities.

End users span the entire spectrum of industry, ranging from automotive and aerospace suppliers to food and drink producers, pharmaceutical companies, machine tool shops and medical device manufacturers.

René said: “2025 will be an exciting year for both Filtermist and Absolent Air Care Group, with a strong focus on the launch of several new products and initiatives.”



René Joppi – managing director at Filtermist Limited

## Fresh perspectives through strategic expansion

Novuna Business Cash Flow, which provides cash flow finance services to SMEs and larger corporate entities across a wide range of sectors, has announced a strategic expansion of its corporate sales and operations team.

Newcomers to the corporate sales team are Phillip Speed, Scott Pendlebury, and Kasia Brzozowska, under the leadership of Shaun Bennett, head of corporate sales.

Shaun said: “Their combined experience and fresh perspectives will be invaluable as we continue to expand our footprint in the corporate finance space.”

The company has also strengthened its operational capacity by adding to the team responsible for managing facilities. Andy Sutton joins as corporate relationship manager, bringing over 37 years of financial services experience across multiple disciplines.

In a significant win for the team, Novuna Business Cash Flow has recently onboarded a recruitment company for a £20 million invoice discounting package.



Pictured from left: Scott Pendlebury, Nick Slack, Shaun Bennett, Phillip Speed and Kasia Brzozowska



Tom Ruston (right) with Chris Field at Telford College

## Apprenticeship manager hopes to make impact on community

**Telford College’s new apprenticeship manager says he is looking forward to making a ‘meaningful impact’ on the lives of students, employers, and the wider community.**

Tom Ruston has more than a decade of experience working in the apprenticeship sector across the West Midlands.

He trained as an apprentice in Sandwell as a 17-year-old, and has since held senior positions with Black Country-based organisations Juniper Training, and Nova Training.

Tom described his new Telford College role as a ‘fantastic opportunity to make a real impact’ and said he was looking forward to helping students and businesses thrive together.

“In recent times we have seen a growing debate around the role of apprenticeships versus university studies, and my belief is that if a job role doesn’t require a degree, you should definitely do an apprenticeship.

“And with apprenticeships ever-expanding, there are more and more opportunities. There is a generational mindset that apprenticeships are for the less academic – this isn’t the case, there’s much more to an apprenticeship than this.

“I’m thrilled to have the opportunity to contribute to the success of the college’s apprenticeship programmes and make a meaningful impact on the lives of students, employers, and the wider community.

“My business development experience has included the account management of large apprenticeship levies, making sure it is used to deliver the right sort of learners, and right levels of service.”

In his new role at Telford College, Tom will be involved in quality assurance processes, supporting the college’s apprenticeship team, and gathering and monitoring feedback from employers to ensure continuous improvement.

He will be working closely alongside the college’s business development manager Chris Field to assess the training needs of local employers, and explore opportunities for offering new courses to meet their demands.

Tom said: “The role is very much about collaboration and communication – both internally across college departments and campuses, and externally around the local business community.”

**TRENTHAM**  
JEWELLERY CENTRE  
by DÖBSON Fine Jewellery

Your Local Jewellery Experts



*Buy, Sell, Repair*

Specialists in the jewellery and antiques trade, with a combined 55 years of experience, we are here to assist you with all aspects of jewellery and luxury watches – whether you are buying, selling, or simply need repairs.

- Free, on-site customer parking
- Private and secure showroom
- Free, no-obligation appraisals
- XRF tested and weighed in front of you
- Instant cash payments
- No appointment needed

Based opposite Trentham Gardens roundabout

Open 9am – 5pm  
(Closed Tuesdays and Sundays)

01782 757599

shop@trenthamjewellerycentre.co.uk  
trenthamjewellerycentre.co.uk



# Five minutes with . . .

SAMANTHA HAYDON joined Stay Telford at the end of the last year as fundraising manager. The charity provides housing and support services to homeless and vulnerable people.

**HOW IS YOUR JOB IMPACTED BY FLUCTUATIONS IN THE ECONOMY?**  
For corporate donors it makes it difficult to plan and commit to support; it can cause nervousness and impact donations. It can also affect employee fundraising, event engagement and corporate volunteering as employers may be less able to allocate their people time to undertake these valuable and rewarding activities. This is where relationships and mutual benefits prove vital to sustaining corporate support. Competition for grant funding gets ever greater and economic change also influences funding availability – and of course the costs of running a charity continue to increase too.

**WHAT'S YOUR VIEW ON THE CHANGE OF GOVERNMENT FOR YOUR JOB?**  
I think it's too soon to tell. Looking at the Labour budget, the National Living Wage and National Insurance increases will put significant financial pressures on charities and businesses alike, which makes fundraising even more important and challenging. However, there were also positive signs for charities, especially those involved in welfare and poverty.

**HOW DO YOU VIEW ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE – AND HOW MIGHT YOU AND YOUR BUSINESS USE IT?**  
Like a lot of people I know, I'm generally wary of it and excited about it in equal measure. For work, I find it useful for lengthy writing, content tasks and social media. It can be a real time saver. My colleagues tell me they use it a lot to support their daily work too and think it's great!

**HOW DO YOU HOPE YOUR COLLEAGUES WOULD DESCRIBE YOU?**  
Kind, passionate and helpful.

**YOUR GREATEST STRENGTH IN THE WORKPLACE?**  
Communication.

**BIGGEST CHALLENGE IN YOUR JOB?**  
Misconceptions about homelessness. Since joining Stay, I have learnt so much that I was completely unaware of. I am keen to raise awareness and share information about our vital work with individuals who are rough sleeping, facing homelessness, have housing and/or financial difficulties, are vulnerable, suffering a life crisis, and/or living with a neurodiverse condition, mental health issues or an addiction.

**YOUR PROUDEST ACHIEVEMENTS?**  
I was listed in Britain's Top 100 Young Entrepreneurs of 2001. More recently I ran a successful business training and coaching company for seven years, and worked with some amazing clients in the UK and Europe.

**PET HATES?**  
Rudeness . . . and coriander.

**IF YOU COULD GO BACK AND GIVE YOUR YOUNGER SELF SOME WISE ADVICE, WHAT WOULD IT BE?**  
Don't sweat the small stuff.

**HOW DO YOU RELAX AWAY FROM WORK?**  
I'm an obsessive amateur gardener; it's good for my mind and you can't do it with a phone in your hand! I love cookbooks, cooking telly and cooking. I also really enjoy managing my small vintage homewares unit in Ironbridge Antiques Arts and Crafts Centre.

**FAVOURITE MOVIE AND/OR TV SHOW?**  
Too many movies so let's go TV... currently Slow Horses, Yellowstone and always Masterchef.



*Sam will be glued to the new series of Masterchef. Picture courtesy of BBC*



*Gardening is good for the mind, Sam says, because you can't do it with a mobile phone in your hand*



*Samantha Haydon of Stay Telford*

**FAVOURITE THING ABOUT SHROPSHIRE?**  
The landscape. You are never far away from a gorgeous place and a lovely view. I find the Shropshire people and business community to be genuinely interested, generous and helpful in support of their local, independent charities like Stay.

**SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORM OF CHOICE?**  
Instagram.

**EARLY BIRD, OR NIGHT OWL?**  
Night owl.

**DREAM DINNER PARTY GUESTS, DEAD OR ALIVE?**  
Monty Don, Ben Fogle, George Michael, Joanna Lumley and Keith Floyd.

**WHAT WOULD YOU COOK FOR THEM?**  
Lots of tapas dishes so there is something for everyone.

**TELL US SOMETHING ABOUT YOU THAT MOST PEOPLE PROBABLY WOULDN'T KNOW.**  
I was a licensee for six years. In a complete career change, I bought a pub in the early noughties. It was brilliant fun and taught me so much about life and people.

**AND FINALLY . . . WHAT DO YOU THINK THE NEXT 12 MONTHS HAS IN STORE FOR YOU, PROFESSIONALLY AND PERSONALLY?**  
Professionally, I'm really looking forward to getting my teeth into this role and doing the best possible job for Stay. I'm busy laying the foundations for some great relationships and initiatives with local businesses, people and community groups. I also have 'The Big Sleep Out' event to organise with local partners, which is very exciting. And on the personal front, I'm hoping to get my husband to come to more antiques fairs with me and fulfil the dream of finding an Only Fools & Horses type treasure!

# Our People, Your Team.

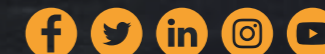
## Here to help you.

We can hold meetings via telephone and video and, of course, we are also able to offer meetings in person. Please contact us and a member of our team will be happy to help.

Find Us:

**Kendal Court, Ironmasters Way  
Telford, TF3 4DT  
Tel: 01952 291222**

**info@lblaw.co.uk  
www.lblaw.co.uk**



# RAINE

Exclusively designed by

*Rudell*

The Jewellers



*Rudell*

The Jewellers

97 Darlington Street, Wolverhampton WV1 4HB. 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](http://www.rudells.com)