

BUSINESS

DIRECTION

Issue 87 | Autumn 2025

INSIDE

LEADING THE WAY:

The women redefining leadership
across Herefordshire & Worcestershire

GOING FOR GROWTH

Outgrowing the headwinds
with expert advice

UNIVERSITY OF WORCESTER

Helping local businesses thrive
in uncertain times

The Official Magazine of



Herefordshire
& Worcestershire
Chamber of Commerce

Joanne Hammick
Women in Business p13



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INTRODUCING THE OCTOBER/NOVEMBER EDITION OF BUSINESS DIRECTION MAGAZINE



Welcome to this special edition of Business Direction, marking the exciting relaunch of our magazine. As we continue to champion and support the businesses of Herefordshire and Worcestershire, I am delighted to introduce Crosby Associates Media as our new publishing partner.

This collaboration represents an important step forward for Business Direction Magazine. With their extensive experience producing publications for Chambers of Commerce across the UK, Crosby Associates Media bring a wealth of creativity, knowledge, and expertise that will help us take our magazine to the next level.

From this edition onwards, you'll notice some important changes. The magazine will feature a refreshed design, more in-depth content and interviews with business professionals across the two counties. Beginning in 2026, Business

Direction will move from a bi-monthly to a quarterly publication, allowing us to deliver a magazine that not only informs but also inspires and connects readers over a longer period of time.

What will not change, however, is our commitment to showcasing the achievements of our Members, celebrating the strength of our local business community, and providing practical advice and updates that help you grow and succeed.

Alongside Chamber updates and Member's news, you will also find articles exploring national and international developments that impact businesses here in the two counties. In this edition of Business Direction magazine, we delve into two critical and timely themes: Women in Business and Business Growth. In this issue, you'll find in-depth interviews, expert commentary, and inspiring features that highlight the challenges, opportunities, and achievements shaping both areas. From spotlighting trailblazing female leaders to uncovering strategies for sustainable growth, this edition offers valuable insights.

I am confident this relaunch will enhance the value of Business Direction for all our readers and provide Members with an even stronger platform to raise their profile. I hope you enjoy this new edition and share in our excitement for the future of the magazine.

Best regards,

Sharon Smith
Chief Executive
 Herefordshire & Worcestershire
 Chamber of Commerce

COVER STORY:

LEADING THE WAY:

The women redefining leadership
across Herefordshire & Worcestershire

PAGES 13-22

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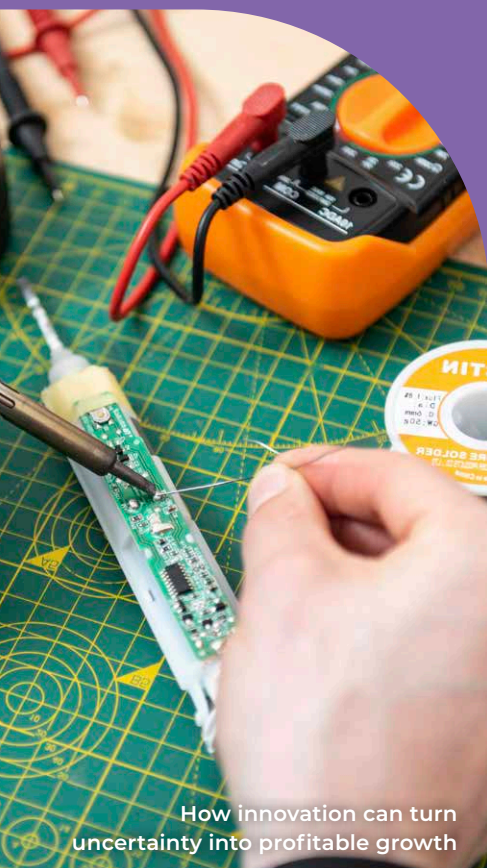
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34

27

Helping local
businesses thrive in
uncertain times



How innovation can turn
uncertainty into profitable growth



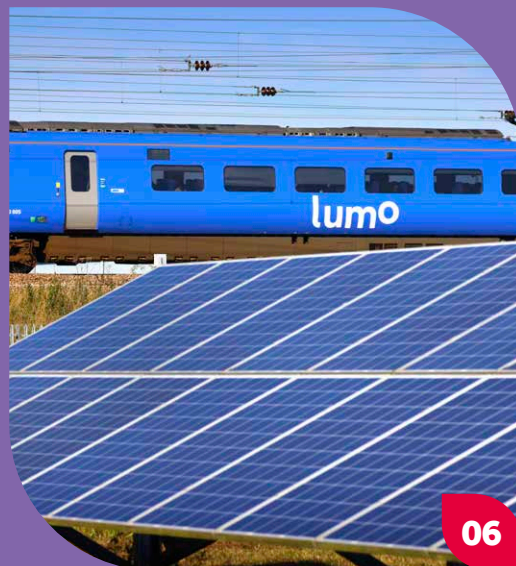
BEN MANNION AND LAURA HEWETT,
HEWETT RECRUITMENT

38



52

ATA Carnets



06

CONTENTS

- 03 WELCOME**
FROM THE CHIEF AT H&W CHAMBER
- 06 HEREFORD TO LONDON LINK**
ON TRACK FOR GROWTH
- 12 CHAMBER NEWS**
- 13 WOMEN IN BUSINESS**
THE WOMEN REDEFINING
LEADERSHIP ACROSS
HEREFORDSHIRE & WORCESTERSHIRE
- 23 CYBER CRIME**
AN EXPERT'S GUIDE TO PROTECTING
YOUR BUSINESS FROM AN ATTACK
- 25 GROWTH**
OUTGROWING THE HEADWINDS WITH
EXPERT ADVICE
- 34 UNIVERSITY OF WORCESTER**
HELPING LOCAL BUSINESSES THRIVE
IN UNCERTAIN TIMES
- 37 HEWETT RECRUITMENT**
THE IMPORTANCE OF TALENT
RETENTION
- 39 MEMBER NEWS**
- 47 NEW MEMBERS**
- 50 INTERNATIONAL TRADE**
- 54 TRAINING**
EMPOWERING GROWTH THROUGH SKILLS
- 58 SKILLS & POLICY**
- 60 AI THREAT**
- 62 EVENTS**
- 70 LAST WORD**

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ON TRACK FOR GROWTH:

FIRSTGROUP'S STUART JONES ON HEREFORD'S PROPOSED DIRECT LINK TO LONDON

Stuart Jones, Managing Director of First Rail Open Access, speaks exclusively to Business Direction about plans to launch a direct London service from Hereford - and why he believes the region is well placed to benefit from Open Access rail...

When Stuart Jones talks about rail, it's not in the language of timetables and signalling systems. It's about People. Places. Possibilities. And right now, it's about Hereford.

As the newly appointed Managing Director of First Rail Open Access - part of the FTSE 250-listed FirstGroup - Jones is leading the charge on a new proposal to connect Hereford directly to London Paddington via a new open access rail service. If approved, it could mean faster, more frequent journeys, improved links to South Wales, and a major shot in the arm for the regional economy.

"We see huge untapped potential in this corridor," Jones tells Business Direction in an exclusive sit-down from FirstGroup's London HQ. "Hereford has a rich heritage, a thriving tourism offer, and a growing, ambitious business community. But it deserves better rail connectivity. We want to be part of changing that."

FirstGroup's proposal, now under formal consideration by the Office of Rail and Road (ORR), would see two return journeys a day between Hereford and London Paddington, including one on Sundays. Crucially, the route would also serve key South Wales stations, such as Cwmbran, Pontypool & New Inn, and Abergavenny, as well as Bristol Parkway and Severn Tunnel Junction, providing nearly 200,000 people across the region with a direct, reliable and competitively priced link to the capital.

For Hereford specifically, it would increase direct services to London from four to six a day - including improved timings and a faster journey time.

"It's not just about quantity, it's about quality," says Jones. "We want to add capacity at the right time of day, making it easier for people to do business in London, to travel for leisure, or to visit Hereford for everything it has to offer. That's how you grow a rail market."

A PROVEN MODEL FOR GROWTH

If anyone knows how to do that, it's



STUART JONES



Stuart Jones. With a career spanning consultancy, commercial modelling, and leadership roles across FirstGroup's rail businesses, he has become one of the most influential people in the world of open access rail – a model that operates independently of government subsidy and instead competes on innovation, pricing and service quality.

Jones helped lay the foundations for Lumo, FirstGroup's flagship open access brand connecting London and Edinburgh. Since launching in 2021, Lumo has won praise for its all-electric fleet, app-first service, and low fares – drawing passengers from planes and cars, and becoming a case study in sustainable, customer-focused transport.

"Lumo proved what's possible," says Jones. "It

brought entirely new passengers to rail, helped decarbonise long-distance travel, and delivered real economic value to the regions it serves – all without a penny of public subsidy."

That's the ambition for Hereford. FirstGroup estimates the proposed route could unlock significant economic and social benefits, boost tourism to destinations like the Brecon Beacons/ Bannau Brycheiniog, Blaenavon World Heritage Site, and Hereford Cathedral, and offer faster, easier travel for the region's workforce and visitors alike.

WHY HEREFORD?

"Timing is everything," says Jones. "We've recently placed a half-a-billion-pound order for new Hitachi trains. This proposed Hereford service would be part of that next-

Continued on page 8...

15 Things I have learnt in business



By John Dillon

1. When starting a business the people you think will support you don't, and the people you thought wouldn't, actually do, remain loyal to the latter.

2. Running a business is like riding a roller coaster, fantastic highs but also some real lows. Don't take it personally just ensure the highs out way the lows.

3. Be clear on the vision for your business from the start and don't get distracted.

4. Establish your culture and company values from the outset, but regularly check their relevance as your team/business expands.

5. Align yourself with clients and companies who share your values. If they don't, walk away.

6. Support your team but let them fail if needs be, by failing in business we learn, get stronger, and grow together.

7. You DO NOT have to win every bit of work, just make sure you win your market share. Do not worry too much about your competition.

8. Watch out for clients who do not listen or want your advice, they think they know better and

then blame you when it goes wrong.

9. Be aware of new start-up businesses, but support them where you can.

10. Give your time and expertise freely to your local business community.

11. It takes patience, sacrifice and hard work to have a successful business, but it beats working for anybody else.

12. To grow your business you need to delegate and trust your team or you will never grow.

13. A sustainable and developed business is all about systems. Fine tune your systems for every eventuality.

14. Being introduced to business coaching was life changing. Goldman Sachs defines a successful business 'as a business that operates WITHOUT YOU' this resonates with me every day!

15. Why did I set up my business in the midst of a recession in September 2010? I spotted an opportunity to establish a good business, but I also feared getting to the end of my career and not being brave enough to set up my own business, have no regrets!

For more information about our services, contact us on **01905 676169**, **info@gjsdillon.co.uk** or visit our website **www.gjsdillon.co.uk**

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The Commercial Property Consultants



generation fleet. Meanwhile, the government is actively looking at ways to grow rail demand and decarbonise travel.”

He also sees a wider opportunity to rebalance the rail network. “Open access works best on routes that are under-served by existing franchises. We’re not taking market share from others - we’re actually creating new journeys, new demand. And Hereford fits that model perfectly.”

LEADING FROM THE FRONT

Jones himself is no stranger to long journeys - literally. A dedicated endurance runner, he often trains for ultra-distance events before sunrise. “Running teaches you patience, discipline, and the ability to keep going when things get tough,” he says.

It’s also the mindset he brings to shaping a new kind of rail business culture - one focused on flexibility, progression and local identity. “We build our teams to reflect the places we serve,” he says. “From using local suppliers for catering to partnering with regional tourism boards, we want our services to feel rooted in the community.”

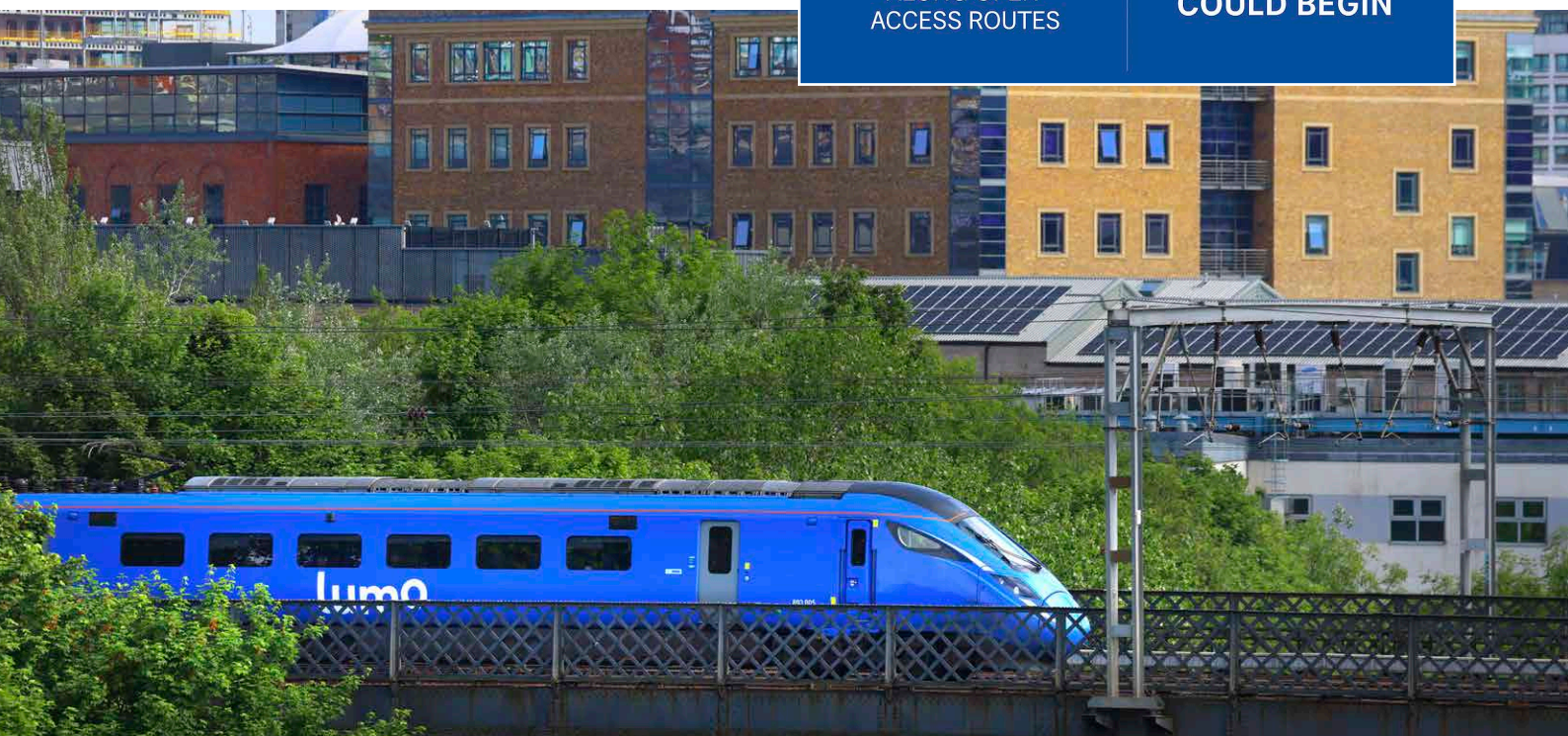
It’s this ethos that could make all the difference for the region.

2
RETURN
JOURNEYS A DAY
FROM HEREFORD
TO LONDON

50%
INCREASE
IN SERVICES
FROM 4 TO 6

£1.4bn
ECONOMIC
BENEFITS
ALONG OPEN
ACCESS ROUTES

DECEMBER
2027
WHEN SERVICES
COULD BEGIN



Addressing health and wellbeing in the workplace

In today's workplace, the health and wellbeing of employees has moved beyond being a matter of good corporate responsibility – it's now a central element to the operational success of a business, and to ensure employees thrive within a safe and supportive environment.

Employers are now bound by statutory obligations to provide a safe and healthy workplace. This includes compliance with health and safety regulations, provision of adequate facilities, and protocols to prevent injury. However, the expectations placed on employers have evolved and now legal compliance is just a basic requirement, with more people taking a keen interest in facilities, and even the position on family friendly provisions, mental health first aiders and flexible working.

Being a modern, caring workplace

Modern workplace health and safety extends to mental wellbeing, work-life balance, and the psychological safety of employees. Employment laws now recognise stress and burnout as legitimate workplace risks and failing to address these can result in not only reputational harm but also legal consequences.

Supporting employee wellbeing is a strategic investment as healthier employees are more engaged, productive, and resilient. They take fewer sick days, have higher morale, and are more likely to stay with the organisation long-term.

This investment pays dividends through reduced recruitment costs, less absenteeism, and a stronger employer brand with wellbeing initiatives becoming a key differentiator in recruitment and retention.

Building a wellbeing-focused culture starts with leadership. Owners and managers are expected to demonstrate positive behaviours and foster a climate of inclusion and respect. This means not only encouraging employees to take breaks and use their annual leave entitlements, but also actively addressing workloads and team dynamics that could lead to stress or conflict.

Constant and committed communication

Communication is a crucial element and employers should regularly engage with staff to assess wellbeing needs, gather feedback, and co-create initiatives. This might include flexible working policies, access to mental health resources, or physical health initiatives such as subsidised gym memberships, or wellness challenges such as internal steps competitions.

Wellbeing means different things to different people, and a successful programme takes into account diverse needs across age, background, disability status, and personal circumstances.

As the nature of work continues to evolve with hybrid models employers must remain agile in how they support health and well-being. This means staying informed about best practice, engaging with external experts where needed, and regularly reviewing internal policies to ensure they reflect current realities.

Ultimately, caring for employee wellbeing is not a one-time initiative. It is an ongoing commitment, reinforced through daily actions, and measured by the daily experiences of employees.

By taking a proactive, holistic approach, employers can foster not only a healthier workforce but also a more sustainable and successful business.

For further information or a discussion, Business Direction readers can email Darryll Thomas, partner at mfg Solicitors, via darryll.thomas@mfgsolicitors.com



WHAT IS OPEN ACCESS RAIL: THE UNSUNG SUCCESS STORY DRIVING GROWTH WITHOUT TAXPAYER SUPPORT

Amid rising costs, squeezed budgets and calls for reform across Britain's railways, a quiet success story has been unfolding - and it's doing so without a single penny of government subsidy.

It's called Open Access rail, and it might just be one of the most effective, yet underappreciated, innovations in UK transport policy.

Unlike traditional rail franchises - which operate with public funding and government-determined contracts - open access operators run independently, taking on full commercial risk and reward. They must compete on price, quality, and customer experience. And against the odds, they're thriving.

FirstGroup, one of the UK's largest transport companies, has become the leading force in this model through its two open access services: Hull Trains and Lumo. Together, they've not only proven that Open Access works - they've shown it can outperform.

Since their launch, FirstGroup's open access services have delivered over seven million new journeys, according to independent economic analysis. These aren't just people switching from one train to another - they're entirely new passengers, often drawn away from cars and domestic flights.

The environmental benefit is significant. Lumo, which runs fully electric services between London and Edinburgh, has helped cut emissions while offering travellers a lower-cost, lower-hassle alternative to flying.

On the East Coast Main Line, Open Access has also brought competition that benefits everyone, including lower fares, more frequent services, and greater innovation. Hull Trains, which began with just one service a day, now runs multiple daily trips and has contributed an estimated £380 million in wider economic benefits to the areas it serves.

What makes Open Access stand out,

according to First Rail, is its value to the wider rail system. Operators like Lumo and Hull Trains pay more in track access charges per mile than many franchised operators. That means they're helping fund the infrastructure while also growing demand.

Passengers seem to agree. Both services consistently rank among the top for customer satisfaction, offering streamlined digital booking, paperless boarding, and thoughtfully designed onboard experiences - often with a strong local flavour.

As the government pushes ahead with its Great British Railways reform plans, industry insiders are urging decision-makers not to overlook what's already working.

"Open Access shows what's possible when operators are free to innovate," says Stuart Jones, Managing Director of First Rail Open Access. "It's entrepreneurial, efficient and entirely focused on the passenger."

OPEN ACCESS RAIL PLAN TARGETS HEREFORD-LONDON EXPANSION

FirstGroup has submitted a formal application to introduce a new open access rail service linking Hereford and London Paddington.

It's a move that could enhance regional connectivity and stimulate economic growth across the region. The proposal, which is now under review by the Office of Rail and Road (ORR), outlines plans for two daily return services (one on Sundays) between Hereford and London, calling at Bristol Parkway, Severn Tunnel Junction, Cwmbran, Pontypool & New Inn, and Abergavenny.

If approved, the service would increase the number of daily direct connections from Hereford to the capital from four to six, addressing existing timetable gaps and offering faster journey times than current options.

The route is part of FirstGroup's wider open access strategy, building on the success of its Lumo service between London and Edinburgh. Operated without public



subsidy, open access rail aims to offer competitive fares, greener journeys, and greater choice for passengers.

The Hereford proposal would also support FirstGroup's £500 million order for new Hitachi trains, with the Hereford fleet forming part of a potential second tranche.

Around 200,000 residents in the Torfaen

and Monmouthshire areas would benefit from direct London services for the first time, helping to encourage a shift from road to rail and supporting local tourism.

Pending regulatory approval and capacity agreements with Network Rail, services could begin by December 2027, alongside FirstGroup's planned Carmarthen-London route.

FACTFILE

Operator: First Rail Open Access (part of FirstGroup plc)
Route: Hereford to London Paddington
Via: Bristol Parkway, Severn Tunnel Junction, Cwmbran, Pontypool & New Inn, Abergavenny
Frequency: Two return services per day (one on Sundays)
Status: Application submitted to the Office of Rail and Road (ORR) – June 2025
Expected Start Date: Targeted for December 2027 (subject to approval and capacity)

WHAT'S BEING PROPOSED?

FirstGroup has formally applied to launch a new open access rail service between Hereford and London, expanding its successful Lumo model beyond the East Coast Main Line. If approved, the service would:

- Increase weekday direct connections from Hereford to London from four to six
- Offer new journey opportunities to key stations along the route
- Provide a faster and more regular alternative to existing services

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL BENEFITS

- **Regional access:** Nearly 200,000 people in South Wales would gain direct rail access to London
- **Tourism boost:** Better links to destinations including the Brecon Beacons, Blaenavon World Heritage Site, and Hereford city
- **Sustainability:** Designed to encourage a shift from road to rail
- **Private investment:** Supported by a £500m order for new Hitachi-built trains, with potential expansion

WHAT IS OPEN ACCESS?

Open access operators run independently of government franchises or subsidies. They rely on commercial viability and customer choice — typically offering competitive fares, digital-first services, and strong local identity.

WHAT'S NEXT?

The ORR will now carry out a consultation, alongside capacity discussions with Network Rail. If approved, the Hereford–London service would launch in parallel with FirstGroup's Carmarthen route in late 2027.



MILFORD RESEARCH & CONSULTANCY LIMITED

TAKING ON STUDENTS

How Milford Research and Consultancy are developing the next generation.

The Engine Room: The Core of Milford Research

Helping you engage with, integrate and manage students.

Milford Research and Consultancy, an award-winning business, is passionate about developing employability skills and personal growth. After successfully supporting students and seeing the benefits for both them and the business, MD Robert Milford now offers training to help others engage with, integrate, and manage students.

A Student's Prespective

How has the programmes and working for Milford Research help them?

Libby McCann, a previous mentee of Rob's, says: "Meeting Rob was the best opportunity I had during my GCSEs. Our weekly conversations built a professional, honest bond and lead to employment. All businesses should embrace the next generation- both sides learn so much."

Contact Milford via E: info@milford.research.co.uk
 Read more about them: www.milfordresearch.co.uk



EXCLUSIVE AXA HEALTH OFFER FOR CHAMBER MEMBERS

Herefordshire & Worcestershire Chamber of Commerce is pleased to share an exclusive opportunity for Members to access significant savings on small business health insurance with AXA Health.

Until 30 November 2025, businesses can benefit from 20% off their first year's premium when taking out small business health insurance for the first time. In addition, Chamber Members can enjoy further savings of up to 50% off their membership fees – worth up to

£125 per employee covered – for up to three years.

This offer is available across all levels of Chamber Membership, including Strategic and Patron, making it a valuable opportunity for organisations of every size to both protect the wellbeing of their workforce and maximise the benefits of membership.

The Chamber is committed to supporting Members in finding solutions that help their businesses thrive, and this partnership with

AXA Health provides a practical way to invest in employee health while reducing costs.

For more information, please contact the Membership Team:
membership@hwchamber.co.uk



HEREFORDSHIRE & WORCESTERSHIRE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE LAUNCHES NEW WORKPLACE SKILLS PARTNERSHIP WITH MAKE STRIDES

Herefordshire & Worcestershire Chamber of Commerce is proud to announce a new strategic partnership with **Make Strides**, a digital-first learning and development provider specialising in early-career and leadership training.

This partnership aims to equip local businesses with flexible, accessible online training to meet the challenges of today's fast-paced digital economy, including tight budgets, limited time, and evolving skill needs.

Programmes include:

- Early Career Development (ideal for young professionals entering the workplace)
- Leadership Capabilities (for rising managers and experienced leaders)
- Group Coaching

Sharon Smith, Chief Executive of the Chamber, said:

"This partnership brings forward-thinking, outcome-driven digital training to our region. It's designed



to overcome barriers like time and cost, while supporting businesses to grow and adapt. Whether upskilling young professionals or developing confident leaders, Make Strides offers innovative, flexible solutions that complement our face-to-face training programmes."

Melaine Hawkett & Gemma Stuart-Young, Directors of Make Strides, added:

"We're delighted to partner with the Chamber to deliver inclusive, bite-sized digital training that fits into real working lives. Together, we're building a more agile, confident, and future-ready workforce across the region."

More details, including the full training schedule and registration information can be found on our website: www.hwchamber.co.uk/training/digital-training/

LEADING FROM THE FRONT: CELEBRATING THE FEMALE CHANGE-MAKERS ACROSS HEREFORDSHIRE AND WORCESTERSHIRE

How local leaders are inspiring change across industries - from boardrooms to football pitches

Following the Chamber's latest Women's Business Conference at Crumplebury Farm, Business Direction shines a spotlight on some of the female leaders shaping our region's future...

Trailblazing women across the country are driving remarkable change – and Herefordshire and Worcestershire are no exception. Across the region, female leaders are redefining what success looks like in business, bringing fresh perspectives, resilience, and a determination to break down barriers.

That energy was on full display at the Chamber's latest Women's Business Conference, sponsored by mfg Legal Services Limited, and held at the stunning Crumplebury Farm. More than 100 professionals came together to hear from a diverse line-up of speakers including Dr Annette Daly, CEO of YMCA Worcestershire; Kersten Catella, Sales and Marketing Director at Wyevale Nurseries; coach and entrepreneur Dawn

Owen; and Jess Fassnidge, captain of Worcester City Women FC. Their stories of leadership, growth and resilience set the tone for an inspiring day of reflection and networking.

In this edition of Business Direction, we continue that celebration with four in-depth interviews that bring the issues to life. Joanne Hammick, newly appointed Managing Director of West Midland Safari Park, reflects on bringing 25 years of hospitality experience to one of Worcestershire's most high-profile attractions.

Ruby Edwards, founder of You Do Better, talks candidly about building a flexible, results-driven agency while navigating personal adversity - and why, as she puts it, knowing when to outsource to specialists is a strength, not a weakness.

Samantha Lewis, Director of People and Operations at NMITE, shares how working in a traditionally male environment - and the realities of pursuing IVF - sharpened her resolve and ultimately made her a more empathetic and effective leader.

And Jess Fassnidge reminisces on her life as an elite athlete, charting her path from limited grassroots opportunities to captaining Worcester City Women FC, translating lessons from sport into business and leadership.



RUBY EDWARDS

Together, their experiences show the breadth of talent and ambition propelling our local economy. They also underline why events like the Women's Business Conference matter: because when inspirational leaders share lived experience, they not only motivate the room - they move the dial for the next generation.

THE REALITY OF GENDER BIAS

While progress has been made, gender bias remains a barrier across the UK workforce. Research shows that more than half (53%) of young women experienced discrimination at work in

Continued on page 14...



JOANNE HAMMICK

2024, rising to 61% for young women from ethnic minorities. The national gender pay gap for full-time employees stood at 8.3% in 2023, widening to 13.5% among those aged 60 and over.

Nowhere is the legacy of bias more stark than in sport. As Jess notes in her interview, women were banned from playing football in England for 50 years - a context that still shapes today's investment, technology and culture around the women's game. The recent surge in attention, catalysed by the Lionesses success at the Euros, is closing gaps - but, as she argues, there's still a lot of ground to make up.

JESS FASSNIDGE



Statistics like these are exactly why initiatives such as the Chamber's forums matter. They are not only celebrations of success but they are practical spaces for support, action and honest conversations about what still needs to change.

Sharon Smith, Chief Executive, Herefordshire & Worcestershire Chamber of Commerce, said: "Our much-anticipated Women's Business Conference is a standout event in the Chamber calendar, bringing together over 100 business professionals from across Herefordshire and Worcestershire for a truly inspiring and empowering day.

"It's an opportunity to celebrate the achievements of women in business, foster meaningful connections, and spark important conversations about leadership, growth, and resilience.

"We're proud to present a dynamic line-up of exceptional female speakers

who will share their personal journeys, insights, and practical strategies for success. Whether you're just starting out in your career or leading at the highest level, this conference offers something valuable for everyone. It's about learning from each other, lifting each other up, and continuing to shape an inclusive and thriving business community."

UNDERREPRESENTATION AND THE LEADERSHIP GAP

Despite a wealth of capability, women remain underrepresented in senior positions. Only 6% of FTSE 100 CEOs are women. Closer to home, patterns across Herefordshire and Worcestershire often mirror the national picture, with leadership concentrated among men.

Visibility matters and when decision-making tables don't reflect the workforce, ambition can be dampened and stereotypes reinforced. Our interviews here rebut those stereotypes with lived detail. Joanne talks about stepping into a role often assumed to be male and focuses not on labels but on the transferable skills — adaptability, pace management, and people leadership — that drive results in a complex, seasonal visitor economy. Samantha speaks to the power of safe cultures in unlocking potential. Her story shows how inclusion, clear expectations and "safe to fail" environments produce work-ready graduates and confident teams. Ruby demonstrates that leadership is rarely a solo act and that building the right team and being humble about your limits is not just efficient but a competitive advantage.

LOOKING AHEAD

The leaders interviewed here point to a multi-front response. Open doors to STEM and leadership in schools and colleges and challenge outdated assumptions about "men's jobs" and "women's jobs". In the workplace, pair ambition with support. Flexible working, parental leave and childcare are not perks, they're got to be productivity enablers that keep talented people in the pipeline. And for founders, access to funding, mentorship and high-quality networks can be decisive in whether a great idea becomes a sustainable business.

Culture change also depends on confidence and safety. As our interviewees stress in different ways, visible role models and mentors help counter imposter feelings, while zero-tolerance approaches to harassment and discrimination protect morale, retention and performance. The business case is



SAMANTHA LEWIS

clear: inclusive organisations make better decisions, innovate faster and serve customers more effectively.

Events like the Chamber's Women's Business Forum show what's possible when female leaders are put centre stage. They provide inspiration, practical strategies and the kind of connection that fuels professional growth. From Crumplebury Farm to boardrooms, lecture theatres and football pitches across our region, women are leading, innovating and raising standards — and the interviews that follow show exactly how.

The Chamber's Women's Business Forums are open to all business professionals across a variety of local venues. Expect high-value networking, a professional and personal goal-setting workshop, inspirational guest speakers and business collaboration.

The next forum will be at the Green Dragon Hotel in Hereford on October 23. Speakers from the "Women in Emergency Services" network curated by Ruby Edwards for International Women's Day, including Jo Hardwick, Tactical Incident Commander, West Midlands Ambulance Service; Michelle Hicks, Station Commander, Herefordshire and Worcestershire Fire & Rescue Service; and Elizabeth Warner, DCI, West Mercia Police.

Over the next pages in Business Direction, we'll bring you exclusive interviews with Joanne Hammick, Ruby Edwards, Samantha Lewis and Jess Fassnidge – four very different leaders, each with unique perspectives on what it really takes to reach the top of their fields and raise the bar for our region.



LEADING THE WILD: STEERING VISITOR EXPERIENCES AND FUELLING CONSERVATION

West Midlands Safari Park's MD on skills over labels - and the results that really matter

Ten months into the role, Joanne Hammick explains how hospitality instincts, agile operations and a clear mission are shaping West Midlands Safari Park from peak-season crowds to long-term species protection...

On the face of it, a safari park and the historic Studley Castle hotel have very little in common. And that is what Joanne Hammick thought when she moved from a career of more than 25 years in the hospitality sector "treating every guest like A-list celebrities" to taking charge of the popular Safari Park in Bewdley.

But after almost 10 months in post as Managing Director of West Midlands Safari Park, as well as having to adapt to a completely new environment, Joanne has found many of her skills and experiences are just as relevant.

Joanne said: "It might not seem like it, but there are similarities with the hospitality industry. We are providing a customer experience which not only involves seeing the animals, it also draws them into what we do.

"There is such competition out there for people's time and customers expect so much more from an attraction. The challenge is entertaining and interesting them while maintaining our conservation work and getting them to embrace our mission and values."

For Joanne, the biggest change from Studley Castle and the hospitality sector was the pace at the Safari Park.

She said: "It is a very fast-paced business which I did not expect, but one of the skills you need is to be flexible and quickly being able to adapt.

"One of the biggest changes is the seasons and the challenge is balancing things so that you can cope when you are extremely busy and scale back when things quieten down - without ruining the experience for the visitors."

SKILLS

When Joanne took over from predecessor Chris Kelly who retired in October last

year, much was made of the fact that she is the Safari Park's first female Managing Director.

For Joanne, the most important thing is having the right skills to do the job.

“ The biggest quality you need is being able to juggle lots of plates and you must remain positive while you are doing it. ”

She said: "Coming from the hospitality industry where there are a lot of female leaders, I don't see it as a woman in a man's world - I'm just the MD.

"The biggest quality you need is being able to juggle lots of plates and you must remain positive while you are doing it.

"As the leader of an organisation, if you are worried or distracted by something, the mood among staff can change very quickly, so you must be positive, no matter what challenges you are dealing with.

Continued on page 16...





"That means that when people have their own difficulties or need advice about something, they feel they can come and ask you. If they think you're too busy with something, things get left and can become much bigger problems than they started out as."

"You are the person who must inspire everyone in the team, no matter what you are dealing with. That can be quite a big weight on your shoulders."

BIGGER PICTURE

Joanne has also enjoyed how different life at the safari park is to her previous experiences of zoos.

She said: "Before I came here, I didn't have an entirely positive view about zoos because I wasn't sure how they benefitted animals. But learning more about their conservation and breeding programmes and how we here focus on protecting endangered species and the environment, this has completely shifted my perspective."

"You quickly realise that as well as looking after the animals' welfare and wellbeing, we are part of something much bigger."

"There's a lot of work going on involving science and protecting species which is part of a much bigger picture, and we are working towards a global goal. It's not

just about a tiger being born here for visitors to see. There is research into disease and medicine, as well as breeding programmes which could involve releasing animals into the wild and making sure we are raising funds for conservation projects."

Another challenge the safari park faces is reducing its own environmental impact.

Joanne said: "We have to be aware that it comes full circle because the conservation projects and species we are trying to protect are the same ones being threatened by our own environmental impact."

VOCATION

As with the hospitality sector, Joanne has found that many of the safari park's employees have found a vocation, not just a job.

She said: "When people love what they do, they never want to leave. And the experience and knowledge they have here is incredible."

"When I started, I went around with Head of Wildlife Angela Potter, who has been here almost since it opened, and she not only knew every animal here, she also knows which animals are at other facilities, which are related, the staff looking after them... it really is a way of life."

With the variety of animals at the safari park – from

PEOPLE MAKE THE DIFFERENCE

One of the most rewarding parts of Joanne's job is the people she meets, from dedicated hospitality workers to safari park staff. And it helps create a much more enjoyable experience all round.

Joanne said: "At my last hotel, I went from a corporate environment to the leisure and holiday market. Working for Warner I met some amazing people – not just celebrities, but all sorts of people with interesting stories and backgrounds."

"We wanted to treat everyone the same. The aim was to give every guest the A-list experience. It was a

really nice experience and a mix of everything from opera singers to pop stars."

While people are often warned not to meet their heroes, Joanne said that despite the range of celebrities who stayed at the hotel, there was no shocking rock 'n' roll bad behaviour.

And it was just before moving to the safari park that Joanne welcomed one of her favourite singers to the hotel.

She said: "The last celebrity I met was Beverley Knight and she was amazing. She was so nice and the show was brilliant."



tiger cubs to red pandas – it is perhaps surprising which animal Joanne found has captured her heart.

She said: "I was surprised by how much I felt for the Indian rhinos. They are very social and affectionate, and I was taken back by it when I first came here. They have also welcomed baby Nurani, which is especially cute. I regularly drive through the park and love watching them."

As with any senior position, one of the keys is finding the work-life balance.

Joanne said: "You have got to be prepared to make sacrifices,

but you also must recognise that you cannot be the perfect MD, the perfect wife, the perfect mother at the same time. While you focus on one, the others cannot get your full attention. Unless you accept that, it can push people to breaking point."

One plus is that children are less likely to complain about being taken to work if their mum runs a safari park!

Joanne said: "I try to put family first, but you do have to make sacrifices and it's often later when you are in a position to appreciate your work-life balance."



LEADING ON AND OFF THE PITCH!

Sports scientist and Worcester City Women's captain Jess Fassnidge on blending sport science and leadership to raise the women's game

In our series celebrating female leaders shaping Herefordshire and Worcestershire, Worcester City Women FC captain Jess Fassnidge explains how lessons from sport and science took her from grassroots to captaincy and why growing the women's game matters now more than ever...

As a young girl, Jess Fassnidge loved playing football and had dreams of following her idol, David Beckham.

While she practised her skills in the back garden in Worcester and played with friends in the park, opportunities for girls to play organised football at the time were very limited, unlike today when the success of the Lionesses has helped elevate the game to new levels.

Jess's love for the game has never dwindled. Determined to reach the highest level she could, she earned a scholarship to America, where the women's game enjoys a much higher profile than the men's. She has been captain of Worcester City Women FC for four years and is a lecturer in sport and exercise science at the University of Worcester.

She said: "As far back as I can remember, I had a football at my feet, breaking fence panels in my grandparents' garden trying to be David Beckham!

"Like the film Bend it like Beckham, there weren't many opportunities for girls to play football. You couldn't play in school teams and there weren't many girls' clubs so I joined a boys' club with another girl."

Although rules at the time meant Jess could not play in mixed teams past the age of 12, she believes the experience helped her.

She said: "Playing in a boys' team helped me develop and made me more determined. Playing with bigger, stronger players helped me improve my own game."

One of the issues Jess and other girls faced was a lack of interest in women's football.

She said: "Women's football wasn't on TV or talked about. I followed the men's league and was a huge Manchester United fan, but also wanted to play at that level."

As Jess tried to reach the highest standards she could, she earned a scholarship to study business and marketing at Eastern Florida State

Continued on page 18...

College then and Flagler College, both located in Florida, where she represented the college women's football team.

"This was my opportunity to Bend it like Beckham," she said. "America's women's footballers are seen as stars and people go to matches and watch them on TV. Collegiate sports also has a much higher profile and you might get more people watching a college match than a local professional side.

"The experience was fantastic and, as well as getting to play football to a high standard in fantastic places, I got an education and my degree."

After graduating, she spent a year coaching before returning to the UK to focus on sport and exercise science (SES) alongside playing. She had a spell at Redditch United before moving to her current club, Worcester City Women, where she has coached as well as played, and is proud of the direction the club has taken under owner Nicole Allison.

Jess said: "We are totally independent and don't have a men's club to support us, which means all the funding and everything else has to be done by us. There are sponsorships and partnerships, but our fantastic volunteers help make it all happen.

"We are in the National League and below us in the fifth tier, there are clubs where



players are being paid, so there is plenty of potential to grow."

Jess' two passions combined in an unfortunate twist of fate in 2021 when she went in for a tackle with a Stourbridge player – and both damaged their ACLs.

Jess said: "I've never heard of two players both doing their ACLs in the same tackle. It was 12 months after surgery before I was playing again and it made me more aware of factors that might have contributed, such as Covid and conditioning when you are recovering from it.

"The SES is something I am really passionate about. As well as helping to prevent injury, it could reduce the seriousness of an injury or help improve recovery time."

Jess also finds her work teaching sports exercise science very rewarding as it helps people fulfil their own football dreams.

She said: "Like me, a lot of people love football and want to be involved. If they can't make it as a player, there are so many ways they can be involved, especially through sports science. The top clubs today use sports therapists, psychologists, data, AI, etc, to analyse every detail and improve performance.

"There is also plenty of opportunity for research in the women's game."

As Jess continues to inspire footballers and sports exercise scientists, her goal is to be able to help improve the women's game.

She said: "I love football and want to be able to help move the women's game forward, even if it is just by a small percentage. I want to be able to help more women and girls enjoy and be involved in football in some way, whether they become professional or enjoy grass-roots football."

THE AMERICAN DREAM FOR WOMEN'S FOOTBALL

For Jess, the difference between women's football in the UK and the US is like night and day, largely due to an FA-imposed ban which was lifted in 1971.

She said: "For 50 years, women were banned from playing football in this country. Although there has been an explosion in growth recently, especially with the success of the Lionesses, we are 50 years behind in terms of technology, development and culture."

While the Lionesses have excelled to get where they are today, Jess doesn't believe the women's game should be compared to the men's leagues.

She said: "It does not need parity with the men's game and there is nothing wrong with it being different. Chloe Kelly talked about hooliganism and I

like the combative atmosphere you get in grounds here, but it's different in the women's league. It is more like a family atmosphere and opposing fans sit next to each other. They are very different and there's no reason they shouldn't stay that way."

Jess also believes that the success of England's women since winning the 2022 Euros – a year after the men's side lost in the final at Wembley – was largely down to being on home turf.

She said: "It gave people the opportunity to support England and they played really well throughout the whole tournament. The grounds were full and even when people expected them to lose to Germany in the final, they won it in a thrilling way. It won them lots of new fans and inspired women and girls to get into football."



'PLAY TO YOUR STRENGTHS,' SAYS MARKETING AGENCY BOSS AND MUM-OF-TWO

The key is knowing when you need other people to help make your business a success

In the final interview in our Women in Business spotlights, **Ruby Edwards** - founder of You Do Better and sole parent of two - talks about turning adversity into a flexible, on-demand marketing agency serving three counties...

Business owners wear a variety of hats and are responsible for making many things happen in a day. One of the biggest responsibilities they face is having people rely on them – whether it is staff, suppliers, or family – to keep a roof over their heads.

While that can be difficult enough, You Do Better boss Ruby Edwards' journey to creating a full-service marketing agency – with clients across Herefordshire, Worcestershire and Gloucestershire – faced further obstacles. Ruby overcame personal adversity to get where she is today – a successful business owner and sole parent-of-two.

STRUGGLES

Having worked in different roles with the utilities sector – including as a team leader, customer services manager and consultant – Ruby began her PR and communications journey after her second child was born.

Ruby said: "My son was born with a life-threatening medical condition and that naturally changed our lives. When I started You Do Better in 2017, I was a sole parent of two children, so work needed to revolve around my family.

"My children have grown as my business has grown and that has been a catalyst for deciding what I could do to make it continue to evolve."

Today, You Do Better has six associates and is going from strength to strength, growing its reputation for its flexible, effective approach and results-driven marketing that champions local business.

The support from the Herefordshire and Worcestershire Chamber of Commerce has also helped Ruby grow her business.

She said: "I have worked with the local Chamber for more than 10 years and it has helped build partnerships and collaborations for my business, and for my clients, too. I have also gained new clients directly through the Chamber and continue to work proactively with them."

You Do Better offers out-sourced marketing, PR and website services, which means businesses of all sizes can benefit from the team's expertise on an hourly, daily or project rate, without a retainer or having to employ someone in-house.

Ruby said: "One of the key decisions I made is outsourcing – we provide on-demand marketing services to businesses of all sizes and if I don't have the immediate skills or capacity for the work, I will outsource it to the best associate for the job.

"Some people don't like to admit they can't do a particular thing, but I would rather say 'that's not something I can do', or 'I can't, but one of the team can' than be out of my depth and not do the job properly.

"I have surrounded myself with talented people with different skills who can do the things that I can't, and I recruit other associates to help deliver what the client needs for a particular job. I can't know everything about everything, and I think it's far better to bring in people who are experts in certain areas and deliver what the client wants."

DETERMINATION AND HUMILITY

With the challenges Ruby has faced to make her business what it is today, she

believes it is her determination that has helped her.

She said: "It has nothing to do with gender. I've never been held back or gone further because I am a woman. That's not to say I haven't experienced sexism or misogyny, but my drive and determination to succeed for me and my family doesn't let anything stop me. I just get on with my own business and what I need to do.

"Running any business can be really hard. Like many others, I am the MD, the FD, the OD – I do whatever I have to – but I am also not afraid to ask for help. It is about being humble enough to know when you need other people to help make your business a success."

And Ruby's advice to other women (and men) starting their own business is equally positive. She said: "Don't let anything hold you back. Whether you're a sole parent or dealing with extreme difficulties, play to your strengths and don't be afraid to ask for help. Know your abilities, but also know your limits.

"You have to work hard, but the more you give, the more you get back. You have to be able to change and adapt and be resilient – focus on keeping going, rather than being held back when something doesn't work. When things go wrong, it is something to learn from. Don't be too hard on yourself, try to let yourself off the hook sometimes."





MOTHERHOOD TAUGHT ME RESILIENCE - AND MADE ME A BETTER LEADER

Samantha Lewis on being a mum, education, and building opportunities for students and veterans alike

As part of our Women in Business spotlight, NMITE's Director of People & Operations Samantha Lewis, is removing barriers, building confidence and partnering with employers — while championing veterans' transferable skills

Samantha Lewis has dedicated her career to building opportunities for others. Now Director of People and Operations at the New Model Institute for Technology & Engineering (NMITE), she also chairs the Hereford Veteran Support Centre and a local school governing body, roles that reflect her values and determination to create lasting impact in her community.

At NMITE, Samantha balances the formal responsibilities of HR compliance with a much broader ambition: to cultivate an environment where students and staff alike can excel. Her focus is not just on regulations and processes, but on creating a culture in which people are encouraged to grow, take risks, and enjoy their time at the institute.

CAREER AMBITIONS

This path is a little different from her earliest ambition of following her father

into the military. After studying at Hereford Cathedral School, she applied to the Army but was unsuccessful at officer selection. Instead, she pursued a degree in Ancient History at the University of Wales, Lampeter, before working for the Ministry of Defence. Two years later, she transitioned into human resources, starting her career at a heavy manufacturing plant in Hereford, while also completing her HR qualifications.

"It was a very male-dominated industry," she remembers. "And they had never had a woman on the leadership team before. I had to stand on my own amongst some strong figures."

The challenge deepened when she and her husband decided to start a family.

"As a woman working in a manufacturing environment, the idea of discussing the difficulties I was facing to conceive was incomprehensible. If the company knew I was planning to have a child, I felt I would be overlooked for promotion, additional opportunities, and further training.

"After four years of trying to conceive and what felt like a continuous emotional rollercoaster, I was finally approved to start IVF, but at what

“It was a very male-dominated industry,” she remembers. “And they had never had a woman on the leadership team before. I had to stand on my own amongst some strong figures.”

cost to my career? Telling my employer that I was actively trying to have a baby was the most difficult conversation I have had in my working life. To then request additional time off for appointments, with all the emotions that come with treatment, was not easy.

"I knew the work and effort I had invested in my career to date could be halted. Who would believe in me now, knowing I was going to be taking maternity leave? When I returned,

Continued on page 22...

THURSDAY 16TH OCTOBER
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to **The Build North Expo 2025** taking place on
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would I be able to commit 100% to the job as I had previously done? Surely, having a child, I couldn't juggle a senior role too."

In fact, the opposite proved true. Samantha believes the experience strengthened her both personally and professionally.



“It taught me resilience, determination, grit, never to give up ... and patience! As an HR professional, I am more driven and creative now than ever before.”

DETERMINED

"It taught me resilience, determination, grit, never to give up ... and patience! As an HR professional, I am more driven and creative now than ever before."

After 15 years in manufacturing, Samantha moved into higher education, becoming Head of HR at NMITE. She relished the opportunity to build something new.

"When I got here, I was basically given a blank canvas. I knew what good did not look like and wanted to develop an inclusive culture where we remove barriers, encourage students to be themselves, and equip them to leave

ready to join the workforce.

"We want to empower young people to see that there are options within their reach. Some students are the first in their families to enter higher education. While most engineering degrees require maths and English qualifications to enrol, we don't; we teach them what they need to know to succeed once they're here."

Although engineering and STEM remain male-dominated fields, Samantha and NMITE actively challenge the stereotypes.

CREATIVE AND INNOVATIVE

"We find that a lot of the women are very creative and innovative, which is what a great engineer is; it's not about strength, spanners, and grease! We can give you the skills and qualifications; you just need to be creative, innovative, and passionate."

This approach has proved effective. The most recent graduation cohort achieved a 100% pass rate, with every student securing employment, from large firms such as Balfour Beatty to small and medium-sized enterprises in the region.

"Staff are very encouraging and supportive, and everyone backs the vision of what we are doing. We create an environment where it is safe to fail, which helps students understand that things won't always go as planned, but mistakes provide the opportunity to learn."

"We want our graduates to be truly work-ready, which means pushing them beyond their comfort zones. I hated public speaking when I arrived, and I told the CEO. Their response was to book me in for regular monthly speaking slots! These are the things you have to do to grow as a professional."



MILITARY MATTERS

Although she did not pursue a military career, Samantha remains deeply connected to the Armed Forces



community. She is Chair of the Hereford Veteran Support Centre (HVSC), a role that often overlaps with her work at NMITE.

There are an estimated 9,600 veterans in Herefordshire, almost half of whom are of working age. Educational attainment levels between veterans and non-veterans remain broadly similar, but barriers to long-term employment persist.

"We are trying, as a community, to support the upskilling and reskilling of our veterans into sustainable careers. Military personnel have a wealth of transferable skills that can add significant value to organisations and support local business growth. Yet many leaving the services underestimate their own value and the contribution they can make."

Through events, training, and outreach, NMITE works with HVSC to highlight alternative pathways for veterans. The results have been profound.

"The impact is phenomenal. When I started, around 30 or 40 veterans came through the centre each month. Now we see around 240 people, either visiting in person or through home support."

"It offers vital support to combat social isolation and addresses a wide range of needs, from debt management and mental health support to navigating the justice system."

Despite the many demands on her time, she is also Chair of Governors at a local school, and Samantha insists she wouldn't have it any other way.

"Life is busy, but when you love what you do, it's so rewarding to help people achieve their goals and become the best version of themselves, whether that's at NMITE, the Veteran Support Centre, at home, or at Holmer CofE School."

HOW SMALL BUSINESSES CAN AVOID BEING DEVASTATED BY CYBERCRIME

Expert's guide to protecting your business from an attack

Two-thirds of small businesses close within a year of a cyberattack – and with criminals increasingly using AI to exploit weaknesses, the risks are rising fast. Detective Inspector Michelle Ohren, head of the Cyber Resilience Centre, explains why local firms must act now to strengthen their defences...

Cybercrime has a devastating effect on companies, with two-thirds of small businesses closing within 12 months of an attack. And as criminals turn to AI for new ways to steal data, the risks for businesses in Herefordshire and Worcestershire are growing.

Detective Inspector Michelle Ohren, head of the Cyber Resilience Centre (CRC), says firms of all sizes need to act now to protect themselves – and the CRC exists to help them do exactly that.

"People don't realise how valuable data is and how important it is that you protect it," DI Ohren said. "Data is what cyber criminals are looking for and they will try anything to get it. The best way to keep data safe is to have strong security and policies embedded from the start and make sure it is regularly updated. It is also important that all new staff joining know exactly what is expected of them and that there are policies in place telling them what to do in a particular scenario."

The Cyber Resilience Centre for the West Midlands brings together expertise from law enforcement, academia and private sector specialists, offering government-backed, police-delivered support to businesses and organisations across the region – including Herefordshire and Worcestershire, as well as Shropshire, Staffordshire, Telford & Wrekin, West Mercia and Warwickshire. Part of its mission is to help smaller businesses, SMEs and supply chains access affordable security services and guidance.

And thinking you are too small to be noticed is the first mistake.

"As well as the traditional phishing scams and malware, criminals are using AI to trick businesses into thinking they are dealing with someone genuine and even



create clone profiles. This is more of a risk with companies that rely heavily on or even operate solely using social media. We have seen a 60% increase in synthetic ID fraud from 2023–24," DI Ohren said.

"We have also seen an increase in deepfake videos and news in which fake celebrity profiles such as Elon Musk and Steven Bartlett have been used to endorse a particular product or investment and encourage others to do the same – and people have lost hundreds of thousands of pounds.

"Criminals are also using deep voice, or voice cloning, to convince staff that they are speaking to one of the bosses, or the head of another company, and businesses have been conned out of millions of pounds.

"Chat bots are also being used to create fake online profiles to develop

relationships with businesses and staff – which is what businesses are trying to do with customers. We have seen a lot of this with romance fraud, but now it is being used to target businesses, especially those that rely on Facebook Marketplace and online sites for sales or supplies."

Even the most careful firms can still be caught out.

"Even with tight cyber security, people can still make a mistake and click on the wrong link or download a malicious file and let in a cyberattack. They might be in a hurry, or not feeling well, or fall victim to a very good scam that catches them off guard," DI Ohren said.

"We're all used to the HMRC and DWP scams, but if you're under pressure and see an email that says your business owes X amount in unpaid tax, you might just fall for it. The important thing is to have the steps in place to know what to do to contain it and keep the business operating and safe moving forward."

For small businesses in Herefordshire and Worcestershire, the risks are even sharper because fewer people are often carrying out multiple functions.

"Unfortunately, the differences in cyber security between businesses can be worlds apart," she said. "A small business might be run from a laptop which one of the owner's children uses for homework and the other plays games on. It will also have access to personal data and business bank accounts which makes it a huge risk.

"At the very least, they need to have separate log-in profiles, with the adult or business log-in having admin privileges.

"And the risks increase with each device – you might have the laptop secure but give the kids your phone to play a game on or

Continued on page 24...

the iPad to watch a video and they have access to everything to do with the business. It gives cyber criminals other ways in.

"Businesses can have the latest tech, but the human element is still the main risk. It's an old saying, but if something seems too good to be true, it probably is."

The CRC recommends that companies consider using network service providers and multi-factor authentication to keep systems secure.

"Network service providers already have policies and procedures in place and they concentrate on keeping data secure while the client carries on with their business," DI Ohren said.

"And it is just as important for one-man bands and smaller businesses to be secure because you are only as strong as your weakest link and a compromised business will have suppliers and customers who are also being put at risk.

"We want businesses to think about their vulnerabilities and what procedures they need to introduce to keep their data, their networks, and their business safe.

"Criminals don't care how much you have or how big or small a firm is. Once they have got the data, they don't care about you or your business that has taken years to build up, they don't care that it stops the only income keeping a roof over your head and food on the table.

"Unfortunately, two-thirds of small businesses close within 12 months of a cyber attack and 99.5% of companies in the UK are SMBs. You see these figures and it's easy to forget the personal element – someone has worked hard to set up this business and provide for their staff and families and this has suddenly gone.

"If it is someone who has spent years building up a business and is suddenly left with nothing, they could lose their house, their car – and have to start looking for a job that pays similar wages when they are in their 50s or 60s."

As well as having updated cyber security protocols in place, DI Ohren says people must be careful with what they share on social media, which could also compromise themselves and their business.

"It is incredible how much data you can find without really trying. You can get someone's name, age, address, the company they work for and job title just from a social media profile," she said.

"With social media posts and check-ins, they give away even more sensitive data, such as their location, the car they drive, pictures of their house, their children's names, where they go to school and where they play football or go swimming. It's chilling to think that in a matter of minutes, someone can have that level of detail about your family's movement from what you are making publicly available.

"We want people to know what they can do to reduce cyber threats as well as what to do if there is a problem – what's our plan to keep the business running and everything else secure while we deal with this threat?

"It's about planning, procedures and contingency – if you aren't prepared, you could lose everything.

"Criminals have done their homework and know that while a corporate business will have heavy cyber security, 80% of cyberattacks start with the supply chain – which means that national and international brands are only as strong as the weakest link."

DI MICHELLE OHREN'S TOP TIPS TO STAY SAFE FROM CYBERCRIME



MICHELLE OHREN

Cybercrime is one of the biggest risks facing small and medium-sized businesses in Herefordshire and Worcestershire. But according to Detective Inspector Michelle Ohren, head of the Cyber Resilience Centre for the West Midlands, there are clear, practical steps companies can take to protect themselves.

CHECK AND VERIFY

Always make sure you know who you are dealing with. Don't be rushed into decisions and take time to confirm the identity of anyone asking for sensitive information or changes to payment details.

REMAIN CAUTIOUS

Think carefully about what you are being asked to do. Is it unusual or out of step with company policy? Does it seem unreasonable? If something feels wrong, stop and question it before acting.

BECOME A CRC MEMBER

The Cyber Resilience Centre offers free membership to small and medium-sized

businesses. This provides access to trusted guidance, regular updates on emerging threats, and support designed specifically for organisations across the region.

SET CLEAR POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Every business should have documented cyber security policies. More importantly, employees must understand them and be able to apply them in their daily work. Procedures should be reviewed regularly and updated as threats evolve.

KEEP UP TO DATE

Criminals are constantly finding new ways to exploit businesses. The CRC helps companies stay ahead by sharing intelligence on the latest scams and by offering AI-focused training and support.

CONTROL ACCESS TO SYSTEMS AND DEVICES

Only authorised staff should have access to company data, equipment and networks. Businesses should have a clear device policy and ensure personal and business use are kept separate.

INVEST IN TRAINING

DI Ohren highlights that 75 per cent of people in the UK have had no training on the use of AI. Providing regular staff training on cyber security and AI risks is vital to build resilience and ensure everyone knows how to spot and respond to threats.

OUTGROWING THE HEADWINDS: THE IMPORTANCE OF GROWTH FOR LONG-TERM SUCCESS

Why disciplined expansion is the strongest defence in a tougher market

Growth is the engine of relevance. Here we look at how your business can unlock genuine growth in a tough market and speak to the experts to get real world insights on what it really takes to grow in today's fast changing business world...

Whether you run a start-up, a family-owned SME, or a multinational corporation, the importance of growth for business is inescapable.

Growth is not merely a sign of success – it is a vital ingredient for survival, adaptation, and ongoing relevance in an ever-evolving marketplace. Here we look at the benefits it brings, the challenges associated with pursuing expansion, as well as the support available to help achieve it.

MORE THAN A NUMBER

The first thing that comes to mind is often financial growth, which brings higher revenues, increased profits, and a bigger market share. While these indicators are crucial, business growth encompasses much more.

It includes expanding product lines, entering new geographical markets, increasing the workforce, investing in innovation, and building stronger relationships with customers and

partners. It is a concept that impacts every aspect of an organisation.

Growth is also essential for maintaining competitiveness. Companies that become complacent risk being overtaken by more innovative rivals. Regularly pursuing growth initiatives encourages firms to stay alert, adapt to market changes, and explore new opportunities. Entering new markets can help a business diversify its revenue streams, cushioning it against downturns in its primary market.

It also allows companies to benefit from economies of scale – as a business expands, its cost per unit often decreases due to increased efficiency in production, procurement, and distribution.

It is not simply a case of bringing in more revenue. Growth must be managed strategically and responsibly, balancing ambition with sustainability. In doing so, businesses can not only achieve their potential, but also contribute positively to their employees, customers, and wider communities.

SUPPORT

To support businesses along their growth journey, Herefordshire & Worcestershire Chamber of Commerce holds regular Growth Forums, sponsored by EBC group,

which has helped numerous businesses and organisations across the region with IT solutions that have helped them achieve their growth ambitions.

EBC Group chief operating officer Mike Cook said: "As a longstanding Patron of the Herefordshire and Worcestershire Chamber of Commerce, EBC Group is proud to be a champion for growth and innovation across the region.

"As Patrons of the Chamber, we're not just talking about growth — we're helping facilitate it. EBC Group proudly sponsors the Chamber's Growth Forums, a dynamic series of events that bring together ambitious businesses from across Herefordshire and Worcestershire to share ideas, challenges and strategies for scaling.

"These forums are an invaluable platform for local business leaders to learn from one another and hear from experts on key topics such as talent acquisition, market expansion, operational efficiency and digital transformation. They reflect the Chamber's ongoing commitment to fostering a resilient, thriving business ecosystem."

August's Growth Forum at the Worcester University Arena was attended by

Continued on page 27...

39 members who heard about the importance of growth in different industries.

HEARING FROM THE EXPERTS

Business and marketing expert Peter Baylis, founder of PEB Marketing Academy, explained how businesses can shape a profitable future by enhancing how they present their value.

Peter's mission is to assist small and medium-sized business owners in increasing profitability, enhancing business value, achieving a better work/life balance, and creating a lasting legacy.

Peter works with companies that are looking to grow their business and harness

the power of marketing to help them to achieve personal and business goals, with a particular focus on strategic marketing and the challenges of small business marketing in the digital age.

Kristo Shivachev, founder of Simple Design Works Product Development, explained the power of innovation in business growth.

Innovation and growth go hand in hand and Kristo explained how a growing business must continually adapt, either by introducing new products, improving existing services, or adopting more efficient processes.

This ongoing improvement ensures

businesses do not fall behind technologically or operationally. A growing business is also typically better positioned to fund research and development, creating a cycle where growth sparks innovation and vice versa.

Cas Amato, of the Department for Business and Trade, explained how it can support digital marketing plans and boost export sales and members also heard from Wendy Garrad, of Worcestershire County Council, who talked about the authority's role in facilitating growth for the region.

For booking details and other forum events, visit <https://hwchamber.co.uk/events/forums/growth-forum/>

LOCAL FIRMS ARE BULLISH ON 2025 GROWTH, KPMG FINDS

Despite the challenges facing businesses, there are some positive signs.

Confidence is running high across boardrooms across the Midlands - and that includes the firms powering Herefordshire and Worcestershire's economy.

According to KPMG's mid-year Private Enterprise Barometer check-in, more than nine in ten private businesses across both the East and West Midlands expect to grow in 2025. The barometer, launched earlier this year, surveyed 1,500 privately owned businesses - including 122 in the East Midlands and 133 in the West - then revisited them to see how the first half of 2025 has shaped sentiment.

Back in the spring, 89% of East Midlands businesses and 95% in the West were upbeat about the year ahead. By mid-year, confidence in the East had climbed to 93%, while the West eased only slightly to 94%—still an exceptionally strong reading.

Behind the optimism sits a clear investment thesis. Technology remains the standout priority, with 62% (East Midlands) and 66% (West Midlands) focusing spend on artificial intelligence, cyber security and broader digital transformation.

The Midlands may trail London and the North East's overall commitment to tech (74%), but the direction of travel is going in the right direction with firms betting big on digital to lift productivity and competitiveness. That push is matched by an appetite to diversify and expand. In the East, 66% of companies plan to introduce

new service lines this year (down modestly from 72% at the start of 2025), while in the West the figure has grown to 80%. Market entry ambitions are also strengthening, with 59% (East) and 64% (West) targeting new markets—up from 52% and 61% respectively.

The backdrop isn't without headwinds. Inflation remains the top external concern - flagged by 43% of East Midlands respondents and 41% in the West. In the East, rising employment costs are next on the risk list (33%), while in the West, more than a third (37%) point to interest rates. Even so, the mood music from KPMG's regional leaders suggests resilience and intent.

Marc Abrams, regional senior partner at KPMG UK, said: "It's encouraging to see such confidence from privately-owned Midlands businesses at the half-year stage.

"Firms are channelling investment into technology, particularly AI, cyber security and digital transformation, to boost productivity and sharpen their competitive edge.

"Alongside this, there's a clear push into new markets and service lines, backed by growing interest in private equity as a route to scale. While inflation and rising employment costs remain challenges, the ambition, adaptability and innovative spirit shown by private enterprises will be key in driving the region's role as a driver of future UK growth."



Andy Bostock, Birmingham office senior partner, added: "Confidence among the West Midlands' private businesses remains exceptionally strong at the mid-year point, with 94 per cent of leaders optimistic about growth prospects for the year ahead.

"From Birmingham's thriving professional services sector to the wider region's world-class manufacturing and automotive industries, firms are investing heavily in technology, including AI, cyber security and digital transformation, to diversify their products and services and enhance competitiveness."

Regional sentiment is robust, tech investment is accelerating, and diversification is firmly on the agenda. For companies across Herefordshire and Worcestershire, that sets an encouraging tone for the second half of the year - and a challenge to keep pushing on productivity, skills and smart capital investment to convert confidence into tangible growth.

Over the next pages in Business Direction, we'll bring you exclusive interviews with a series of sector experts with unique perspectives on what it really takes to achieve growth in today's fast changing business world.

HOW INNOVATION CAN TURN UNCERTAINTY INTO PROFITABLE GROWTH

Growth is the boardroom's north star. Treated casually, "innovation" wastes cash but treated deliberately, it compounds value. Kristo Shivachev, founder of Worcester-based Simple Design Works, explains how to make it a system that pays...



KRISTO SHIVACHEV

Some businesses may choose a market-penetration growth strategy and focus on selling more of their current products and services to existing customers or markets. Others may adopt a market-development strategy in which they take existing products and services to new customer markets. Product development introduces a different approach in which new products or services are offered to the existing market, while diversification sees new products or services launched into entirely new markets.

Other methods include strategic partnerships, mergers and acquisitions and even franchising and licensing.

When used correctly, innovation can be the key to turning uncertainty into profitable growth. And it isn't always about developing a new product to take a market by storm. For Kristo and his team, innovation can be delivered in a number of ways, from new products and services, to equipment and processes along the way.

Kristo said: "The word 'innovation' is used so often in business. It is not a slogan, it's an operating choice. Treated deliberately, it compounds value. Treated casually, it burns time and cash. The aim is to show leaders how they can harness innovation as a dependable engine of commercial growth without gambling.

"Innovation is often portrayed as a lightning bolt. In my experience, it's closer to good engineering - define the problem precisely, respect constraints, test before you scale, and keep the user in the loop. Do that with commercial

discipline and a little courage, and you turn uncertainty from a threat into an asset. That is how organisations move beyond incrementalism and build growth that lasts.

OUTCOMES MATTER

"In commercial terms, innovation should be understood as the implementation of new or significantly improved products, services, processes or business models that people actually adopt, and that adoption creates measurable value. The emphasis on implementation and adoption is important. Ideas don't pay salaries — outcomes do. When leadership teams share this definition, innovation shifts from a brainstorming activity to a system that can be resourced, governed and measured.

"Innovation should be treated as a system, not a side project, because the most powerful sources of growth often sit beyond features. New service models, smarter operations, redesigned customer journeys, more resilient supply chains. All

Continued on page 28...

of these are fertile ground for innovation when they create value customers are willing to pay for or when they meaningfully reduce risk and cost.”

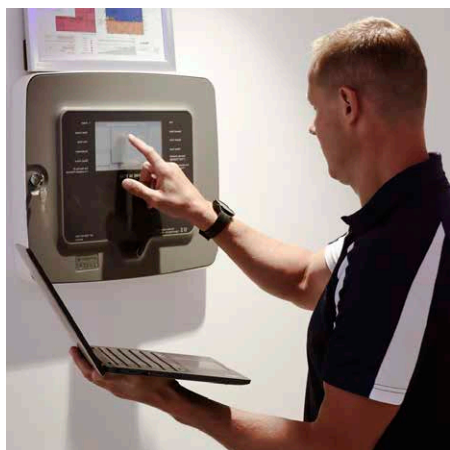
A LOT TO PROCESS

When companies set their growth agenda, Kristo believes changes in technology as well as demand mean innovation should be included in that strategy.

He said: “Growth rarely comes from squeezing last year’s model. Customer expectations move quickly, categories mature, competitors copy. Firms that consistently outperform are those that convert insight into new value faster, and that do so with a governance model that keeps risk proportionate.

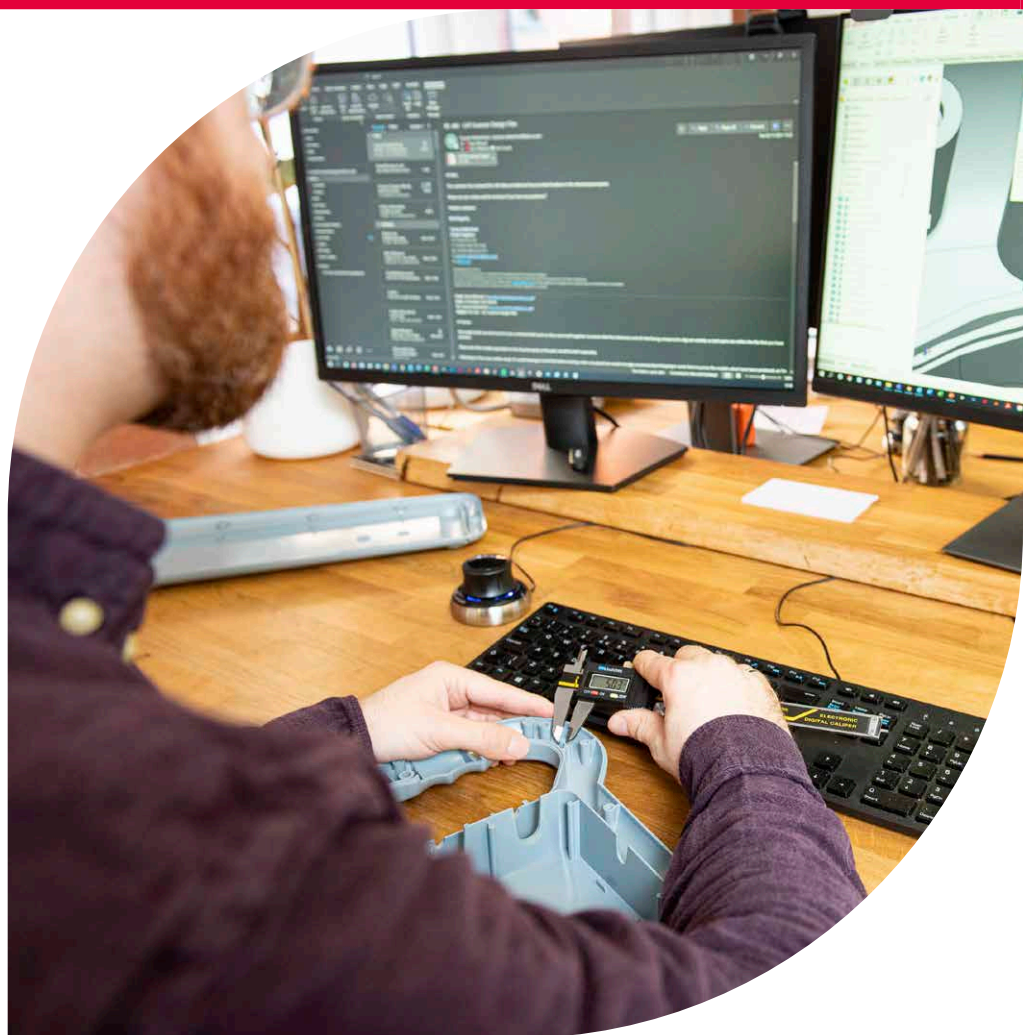
“This is because design is a business discipline, not a veneer. When engineers, product specialists, marketers and operations people work together with users in the loop, reality arrives early and becomes the raw material for differentiation.

“Innovation also works best when it is portfolio-led. No leadership team can predict which bet will win, but every leadership team can decide the balance between nearer-term improvements, adjacent growth, and longer-horizon options. That balance stabilises performance and prevents one pet idea from consuming disproportionate level of resource.”



SUPPORT

For those looking to innovation to achieve growth, Kristo believes the UK can offer an advantage. He said: “The UK environment is well set up to de-risk ambitious work. Collaborative R&D centres, grant competitions, testbeds and tax reliefs exist to lower the cost of early learning. Used wisely, they help you generate credible evidence before



you commit hard capital expenditure or large market roll-outs. The key is to view this landscape as co-funded learning and not a subsidy — external support buys down uncertainty, so your own capital is reserved for scaling what the evidence supports.”

While businesses need to be reasonable with their approach to risk and innovation, Kristo doesn’t believe it should dull their ambition.

He said: “Innovation is uncertain by nature, but uncertainty can be managed. The most reliable growth programmes I’ve seen share a handful of habits.

“Leaders who are clear about where growth should come from — whether that is defending core profit pools, serving adjacent segments, or altering the business model — make better innovation decisions. This clarity informs where you place your bets, how much risk you tolerate, and when you expect payback. It also sets expectations — teams know what ‘good’ looks like and what evidence earns the next tranche of commitment.”

Leaders who are clear about where growth should come from — whether that is defending core profit pools, serving adjacent segments, or altering the business model — make better innovation decisions.

PROBLEM SOLVING

And before firms spend huge sums developing a product or service, it is vital they fully understand the demand or problem they are trying to address.

Kristo said: “Spending time with users, customers and operators to understand the job they’re trying to do, the workarounds they rely on, and what would make them switch is not an indulgence. It is the cheapest way to avoid building the wrong thing. The

outcome of good framing is a sharp problem statement and a handful of value hypotheses expressed in plain language. That precision saves months.

“Businesses also need to understand that when they start to build something, prototypes are there to learn from, not to impress. Early models should be good enough to provoke honest reactions, expose engineering risks, and pressure-test manufacturing and service assumptions. Involving suppliers at this stage pays dividends — they will yield risks and process constraints that spreadsheets miss.

“It is important at this stage that they think like an investor. The most sensible way to fund innovation is to stage it, releasing money in tranches tied to learning, not to calendar milestones.

“Traditional KPIs arrive too late. Blend leading indicators — how many critical assumptions have been converted to evidence, the time it takes to get from prototype to learning, traction signals from pilots — with lagging indicators such as revenue and margin from recent launches, payback and cost-to-serve. The point isn’t to drown teams in dashboards. It’s to create a line of sight between learning and value.”



CLEAR VISION

One of the most important features about innovation is having leaders who are focused on getting it right.

Kristo said: “A healthy innovation culture makes a few things normal — surfacing uncertainty early, changing course without stigma, and inviting customers into the process before it’s comfortable. Effective governance is light on theatre and heavy on decision clarity. Who has the authority to approve spend at each stage? What evidence is required?

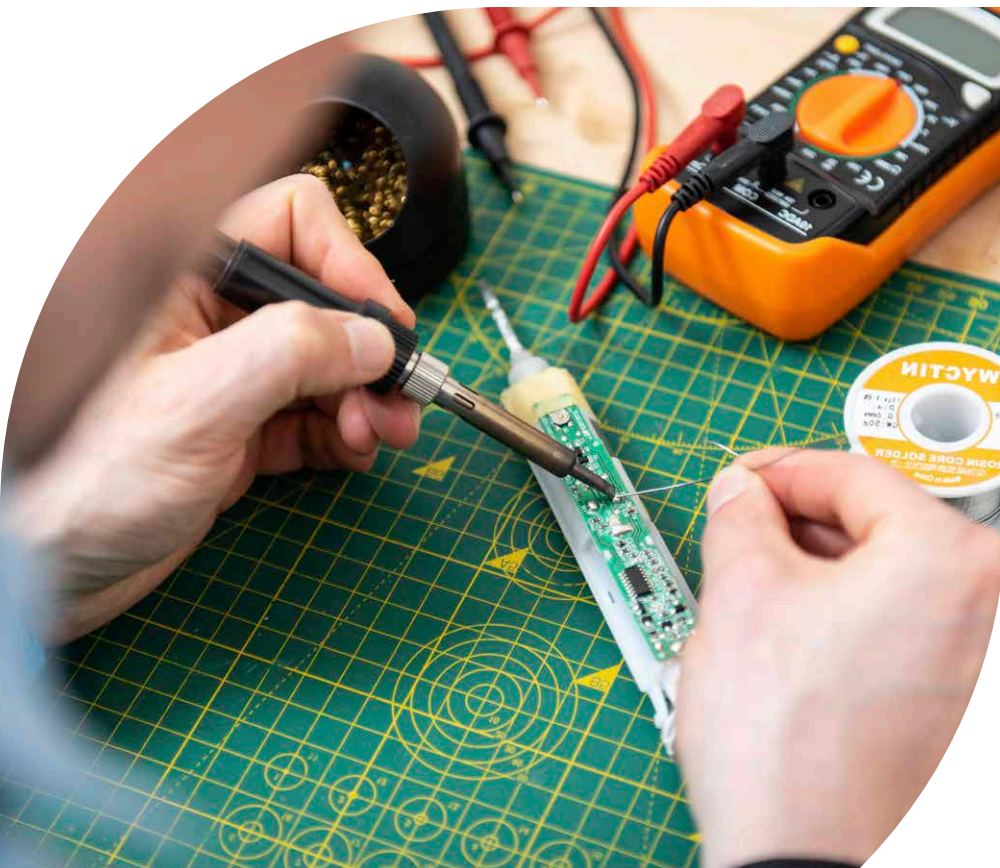
What risks are currently accepted, and by whom? Which suppliers or partners must be involved for the next gate to be meaningful? Write it down. Ambiguity burns cash.”

For Kristo and his team, design sits at the heart of the process, with questions about desirability, feasibility and viability being asked from the start of the process.

He said: “For physical products, the gap between a prototype and a profitable line is where ambitions fail. Tolerances, yields, supplier readiness and test methods decide launch dates and margins. Bringing manufacturing partners into the conversation early, and agreeing how you will qualify parts, measure performance and handle ramp-up, prevents nasty surprises. Small design concessions made with a toolmaker today often avoid months of delay and large bills tomorrow.

“Most failed projects share familiar patterns. They solved a nice problem rather than the right one. Technical risks were discovered too late. The economics never truly worked at the price customers were willing to pay. The scale decision was made on enthusiasm, not evidence. None of this is inevitable. When you make problem framing explicit, test assumptions cheaply, and treat scale as a choice you earn, you replace hope with discipline.

“Govern with evidence, not optimism. Curiosity should be encouraged, commitment should be earned.”



DRIVING REGIONAL GROWTH THROUGH TECHNOLOGY, SECURITY AND STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

How EBC Group is supporting businesses and organisations across the region

Growth goes far beyond a company earning more money. While increasing revenue is vital, there are other aspects that are essential to ensuring businesses can continue to deliver.

IT solutions company the EBC Group has helped a variety of businesses and organisations across Herefordshire and Worcestershire do just that.

As well as sponsoring the Chamber's regular Growth Forums, for 35 years it has also enabled a range of organisations to grow through improved technology, from the life-saving air ambulance to the county cricket club, as well as the Chamber of Commerce itself.

PARTNERSHIPS

The EBC Group focuses on creating partnerships that create more value than a traditional business-to-customer transaction.

For chief operating officer Mike Cook, ensuring the success and growth of customers goes hand in hand with the success of the EBC Group.

Mike said: "Our continued success has been shaped by a commitment to evolving technologies, robust infrastructure, and a deep connection with the local business community.

"EBC Group's growth story has always been built around forward-thinking investments and anticipating the needs of modern businesses."



MIKE COOK

By investing in its cloud platform, EBC's flagship data centre is located in the iconic BT Tower in Birmingham, on the BT core network node, offering a level of performance, scalability and security that



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With Us It's Personal

BIG FIRM CAPABILITY FAMILY FIRM PERSONALITY

- Chartered Accountants
- Tax Specialists
- Business Advisors
- Audit & Assurance



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few others can match.

Mike said: "It means that our clients — many of whom operate in highly regulated industries like legal, finance and public sector — can benefit from high-speed, resilient and fully compliant hosting without having to rely on overseas infrastructure."

CYBER SECURITY: SUPPORTING GROWTH BY REDUCING RISK

One of the biggest barriers to sustainable business growth today is the risk posed by cyber threats. Those threats are becoming more sophisticated by the day, especially with the emergence of AI-enabled attacks.

Mike said: "We've made significant investments in our cyber security services to help protect businesses against these rising threats. From endpoint protection and threat detection to incident response and compliance monitoring, our approach is comprehensive and proactive. We also work closely with police forces, holding and securing some of the most-sensitive public sector data in the UK — a testament to the level of trust and assurance we bring to our clients."

Mike said it is important for businesses to understand that growth and cyber resilience go hand in hand.

He warned: "A single data breach can undo years of hard work, damage reputations and leading to significant regulatory fines. By helping businesses build strong, secure digital foundations, we ensure they can grow with confidence."

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Among the partnerships it has forged, EBC Group helped Worcestershire County Cricket Club modernise its IT infrastructure.

With a strong heritage and deep community ties, the club continues to grow — both on and off the field. But, like many organisations, it faced increasing pressure to meet the demands of a digital-first world which impacted both day-to-day operations and strategic development, including outdated systems, limited remote access, unreliable connectivity, and data management and security concerns.

Mike said: "We built a bespoke IT solution that addressed immediate concerns while preparing the club for long-term success, reducing risk, simplifying IT management, and improving user experience."

EBC Group also stepped in to ensure Midlands Air Ambulance Charity's headquarters relocation went seamlessly. The air ambulance has carried out more than 78,000 lifesaving missions since 1991. Operating across six counties, its team relies on rapid deployment of air ambulances and critical care cars to respond to everything from road traffic collisions to cardiac emergencies.

When the organisation moved to a purpose-built new building, it was vital that the life-saving service it provides was not disrupted.

Mike said: "They needed technology that would allow them to operate without disruption, support their fast-paced, high-stakes mission, and grow with their organisation."

"By designing and implementing a robust, secure IT infrastructure, EBC Group ensured a seamless transition to MAAC's new HQ, allowing their team to continue their lifesaving work without missing a beat."

As well as supporting the Growth Forums, the Chamber knew where to turn when it came to upgrade its outdated IT systems. Among the issues were unreliable service, problems with remote working and the

“ Their hard work each and every day is now more effective, secure, and adaptable. As a result, they can continue to support local businesses and drive growth across the region with confidence. ”

inability to adapt to growing business demands.

Mike said: "By leveraging advanced tools, scalable solutions, and enhanced security measures, they achieved a streamlined, efficient, and resilient system, allowing the Chamber to adapt without significant reinvestment."

"The benefits of the transformation were immediate and far-reaching. With a modern, cloud-based IT environment, the Chamber is well-positioned for the future. Their hard work each and every day is now more effective, secure, and adaptable. As a result, they can continue to support local businesses and drive growth across the region with confidence."

LOOKING AHEAD

With technology evolving at pace, EBC Group remains committed to helping clients stay ahead. Future plans include continued investment in UK-based infrastructure, deeper integration of AI and automation within its service offering, and expanded support for cyber resilience in regulated sectors.

Mike said: "Above all, our priority is to remain a trusted partner for businesses throughout Herefordshire and Worcestershire, combining cutting-edge solutions with local accountability and a shared ambition for growth."

"As a longstanding Patron of the Herefordshire and Worcestershire Chamber of Commerce, EBC Group is proud to be a champion for growth and innovation across the region."

"We see our involvement in the Growth Forums as an extension of our mission: to empower businesses through technology, collaboration and knowledge-sharing. By supporting these events, we help cultivate the conditions that enable long-term growth not only for individual companies, but for the region as a whole."



Workwell Insights: Harnessing and Retaining Neurodiverse Talent

Employers across Herefordshire and Worcestershire are navigating a complex and challenging economic landscape. Rising operational costs, high staff turnover, and limited recruitment options are placing significant pressure on businesses of all sizes. According to the latest Quarterly Economic Survey (Q2 2025) conducted by Herefordshire and Worcestershire Chamber of Commerce, 48% of businesses that attempted to recruit reported difficulties in finding candidates who were both qualified and a good cultural fit. This highlights a growing need for innovative approaches to workforce development and talent retention.

In this climate, the importance of cultivating a happy, healthy, and productive workforce has never been greater. Creating inclusive environments where all employees can thrive is not only a moral imperative but also a strategic one. One area gaining increasing attention is the support and inclusion of neurodiverse individuals in the workplace. This conversation has been further amplified by the recent launch of the NHS Herefordshire and Worcestershire's new Health and Work Strategy, which places a strong emphasis on employee retention, including supporting neurodiversity and mental wellbeing.

Research from the Chartered Institute for Personnel Development (CIPD) into neuroinclusion reveals that up to 20% of employees identify as neurodivergent. These individuals often face barriers within organisational cultures, processes, and technologies that fail to accommodate diverse cognitive styles. While many small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are making strides in employee wellbeing, neuroinclusion remains an area that is frequently overlooked.

Herefordshire and Worcestershire are committed to changing this narrative. By equipping businesses with the tools and knowledge to recruit and support neurodiverse talent, we can unlock a wealth of potential that drives innovation and productivity. Neurodivergent individuals bring unique strengths to the workplace. For example, those on the autistic spectrum may excel in analytical thinking and attention to detail. Individuals with ADHD often



thrive in fast-paced environments and demonstrate exceptional creativity. People with Tourette's Syndrome often exhibit a remarkable ability to learn new skills quickly and adapt to changing circumstances.

These attributes represent a significant opportunity for businesses in the region to embrace neurodiversity as a competitive advantage. By fostering inclusive practices, employers can not only support their existing staff more effectively but also attract new talent that brings fresh perspectives and capabilities to their organisations.

Worcestershire has already taken proactive steps in this direction. The launch of the Inclusive Worcestershire Leaders (IWL) programme in 2024 marked a pivotal moment in promoting inclusive leadership and workplace practices. Meanwhile, Herefordshire is working to expand the number of Disability Confident employers, encouraging businesses to commit to inclusive recruitment and retention strategies.

To further support this journey, a collaborative event is being organised by the Worcestershire Growth Hub, Herefordshire Growth Hub, WorkWell, Worcestershire County Council, and Herefordshire Council. This free event, focused on neurodiversity in the workplace and harnessing the talents of your workforce, will offer practical take aways to managers in business to

work more successfully together with neurodiverse talent .

This FREE event will take place at The Abbey Hotel in Great Malvern on Thursday, 6th November. Attendees will have the opportunity to hear from expert speakers, gain those practical insights, and connect with other local businesses committed to fostering inclusive work environments.

This event is a valuable opportunity for employers across Herefordshire and Worcestershire to deepen their understanding of neurodiversity, explore actionable strategies, and contribute to building a workforce that is not only diverse but also empowered to succeed.

Inclusion is not just the right thing to do; it makes sound business sense. By investing in neuroinclusive practices, businesses can enhance employee well-being, reduce turnover, and unlock new avenues for growth and innovation.

To find out more and book your place at the event, scan the QR code below:



HOW TO SET YOUR BUSINESS UP FOR GROWTH - MARKETING EXPERT'S TOP TIPS FOR SUCCESS

From defining your ideal client to measuring what matters, You Do Better's Ruby Edwards outlines the simple shifts that help local businesses cut waste, stay agile and turn momentum into long-term success.



RUBY EDWARDS

Hereford and Worcestershire's business community thrives on ambition and adaptability. As part of Business Direction's series on achieving sustainable growth, we're sharing practical guidance that owners and leaders can put to work right away. Here marketing expert Ruby Edwards of You Do Better Ltd offers clear, no-nonsense advice for setting your business up for success.

"Often the best business growth comes when you identify and then focus on what you do best and who your ideal clients are," Ruby explains. "Then ask for help with the things you don't have strength in."

Sustainable business growth doesn't happen overnight. It's the result of smart decisions, strategy and hard work. Having supported organisations from start-ups to established brands, we asked marketing expert Ruby Edwards to share her advice on how companies can set themselves up for success.

Here are Ruby's top tips for setting your business up for success:

1. Play to your strengths

You don't need to do everything yourself. Concentrate on the areas where you excel and find trusted partners or experts to handle the rest. This frees up your time and helps ensure every part of the business is handled effectively.

2. Define your ideal client

Trying to appeal to everyone often dilutes your message. Instead, it's worth being clear on who your best customers are and focus your marketing and service delivery around them. This not only drives growth but is also great for PR, as it builds loyalty and reputation.

3. Prioritise relationships over quick wins

Sustainable success comes from long-term clients who come back again and again. Delivering consistent service, staying connected and adding value at every stage is far more powerful than chasing one-off sales; plus it's an opportunity to upsell and share your news and experience – win-win.

4. Stay agile

Business changes – and so should you. Using the upcoming changes to the Employment Rights Bill as an example, it's wise to build flexibility into your model, whether that's through agile outsourcing, hourly or project-based support or scalable services. This helps you adapt without being weighed down by overheads.

5. Measure what matters

Growth isn't just about more turnover – it's about sustainable profitability. Measure what matters: profit margins, customer retention, conversion rates and ROI on your marketing. Having visibility on these numbers allows you to make smarter decisions.

6. Make marketing a priority

Marketing isn't optional – it's central to growth. Consistent, clear communication with your target audience builds credibility and trust. Whether through PR, social media or digital campaigns, the key is to show up regularly in the right places. You don't need a huge budget.

7. Build the right network

Collaboration is often overlooked. Surrounding yourself with the right

associates, suppliers and peers will open doors. Whether it's through local events, industry networks or partnerships, growth is best shared with others.

8. Turn your quirks into strengths

Your idiosyncrasies are often your greatest assets. Don't try to smooth them out – lean into them. Ruby says: "For me, being straight-talking has become a strength: clients usually value honesty, clarity and practical advice. Whatever makes you stand out, embrace it."

If you want to explore flexible, outsourced marketing support – whether hourly, daily or project-based – You Do Better Ltd can help you put these principles into action. Go to:

www.youdobetter.co.uk



HELPING LOCAL BUSINESSES THRIVE IN UNCERTAIN TIMES



University of Worcester extends Help to Grow Management course for another three years

In today's unpredictable economy, small and medium-sized businesses need more than resilience — they need the skills and confidence to adapt and grow. The University of Worcester's Help to Grow Management programme, 90% government funded, is giving local leaders the tools, strategies and networks to do just that...

In the modern economic landscape, SMEs face a constant challenge. How can you grow while adapting to change; and make sure it's sustainable?

Market volatility, regulatory and policy changes, talent retention and more, contending with uncertainty has become a big part of modern business.

For leaders trying to navigate this terrain, the University of Worcester's Help to Grow Management course offers a lifeline. It provides senior leaders with the skills they need to boost business performance and leadership skills so they're not just surviving the tough times; they're thriving in them.

The course is part-government funded and delivered by the University of

Worcester's Business School for senior leaders. Across 12 weeks, participants are given the tools they need to strengthen their businesses in areas such as brand development, building a high-performance workplace culture, strategic growth and much more.

It also covers approaches to digital adoption, financial management and responsible business practices, and is designed to be studied around the work commitments of the busy leaders who enrol.

Through Help to Grow, participants are encouraged to look at their practices and ask, 'what could we do better?'

Sometimes this is about addressing a weakness, other times it's about ensuring

that strengths are taken full advantage of; course members are guided through processes which help them assess what they're doing, identify vulnerabilities and plan for long-term growth.

It's 90% funded by the government, and businesses only contribute the remaining 10% of the total cost.

Now that the University has announced that the course will be delivered for a further 3 years, it's the perfect time to find out more about how Help to Grow can help you develop yourself, your business, and your networks.

The next cohort of students will begin learning on October 2. For more details on how to join please contact Laura Swain at L.swain@worc.ac.uk

CASE STUDY

The strength of the Help to Grow Management course is that it helps participants apply their learning directly to their businesses.

Leaders are encouraged to bring their real-life challenges and their university learning together to come up with genuine solutions to problems and promote real growth.

One standout success story is Richard Sadler, Managing Director of CJC Aggregates & Landscaping Supplies in Upton Snodsbury. The firm started during one of the most challenging times in recent memory.



RICHARD SADLER

"We started our business during Covid, and it grew very quickly," said Richard. "I'd spent my life selling to big businesses but never run my own business and that's why Help to Grow appealed to me."

Richard said: "The course enabled me to identify a weakness in the business, which was that we've got great data on our customers, but we had no customer relationship management systems in place."

He continued: "We've now addressed that, and coupled with other changes we've made, our retail business is up 50% in the last quarter on the same time last year, and our B2B (Business to Business) is up 20%, which is brilliant. I'm really pleased at how we continue to grow."

Based on the outskirts of Worcester, CJC is fast becoming a big name in selling hard landscaping products to trade and non-trade customers.

In uncertain times, connections become more and more important. The course helps foster a community of business leaders who support and learn from one another.

Peer discussions, mentoring and networking create opportunities for collaboration which extends far beyond the classroom.

Richard said: "Someone who was on the course at the same time as me has now actually become a really great customer, we've been able to put a load of work each other's way and we've got a great trading relationship."

SCOTT ANDREWS, HEAD OF WORCESTER BUSINESS SCHOOL

I think one of the greatest opportunities that Help to Grow brings local leaders and managers is that they're surprised by the extent to which they're facing very similar challenges.

They not only receive inputs from the front of the classroom, and we have some incredibly knowledgeable individuals who present to them on a weekly basis, but they're able to learn from one another as well.

Looking at the strengths and weaknesses of your business through different lenses and seeing other people's perspective is genuinely helpful for people, and they've also got that coaching and support from the University to encourage them too.

They're able to take that learning straight back into their workplace and see what sticks, and what they need to do differently; sometimes it's just about asking how we can rethink things, big and small.

We had one person who ran a hands-on business, and I met up with him shortly after he finished the course and I asked him what it did for him. He said it helped him learn how to put down his tools and pick up the computer. He told me he now



SCOTT ANDREWS

employs 9 people and business is booming.

This is the only Help to Grow Management programme in the Herefordshire and Worcestershire area, and it's already making such a difference to businesspeople across the region.

By now, we've had 50 people come through the Help to Grow Management Programme, and we're now seeing a strong alumni network building. They meet up and network, and we have had several of them progress onto our Executive MBA programmes, so you can see it's invigorating that learning process for a lot of people.

I've been delighted to hear about the positive impact that course has had on Richard and the team at CJC Aggregates and Landscaping supplies, and as with all of our participants we're all looking forward to seeing them continue to grow.

For many people the course could be the first time on a campus since their university days, or it could be the first time they've ever been to a university and that can seem daunting. Very quickly we get around that and people become comfortable in the environment and are ready to start their learning and development.

For more information on the Help to Grow course, visit the University of Worcester website.



TACKLING SKILLS CHALLENGES

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THE IMPORTANCE OF TALENT RETENTION

Attracting, engaging, and retaining the right people is at the heart of every successful business. In the first of a series of articles, Hewett Recruitment explores the key stages of the talent journey – from building a strong employer brand and creating an inclusive hiring process, through to effective onboarding and long-term retention strategies.

Each article will share insights and practical advice to help organisations strengthen their approach to people and recruitment in today's competitive market.

1. Preserving Institutional Knowledge

When experienced employees walk out the door, they take with them more than just skills – they take the knowledge, insights, and lessons they've accumulated over years. This kind of institutional knowledge is often undocumented and irreplaceable. Its loss can delay projects, affect customer relationships, and leave gaps in team expertise. By retaining key employees, organisations can safeguard continuity and ensure that

this knowledge is passed on, fostering a culture of learning and innovation.

2. Cost Efficiency

Hiring new staff isn't cheap. The costs include advertising, agency fees, time spent interviewing, onboarding, and training. Add to that the hidden costs of lost productivity while a new hire gets up to speed, and it becomes clear that staff turnover can seriously eat into profitability. Research has shown that replacing an employee can cost anywhere between six and nine months of their salary. By comparison, investing in strategies that retain talent offers a far greater return on investment.

3. Enhanced Performance and Productivity

who invest in their people not only reduce costs and increase productivity but also position themselves as leaders in the local economy. In a close-knit business community like ours, reputation matters. Word spreads quickly about which organisations are great places to work – and which are not.

Retaining talent is not just about stopping people from leaving. It's about creating an environment where employees feel engaged, valued, and able to see a

Employees who remain with a business for longer tend to be more engaged and aligned with its mission. They understand internal processes, know how to get things done, and are more effective in their roles. High retention also helps build strong customer relationships, as clients benefit from dealing with familiar faces who know their needs inside out.

4. Stability and Team Dynamics

High turnover is disruptive – not just operationally, but culturally. When colleagues frequently come and go, team spirit suffers and morale dips. Conversely, a stable workforce encourages collaboration, trust, and innovation. Teams that know each other well are more resilient and more capable of solving complex challenges together.

THE LOCAL PERSPECTIVE

Herefordshire and Worcestershire businesses face unique challenges when it comes to recruitment and retention. The local labour market is highly competitive, with skills shortages in sectors ranging from manufacturing and engineering to health and social care. For many employers, the challenge isn't just attracting skilled people – it's keeping them.

Retention strategies can give businesses in the region a significant edge. Employers

long-term future for themselves within the company. Businesses that get this right will reap the rewards: stronger performance, a more motivated workforce, and a reputation as an employer of choice in the region.

Your people are your most valuable asset. By prioritising retention, you're not just investing in employees – you're investing in the future of your business, and by extension, in the growth and resilience of our wider local economy.

PRACTICAL STRATEGIES FOR RETAINING TOP TALENT

Knowing why retention matters is one thing. Acting on it is another. Below are practical steps that businesses of all sizes can adopt to keep their best people engaged and loyal.

1. Offer Competitive Compensation and Benefits

Salary alone isn't everything – but it matters. Employees who feel underpaid are far more likely to look elsewhere. Regularly benchmark salaries against industry standards, both nationally and locally within Herefordshire and Worcestershire. The annual Salary & Benefits Survey that Hewett Recruitment produce in partnership with the Chamber of Commerce is good place to start. Alongside base pay, consider the total package: pensions, bonuses, healthcare, holiday allowance, and other perks. Even small benefits like gym discounts or extra leave for volunteering can make a difference in showing employees they are valued.

2. Provide Career Development Opportunities

One of the main reasons people leave jobs is lack of progression and personal development. Employees want to feel that they have a future with their employer, be that moving through the ranks or developing new skills. Offering structured career pathways, mentoring, training courses, and support for professional qualifications can go a long way in retaining ambitious staff. Even SMEs with fewer layers of hierarchy can provide growth by giving employees opportunities to expand their skills, take on new responsibilities, or get involved in cross-department projects.

3. Foster a Positive Workplace Culture

Culture is a big differentiator. People are more likely to stay with organisations where they feel respected, included, and listened to. Build a culture of open communication where feedback is encouraged and acted upon. Recognise achievements publicly, whether big or small. Celebrate milestones. In a region where many businesses rely on close-knit teams, creating a supportive and inclusive culture is one of the most powerful retention tools.

4. Support Work-Life Balance

Expectations around a flexible approach to employment have shifted dramatically in recent years. For many employees, a healthy work-life balance is non-negotiable. Where possible, offer hybrid working arrangements, flexible hours, or part-time options. Wellbeing initiatives – such as access to counselling, mental health days, or fitness schemes – can also demonstrate that you care about the whole person, not just their output. Employees who feel their personal lives are respected and valued by the leadership of the business are far more likely to remain loyal.

5. Develop Effective Leadership

It's often said that people don't leave jobs, they leave managers. Strong leadership at every level is essential for retention. Train managers to be approachable, communicative, and fair. Encourage them to hold regular one-to-one meetings, set clear expectations, and provide constructive feedback. Leaders should inspire and motivate their teams, not micromanage them. By investing in leadership development, businesses can directly influence employee engagement and loyalty.

6. Offer Meaningful and Purposeful Work

Beyond pay and perks, employees increasingly want to feel that their work matters. Connect daily



tasks to the bigger picture of the organisation's goals and values. Show employees how their contributions make a difference to customers, the community, or the environment. Jobs that align with personal values are more fulfilling, and fulfilled employees are more likely to stay.

7. Prioritise Employee Well-being

Employee wellbeing is more than just a buzzword – it's a business imperative. Stress, burnout, and poor mental health are leading causes of staff turnover. Employers should take proactive steps, whether through access to Employee Assistance Programmes or promoting healthy lifestyles. A culture that puts wellbeing first will not only retain staff but also boost performance.

8. Provide Regular Assessments and Feedback

Feedback shouldn't be limited to an annual appraisal. Regular check-ins create opportunities to recognise good work, discuss challenges, and explore future aspirations. This ongoing dialogue shows employees that their growth is a priority and helps resolve small issues before they become reasons to leave.



SUPPORT LOCAL, GIVE LOCAL - HEREFORDSHIRE BUSINESSES COME TOGETHER TO SUPPORT NEW CHARITABLE FUND

Herefordshire Community Foundation (HCF) has launched 'Business for Good' – an innovative new charitable fund which is bringing businesses together to drive real change across the county of Herefordshire.

Bridie Sullivan, Chief Executive, explains, *"Businesses have been telling us that they want an easy way to manage their charitable giving, safe in the knowledge that it will be directed to causes that matter. Just as many of us like to buy local, businesses told us they wanted to 'give' locally but weren't sure where to start. The Business for Good Fund takes away all that decision making."*

HCF's mission is to create a 'community chest' that regularly distributes grants to good causes across the county. Donations are based on the number of employees working in Herefordshire, with a minimum entry point of £10 per employee per annum. Some

businesses may choose to give more, but the aim is to create an affordable option for businesses of all sizes.

It's a great way to give back to your local community and demonstrate corporate social responsibility. Additionally, there are tax advantages to businesses for making charitable donations.

Members will receive regular updates, a branding pack and there are also opportunities for members to join the panel to award the grant.

"Joining Business for Good isn't just about making a donation; it's about walking the walk when it comes to our values. We believe in collaboration, community and doing what's right, even in small ways. Let's show what's possible when local businesses pull in the same direction." Member Lorna Simpson, Marches HR.

HCF is the county's leading independent grant-maker. Since 2002, over £7.5 million in grants have been awarded to grassroots community projects. Accredited and regulated, donations are in safe hands.

Please visit the website for more information and to join the Fund.

www.herefordshirecf.org/funds/business/



LIMBCO LTD ACHIEVES ISO 9001 RECERTIFICATION FOR 6TH CONSECUTIVE YEAR

Herefordshire based business, Limbco Limited, is proud to announce its sixth consecutive year of ISO9001 certification — with no nonconformities identified in their most recent audit.

Providing specialised warehousing, distribution, and fulfilment services to pharmaceutical, medical device, and cosmetics companies, Limbco's reputation is supported by its long-standing commitment to quality standards and continuous improvement. With over 50 years of experience in the healthcare sector, Limbco combines industry knowledge with a flexible, client-focused approach.

The latest report praised them for their transparency and openness, with particular recognition of how effectively they applied risk-based thinking and continuous improvement to their processes – key principles of the ISO 9001 framework.

Bruce Gardiner, Managing Director, commented: "At Limbco – formerly STD Pharmaceutical Products Ltd – quality has always been at the heart of everything we do: our products, our service, and our processes. We've worked to ISO 9001 standards, often going beyond them, to ensure our customers receive nothing but the best, so this recognition is a testament

to the hard work and commitment of our entire team."

With ISO 9001 certification providing customers with critical assurance that suppliers have robust processes and quality controls in place, it is a great achievement for Limbco to have received such positive audit results. As Limbco pushes towards a decade of ISO 9001 certification, the company remains dedicated to upholding the highest standards — while retaining the personal touch and collaborative approach that make it such a valued partner.

For more information, visit www.limbco.uk or call 01432 373 535.

CHANGES TO ENERGY EFFICIENCY STANDARDS



EMILY WILLETT

The Government is currently consulting on improving energy efficiency measures within the private rental sector which will likely see landlord's being asked to improve EPC ratings for any property in the social housing, private rental or commercial sectors.

Currently, a property must have an EPC, E or above rating to be legally let to a tenant unless there's a

valid exemption. However, Whitehall proposals will see the minimum rating raised from an E to a C, with a phased approach over the next five years.

It's also proposed that there are changes as to how a property's EPC rating is assessed to include a broader range of factors.

Although the changes may seem concerning for landlords, it will provide them with the

opportunity to increase their investment value.

The proposals are not yet legally binding. However, landlords should prepare for the changes with the consultation being just one step in a wider energy efficiency drive.

For a further discussion, Chamber Members can contact Commercial Property specialist Emily Willett at mfg Solicitors via emily.willett@mfgsolicitors.com

WILD EDRIC MEDIA

Have you ever considered advertising your business on TV but assumed it was out of your budget? Think again. Herefordshire-based video production company Wild Edric Media is making TV advertising accessible and affordable for small to medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), across the region through their partnership with the AdSmart from Sky platform.

AdSmart is Sky's targeted TV advertising solution, specifically designed for SMEs. It uses location and demographic data to ensure that adverts reach the most relevant audiences—whether that's by age, income, household composition, or even seniority in a business setting for B2B campaigns.

Carl Walker, Managing Director of Wild Edric Media, explains:

"We've been working with Sky for three years now, creating engaging 30-second TV adverts for a range of businesses across Herefordshire and Worcestershire using the AdSmart platform."

The beauty of targeted TV advertising is that it not only makes TV a viable option for SMEs, but also allows them to speak directly to their ideal customer base. As an experienced Sky Production Agency, we handle the whole process—from concept design and filming, through post-production and broadcast clearance. Once the ad is ready, it can be shown on Sky channels from just £3,000."

Whether you're looking to raise brand awareness, launch a new product, or connect with a specific customer segment, Wild Edric Media offers an end-to-end service that takes the stress out of TV advertising and delivers real results.



Interested in seeing your business on TV? Visit www.wildedricmedia.com to learn more.

HOLD THE MOMENT – SUPPORTING FAMILIES THROUGH LIFE'S BIGGEST MOMENTS

In September, Worcestershire Acute Hospitals Charity launched its **Hold the Moment – Maternity Appeal**, with an ambitious **£223,000 target to enhance maternity services for families across the county. At its heart, the appeal is about people - ensuring that every**

family in Worcestershire feels supported during life's most significant moments.

While antenatal and postnatal care takes place across the county – in the community, at the Alexandra Hospital, and Kidderminster Treatment Centre – all hospital births occur at Worcestershire Royal Hospital, where more than 4,500 babies are delivered each year. From the first scan through to the early days at home, and even in moments of loss, maternity teams are by families' sides every step of the way.

The Hold the Moment appeal will support:

- **Expansion of the Maternity Bereavement Suite** at Worcestershire Royal, including a new memory-making room for grieving families.
- **Buddy beds**, allowing partners to stay close during those precious first nights.
- **Specialist jaundice meters** for community care, offering quicker,

gentler testing for newborns.

- **Calmer, more welcoming maternity spaces** for families experiencing life-changing moments.

"These enhancements will transform how local families experience maternity care," says Trudy Berlet, Maternity Matron. "We can't remove the challenges, but we can ensure dignity, compassion, and comfort."

The appeal calls on Worcestershire's business leaders to unite behind a cause that will touch thousands of families each year. Supporting it strengthens vital local services and shows a shared commitment to the wellbeing of future generations.

Can your business help make a difference?
Visit www.wahcharity.org/moments or scan the QR code to learn more and show your support today.



ACORN'S CHILDREN'S HOSPICE TO BENEFIT FROM SUCCESSFUL CHARITY CHALLENGE

Professionals from the Worcester office of a leading property consultancy have helped raise more than £25,000 for charity as part of an epic fundraising relay – with 11 weeks of the challenge still to go.

Fisher German is marking its 25th anniversary with its 'Big25' charity challenge which is seeing colleagues tour its 25 offices across the country in a 2,400-mile journey – without any form of motorised transport.

The firm created the Big 25 challenge to raise at least £25,000 which will be split equally between the 25 charities, and colleagues have already smashed the target raising a total of £25,642 so far.

Fisher German has also pledged to match-fund any donations up to £25,000 from

supporters, meaning at least £50,000 will now be divided between the good causes.

As part of the challenge, the firm's Worcester office has chosen to raise money for Acorn's Children's Hospice, which supports hundreds of babies, children and young people with life-limiting conditions access specialist care.

The office's leg of the challenge is set to begin in the coming weeks.

So far, the Big 25 challenge has seen colleagues walking, running, cycling, horseback riding, sailing, paddleboarding, skiing and even roller skating their way between offices.

Anyone wishing to donate should visit Fisher German's GiveWheel link at <https://givewheel.com/fundraising/7005/fisher-germans-big-25-challenge/>



NMITE PARTNERS WITH OCTOPUS ENERGY TO LAUNCH A NEW BURSARY FOR ASPIRING WOMEN ENGINEERS

The New Model Institute for Technology and Engineering (NMITE) today announces a new bursary, in partnership with Octopus Energy, to open pathways for aspiring women engineers.

The Octopus Energy Bursary provides a total cash award of £5,000 to four women joining as a new NMITE student in September 2025 on an undergraduate degree programme in Engineering or Construction Management.

"Octopus is a disrupter and we're a disrupter. We have very similar values in terms of sustainability, diversity, inclusion and changing the status quo to make a difference. There was a natural partnership," said James Newby, CEO and President of NMITE. "We know that going to university is a financial commitment which is why we and our industry partners are dedicated

to easing the financial burden through bursaries and scholarships to ensure access for all, regardless of background."

The Octopus Energy Bursary aims to provide more opportunities for women in engineering education, helping to address the current underrepresentation in the field. The bursary is open to all UK-based and international women.

"At Octopus Energy and the Octopus Energy Equality Foundation we believe the next generation of innovators will play a huge role in building a greener, fairer future," comments Samsam Farah, Manager of the Octopus Energy Equality Foundation. "That's why we've partnered with NMITE to launch the Octopus Energy Bursary – helping to remove financial barriers for young women with big ideas and bold ambitions. By supporting brilliant

young women to study engineering, we're investing in the skills, creativity and passion needed to tackle the climate crisis and transform the world of energy and engineering. It's a unique and incredible opportunity to get practical hands-on experience, and we want to support those who will be crafting the building blocks of our green future."

The Octopus Energy Bursary is designed to recognise and support talented, motivated students who demonstrate strong academic progress and a clear commitment to completing the full three-year programme.

To find out more, visit: <https://nmite.ac.uk/fees-and-finances#bursaries>



AGRI-TOURISM BOOM

Uncertainty and a creeping level of unease are everywhere in business at the moment. Rapidly changing world events, climate change and technological advances mean that creativity and agility are vital to survival for many businesses. Nowhere is this more true than in the UK agricultural sector, where farms are pushed ever harder on profit margins and competition from imported, arguably inferior, cheaper food. On White Heron Estate, home of Whittern Farms, the response to this increasing pressure

has always been to think creatively. A lockdown project was to invest in planting a vineyard, and employing a viticulture expert displaced from Ukraine, to manage and tend it. The third 'vendage' is underway and the resultant Herefordshire sparkling wine is part of an impressive line-up of fine quality locally produced foods and drinks in.

Perhaps the answer to global change is indeed to be found in the local. Diversification and investment into the agri-tourism sector remains a priority in

Herefordshire. White Heron Estate E-Bike Tours was launched earlier in 2025 and brings UK food production to the attention of visitors. Corporate or private guests are guided around SFI areas, cider orchards, Ribena fields, vineyards, and it is very rewarding to hear that they leave with a greater understanding of British food than they arrived with, as well as a hunger to learn more. With so many UK consumers unaware of the quality local foods available, it is our job to change this. Agri-tourism is booming.

SUPPORT LOCAL, GIVE LOCAL - HEREFORDSHIRE BUSINESSES COME TOGETHER TO SUPPORT NEW CHARITABLE FUND

Redditch-based smart home specialist TSR Group is proud to announce that team member James Clarke has been named a finalist in the Best Newcomer category at the CEDIA Smart Home Awards 2025, an internationally recognised celebration of excellence in smart home design.

CEDIA is the global trade association for the smart home industry, with entries from businesses worldwide. James's recognition places him among the most promising new talents in the sector and highlights TSR's growing reputation for technical expertise and forward-thinking solutions.

Since joining TSR in 2024,



James has played a key role in delivering complex projects and helping to develop its Control4-certified showroom. Open to local residents, architects and designers, the showroom offers a chance to experience smart home living in action, demonstrating

how technology can enhance daily life by bringing together lighting, entertainment and security into one simple, elegant system. Visitors can see how systems work together, gain inspiration for their own projects and experience TSR's quality.

Simon Tricklebank, Managing Director of TSR, commented:

"We're delighted to see James recognised on such a global stage. His creativity and dedication reflect the values we hold here at TSR. This nomination not only celebrates James's achievement, but also shows our commitment to developing talent and driving smart home innovation."

The winners will be announced in November. In the meantime, TSR warmly invites local residents to visit its showroom and experience first-hand the innovation that earned this global recognition.

For more information, visit
www.tsrelectrical.co.uk.

ELEVATE GROWTH: STRATEGIC SUPPORT FOR AMBITIOUS WORCESTERSHIRE BUSINESSES

For established businesses with ambition and growth potential, stepping back from day-to-day operations can be challenging but it's often the key to scaling successfully. The Elevate Growth programme offers businesses across Worcestershire the opportunity to gain high-quality, specialist support designed to help them thrive, not just function.

Running over 10 weeks, the programme provides up to 16 hours of tailored support, with a recommended commitment of around two hours per week to maximise benefits. Participating businesses will access a combination of expert guidance, one-to-one coaching, peer learning, and a practical growth plan to accelerate their development.

EXPERT ONE-TO-ONE CONSULTANCY

Businesses receive insights from specialist consultants experienced in scaling companies across a wide range of sectors. These experts provide strategic advice to unlock growth opportunities, helping business leaders to refine their

operations, optimise systems, and implement plans that deliver results. Each business benefits from support focused on its unique aspirations and growth potential. Whether the goal is expanding revenue streams, entering new markets, or improving business processes, our consultants work directly with leaders to identify the path forward and ensure practical, achievable strategies are in place.

PEER SUPPORT

Learning doesn't happen in isolation. The Elevate Growth programme encourages collaboration by connecting like-minded business leaders to explore challenges and share solutions. Facilitated by our experts, these peer sessions provide fresh perspectives, practical advice, and the reassurance that others face similar challenges in their growth journey.

AN IMPLEMENTABLE GROWTH PLAN

At the conclusion of the programme, each business will leave with a clear, actionable growth plan. Covering key areas for development, this plan translates ideas

into achievable steps, providing a roadmap to reach ambitious business goals.

Designed predominantly for B2B companies, the programme is ideal for experienced business leaders looking to leverage shared knowledge, overcome barriers, and create realistic, long-term growth strategies.

For businesses across Worcestershire ready to elevate their potential, this is an opportunity to step away from day-to-day operations, access expert guidance, and develop a clear, practical plan to scale and grow.

To find out more on how please visit:
www.worcestershire.gov.uk/elevateworcestershire or contact
info@worcestershiregrowthhub.co.uk

This project is part-funded by the UK government through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and Worcestershire County Council.

The programme is managed and delivered by Worcestershire County Council on behalf of local district councils.



SOUTHCO MANUFACTURING CELEBRATES TEAM SPIRIT AT FAMILY DAY

On Saturday 6th September, Southco Manufacturing Limited welcomed back its much-loved Family Day, bringing together employees, their families, and friends for a sun-soaked celebration of community and camaraderie. The event marked the conclusion of the company's European Sales Conference and embraced the theme of Team Spirit, highlighting the strong bonds between colleagues and their wider networks.

Held under clear blue skies, the day offered something for everyone—live music, delicious food, and a host of fun activities. Guests enjoyed face painting, games, doughnuts, and ice cream, creating a brilliant atmosphere. Entertainment was provided by Southco's own Ric Cipriani and the band "The Beenz," whose members included family and friends of another employee,

adding a very personal touch to the festivities.

Community involvement was a key feature of the day. Southco extended heartfelt thanks to Worcester City Women's Football Club and their loveable mascot Pablo, the 20th Worcester Scouts, and the Friends of Fort Royal for their support and engaging activities. Special appreciation also went to Ben and Laura from Hewett Recruitment, who kept spirits high while manning the bar throughout the event.

The Family Day was a true reflection of Southco's values—bringing people together, celebrating achievements, and strengthening connections both within the company and across the local community. With smiles all around and memories made, the event was a resounding success and a perfect way to wrap up a busy and productive week.

UPPER TEME BUSINESS PARK BRINGS NEW HOPE FOR LOCAL BUSINESSES IN TENBURY WELLS

A new chapter is unfolding for Tenbury Wells with the launch of Upper Teme Business Park – a contemporary commercial development offering 23 high-specification units, set on the Shropshire–Worcestershire border.

CAPTION: L–R: Nick Jethwa (G Herbert Banks), Delia Yapp (Shropshire Council), Wayne Butterfield (Terrain Construction Group), Mike Forrester (Herefordshire & Worcestershire Chamber of Commerce), Amy Butterfield (owner of Upper Teme Business Park) and Councillor Justin Bowen (Worcestershire County Council) were invited to an informal discussion regarding a multi-channel approach to supporting local businesses.

The site has already attracted a wide range of tenants – including a pan-European leisure sector company, a solar energy electrician, a fuel tank specialist and a builder – highlighting strong demand for flexible, modern business space.

Amy Butterfield, owner of Upper Teme Business Park, recently hosted a meeting with stakeholders including Shropshire Council, Worcestershire County Council, the Herefordshire & Worcestershire



Chamber of Commerce and Tenbury Wells Open For Business to explore how to support local businesses and promote the opportunities the development presents.

Amy said: "Upper Teme Business Park is fully committed to supporting the growth of Tenbury Wells, Shropshire and the surrounding Counties. Indeed, our aim is to help local entrepreneurs and businesses thrive by providing high-quality commercial spaces to rent and we're all ears when it comes to supporting their needs."

Nick Jethwa, Partner at G Herbert Banks, added: "We are delighted to see the first lease completions at Upper Teme Business Park... the development is already attracting a wide variety of businesses that are contributing to the area's economic vitality."

Located just off the A456, the park offers units from 750 to 6,250 sq ft — building local futures through enterprise and opportunity.

Chamber Members are invited to enquire or arrange a visit by contacting Wayne Butterfield on 07341 774177.



ASSURE TECHNICAL REAPPOINTED AS PROFESSIONAL ADVISORS FOR WORCESTERSHIRE GROWTH HUB

Assure Technical has, once again, been selected to act as a Professional Business Advisor for the Worcestershire Growth Hub. In this capacity, they will provide fully funded one-to-one specialist support to assist SMEs from across the county, helping them adopt digital technology and AI.

Eligible businesses taking advantage of the scheme will receive a free digital health check, tailored action plan, and one-to-one support throughout the adoption process.

Assure Technical brings extensive expertise in:

- **Cybersecurity audits and compliance** - protecting critical systems and data, underpinned by our Cyber Essentials Certification Body status and ISO 27001 experience;
- **AI integration** - identifying realistic use cases and guiding best-practice

implementation;

- **Cloud migration and optimisation** - boosting flexibility and resilience;
- **Data analytics** - turning information into insight to drive smarter decisions;
- **Workflow automation** - streamlining processes to save time and cut costs.

Since being appointed as Professional Advisors two years ago, Assure Technical have supported 47 Worcestershire-based SMEs through the scheme, helping them build stronger defences, adopt innovative tools, and unlock measurable performance improvements. From family-run retailers to growing manufacturers, their pragmatic and commercially focused advice has delivered real impact across the region.

"Being selected as Professional Business Advisors on behalf of the Worcestershire Growth Hub again is a privilege," said Pete Rucinski, Managing Director at Assure Technical. "Effective technical adoption is



now a critical success factor for businesses, and we know that this can be challenging. This scheme enables us to provide free advice and support to local SMEs, giving them clarity and confidence to support their long-term growth."

Local SMEs ready to improve efficiency, strengthen security, and embrace innovation are encouraged to take advantage of the scheme. To find out more and check eligibility, visit the Worcestershire Growth Hub website or email hello@assuretechnical.com.

GREENSAFE IT SHOWCASES INNOVATION AT GLOBAL ITAD SUMMIT

Worcestershire based IT asset disposition specialist, Greensafe IT, recently attended the prestigious ITAD Summit in Las Vegas. Joining industry leaders from across the globe to discuss the future of secure data destruction, IT recycling and circular economy solutions.



The summit - recognised as the leading international event for IT asset disposition - gave Greensafe the opportunity to engage with new technologies, forge international partnerships and bring fresh insights back to the UK.

For local businesses, this means access to the very latest thinking in IT lifecycle management. By adopting global best practice, Greensafe ensures Worcestershire organisations can benefit from world-class solutions, without having to look beyond the county for a service provider.

Commenting on the visit, Greensafe's

Head of Marketing said: "Representing Worcestershire on the international stage was an invaluable opportunity. The ideas and partnerships we've brought back will directly support our local business community by improving sustainable IT management and practices."

Greensafe's presence at the summit highlights Worcestershire's growing role in global business. Reinforcing their commitment to innovation, through the delivery of world-class IT services and solutions and driving positive economic and environmental impact for the region.

MARCHES HR LAUNCHES SAFEGUARDHR BRAND

Marches HR Ltd has launched SafeGuardHR, a dedicated brand offering independent safeguarding HR investigations, case reviews and safer recruitment training for schools, academies, charities and other child-centred organisations across England and Wales.

This marks a natural step for Marches HR, which has delivered safeguarding-

related HR support since it was founded in 2022. By giving this specialist work its own identity, the consultancy can provide child-centred organisations with the reassurance of an independent service, while continuing to deliver the warm, practical HR support that their clients know them for.

SafeGuardHR is backed by the credibility of Marches HR, a multi-award-winning,

Cyber Essentials-accredited consultancy.

"The safeguarding side of our work has always been there", says Lorna Simpson, Director. "SafeGuardHR simply gives this service its own space while Marches HR remains as busy as ever providing generalist HR advice and support".

For more information, visit www.safeguardhr.co.uk

Celebrating 50 Years of Leadership in Herefordshire

From SAS roots to shaping the next generation – The Leadership Trust invites local businesses to join the journey

In 1975, a bold idea was born in the Herefordshire countryside. Former SAS officer David Gilbert-Smith, working with psychologist Janet Richardson, set out to prove that leadership was not about rank or command, but about people: the courage to know yourself and to thrive under pressure, the humility to listen, and the resilience to keep going when it matters most.

Their creation – The Leadership Trust – combined SAS discipline with behavioural psychology in a way the world hadn't seen before. While others taught leadership in classrooms or tested it on mountains, the Trust pioneered something different: immersive experiences designed to push limits, hold up a mirror to their impact, and help them emerge as stronger, more authentic leaders.

Half a century later, the SAS are still based here in Herefordshire. And so is The Leadership Trust, at Chelsea Parkfields in Pontshill near Ross-on-Wye.



The Programme Today

More than 80,000 people have taken part in Leadership Trust programmes over the past 50 years – from Royal Marines and NHS managers to finance directors and entrepreneurs.

At the heart of this work is the flagship Leadership in Management programme – a six-month journey incorporating a 5½-day immersive residential at Chelsea Parkfields.

Leaders are pushed out of their comfort zones, receive peer feedback and are supported by expert facilitators. Delegates describe being “cracked open”, discovering blind spots, and finding the courage to lead with both empathy and conviction.

The impact lasts long after the week. Participants report sharper decision-making under pressure, stronger teams that trust and deliver, and a renewed sense of authenticity. For organisations, the results are tangible: growth, savings, better collaboration and resilient leaders.



Chelsea Parkfields near Ross-on-Wye – home of The LT, our Leadership in Management programme and a stunning venue available for events and retreats.

Local Leaders, Lasting Change

Ali Beynon, a Herefordshire leadership coach

Ali joined the programme in June 2023. With a background in coaching she thought she knew what to expect, “but applying that knowledge in a completely new environment, alongside a group of strangers, put everything I thought I knew to the test”.

Her breakthrough came in a cave, where she confronted fear and realised just how powerfully emotions shape decisions.

“The programme gave me the confidence to lead by leaning into my strengths, recognising my weaknesses, and managing them,” she says. “It gave me space to reflect – and to lead in my own way.”

Ali has since joined The Leadership Trust faculty, supporting the next generation of leaders.



Sarah Stevenson, School Effectiveness Officer, Herefordshire Council

Sarah arrived on her LM cautious but quickly energised by the diversity of her cohort – working closely with them showed her the power of collaboration and shared purpose.

One standout moment was stepping onto a rock face despite her fear of heights. The experience gave her resilience – and the confidence to support others and lead with conviction.

“The programme reaffirmed for me that authentic leadership matters,” she says. “Kindness, empathy and emotional intelligence are just as critical as assertiveness.”

Today, Sarah draws on her experience to deliver county-wide projects. At the Council, she applies reflective practice and collaborative leadership to improve outcomes for children with English as an additional language, while mentoring colleagues and strengthening team capacity.



Looking Ahead – An Invitation to Local Businesses

This year marks the Trust's 50th anniversary now under the leadership of new Chief Executive John English.

John says: “As we celebrate 50 years, we're especially keen to connect with local businesses and work alongside them to develop the leaders our region needs.”

We work with leaders across the globe and are on stand by to support more local businesses – whether through our flagship Leadership in Management programme or broader partnerships to grow your business through its people.

To explore a place on this autumn's Leadership in Management cohort, or how we can support your organisation, visit leadershiptrust.co or email John at johnenglish@leadershiptrust.co.



THE ARTRIX: BROMSGROVE'S THEATRE GEM REBORN

Before the pandemic, The Artrix was celebrated as the premier theatre destination in Bromsgrove, but when Covid struck, the venue transformed into a vaccination centre, serving the community in a vital new way. After this, The Artrix remained closed, reopening briefly in November 2023 to host Solihull's The Core productions whilst they underwent renovations.



The true revival came in April 2024, when The Artrix officially reopened its doors. Since then, the theatre has gone from strength to strength, showcasing an exciting line-up of tribute acts, comedy nights, and theatrical productions.

Beyond the stage, The Artrix has once again become a hub for the local community. Youth groups and classes fill the building every week, ensuring that the venue continues to inspire the next generation of performers and audiences alike.

A highlight of the past year was the theatre's pantomime, which proved to be the best-selling event on the calendar. Building on that success, anticipation

is already high for this year's festive production of Treasure Island.

Run by a fantastic team of volunteers, the Artrix has an eclectic array of shows already on the books for 2026 and will soon be opening their 2027 diary. We always welcome new volunteers to help usher shows, work on the bar or run box office.

There is also the opportunity to host your meetings at The Artrix, with rooms that can host anything from small 1-2-1's to 300 capacity conferences.

If you'd like to find out more about the Artrix, please email marketing@artrixbromsgrove.co.uk

MEET OCM – YOUR LOCAL EXPERTS IN SUSTAINABLE IT ASSET MANAGEMENT

As a proud new Member of the Herefordshire & Worcestershire Chamber of Commerce, OCM is excited to introduce their team to fellow businesses across the region.

CAPTION: (L-R) The OCM team includes, back: Paul Mills (Quality Assurance & Compliance Manager), Michelle Woodbury (Business Development), Jack Denton (Logistics Manager) and Steve Turberfield (Head of Corporate Accounts). Front: Richard Done (Sales Director), Jennine Gilbert-Woods (Managing Director) and Gemma Bott (Head of Finance and Social Value Lead).

Based in Pershore, Jennine, Richard and co have been delivering secure, sustainable and reliable IT asset recovery, refurbishment and data destruction services for nearly 40 years. They're a long-established, independent business with a national footprint and strong Midlands roots—trusted by organisations ranging from

SMEs to multinational corporates – they care where your IT goes.

WHAT OCM DO – SUPPORTING YOUR BUSINESS IT LIFECYCLE

OCM help businesses manage redundant IT and electronic equipment through: secure IT collection and data destruction, Blancco-certified erasure, ISO & ADISA-certified processes, sustainability reporting, ESG support and social value through community donations.

WHY IT MATTERS TO CHAMBER MEMBERS

Chamber members benefit from GDPR-compliant processes, carbon reduction support, tender documentation and a responsive local service with national reach.

INTRODUCING OCM STORE – REFURBISHED TECH

Through OCM Store, businesses can



buy high-quality, refurbished laptops, desktops and monitors - professionally tested, cleaned and backed by a 12-month warranty. Clients use them for staff incentives, hybrid working or community donations.

OCM SAY – LET'S CONNECT

We'd love to hear from fellow Chamber Members interested in IT lifecycle services, sustainability or sustainable tech.

**Call 01386 555008 | Visit www.ocmbiz.com
Shop www.ocmstore.com**

THORLUX DRIVES SUSTAINABILITY FORWARD WITH GREENER DELIVERY FLEET

Redditch-based Thorlux Lighting is taking significant steps to reduce its environmental impact by investing in a new fleet of electric and biofuel-powered delivery vehicles.

The upgraded fleet includes three trucks and three vans powered by Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil (HVO) biofuel. Additionally, Thorlux has added two fully electric vans to its lineup.

The electric vans have an approximate 200-mile range and will be crucial in delivering Thorlux luminaires to local customers. These vehicles are charged with 100% green energy

generated from 3,000 solar PV panels at the company's headquarters.

The transition to HVO biofuel for its larger vehicles underscores Thorlux's commitment to reducing carbon emissions while waiting for electric or alternative fuel options to become widely available.

HVO biofuel, derived from vegetable oils and waste biomass, offers a lower-carbon alternative to conventional diesel. Unlike fossil fuels, which release carbon stored underground, HVO's carbon emissions are effectively balanced by the carbon absorbed during the growth

of the biomass used in its production. This makes it a renewable and more sustainable fuel choice. Based on figures from the UK government, switching to HVO will yield a reduction in Thorlux emissions of up to 90% compared to previous diesel vehicles.

Importantly, the HVO is purchased from members of the Renewable Fuels Assurance Scheme (RFAS) to ensure it is only made from responsibly sourced waste materials.

By investing in a low-emission fleet today, Thorlux is making an immediate impact in the fight against climate change.

OPUS CLAIM SOLUTIONS BECOMES STRATEGIC PARTNER WITH HEREFORDSHIRE & WORCESTERSHIRE CHAMBER OF

WHY WE JOINED THE CHAMBER

At Opus Claim Solutions, we believe that the strength of local business lies in collaboration, support, and shared ambition. Joining the H&W Chamber as a Strategic Partner marks a significant step in our commitment to these values. The Chamber is an invaluable cornerstone of the regional business community, fostering connections between organisations that span sectors and sizes.

WHAT WE DO

We are a specialist provider of fleet claims management services. Our expertise spans the full lifecycle of insurance claims, from initial notification and investigation to negotiation, and settlement. We work with individuals, businesses, and insurers to ensure that claims are managed efficiently, fairly, and with transparency at every stage.

Our core services include:

- Handling the administration, documentation, and communication required throughout a claim's progress.
- Offering expert advice and assessment to determine the true extent of loss, ensuring clients receive the compensation they deserve.
- Acting on behalf of our clients in negotiations with insurers, brokers, and third parties to achieve **optimal outcomes**.

We pride ourselves on a client-focused approach, tailoring our services to meet individual needs and providing reassurance in what can be a stressful and complex process. Whether dealing with fleet vehicle damage or property damage caused by road users, our experienced team is dedicated to making the claims journey as smooth and successful as possible.

GET IN TOUCH

If you are considering your own claims needs, or would simply like to find out more about how we can support your organisation, we welcome the opportunity to connect. Through the Chamber, we look forward to meeting fellow Members, sharing knowledge, and building lasting partnerships.



SPRING FORWARD LANDSCAPING LTD: GROWING EXCELLENCE FROM THE GROUND UP



ADAM BATE

In the heart of Worcestershire, Spring Forward Landscaping Ltd is redefining what it means to be a premium, community-driven business. Founded by Adam Bate and proudly family-run, the company

delivers bespoke landscaping projects and high-end garden maintenance delivering craftsmanship with character alongside reliable grounds maintenances packages keeping commercial properties grounds pristine.

From creating unique spaces to entertain that encompass patios and fencing to turfing and planting, Spring Forward's work is rooted in quality and care. But it's their ethos that truly sets them apart. Adam leads with resilience, creativity, and a deep commitment to people whether that's clients, team members, or the wider community.

As proud Members of the Herefordshire & Worcestershire Chamber of Commerce, Spring Forward embodies the values of trust, professionalism, and local pride.

Beyond gardens, the team is making a meaningful impact. Through fundraising for the Grace Kelly Childhood Cancer Trust and celebrating milestones like Apprentice of the Year nominations, Spring Forward blends business with purpose.

In an industry often focused on the surface, Spring Forward Landscaping digs deeper creating spaces that inspire, and relationships that last. Their story is a reminder that when you invest in people, the results bloom far beyond the borders of a garden.

Contact Spring Forward Landscaping to help breathe new life in gardens and open spaces on;

Telephone: 07534228856

Website: www.springforward-landscaping.co.uk



NEW MEMBERS

ActionCOACH Worcester

T: 01905 670028

<https://business.actioncoach.co.uk/>

AI Expert

T: 0333 5440000

<https://ai-expert.co.uk>

Age UK North Worcestershire

T: 01527 570490

<https://www.ageuk.org.uk/northworcestershire/>

Agility Fleet

T: 01527 571605

<https://www.agilityfleet.com>

Alimax Global Limited

T: 07399 323308

<https://www.bridgehousebewdley.co.uk>

Allica Bank

T: 07355629127

<https://www.allica.bank>

AMB Energy Assessments Ltd

www.amb-energy-assessments.co.uk

ARCOS - Association for the Rehabilitation of Communication & Oral Skills

T: 01684 576795

www.arcos.org.uk

Aston Centre for Enterprise and Entrepreneurship

T: 0121 204 3225

<https://www.aston.ac.uk/research/bss/abs/centres-hubs/aston-centre-for-growth>

Ateq UK Ltd

T: 01527 520011

<https://ateq.co.uk/>

AtkinsRéal

T: +44 1454 66 3246

<https://www.atkinsrealis.com>

Axiom Pictures

T: 07770 923503

<https://www.axiom.pictures/>

Babybase Limited

T: 01886 887758

<https://www.babybase.co.uk>

Bell Lax Solicitors

T: 01684 216777

Bison Management Corporation Ltd

T: 07876880001

Brace Creative Agency Ltd

T: 01452 729953

<https://www.brace.co.uk>

Cannon House Finance Ltd

T: 01386 712308

<https://www.cannonhouse.co.uk/>

Charlbury Contractors

T: 07359 008762

<https://charlburycontractors.co.uk/>

Constellation Cold Logistics UK

T: 01527 914410

<https://www.constellationcold.com/uk/>

Copson Social Ltd

T: 07791 541937

<https://copsonsocial.co.uk>

Crazi Jalfrezi Catering

T: 07710 741111

Dandelion Video Production

T: 07929 102697

<https://www.dandelionvideo.co.uk>

Distort Films Ltd

T: 07432 598778

<https://www.distortfilms.com>

Eastnor Land Rover Experience

T: 01531 638777

<https://eastnorcastle.com/land-rover/>

Elston HR Ltd

T: 07746711975

<https://www.elston-hr.com/>

Emiria Consulting Ltd

T: 07818 113181

Exhibition Equipment UK Ltd

T: 01789 766 733

<https://exhibitionequipmentuk.com/>

Facilit8 & Flourish Ltd

T: 07713 073883

<https://www.facilit8andflourish.com/>

Fast Forward Therapy

T: 01905 886440

<https://fastforwardtherapy.co.uk/>

Foster Crane & Lifting Equipment Ltd

T: 01299 253 610

<https://www.fostercranes.co.uk/>

FP Gaunt & Sons Ltd

T: 01562 541062

www.gauntsofkidderminster.co.uk

Frome Valley Vineyard

T: 01885 490768

<https://www.fromevalleyvineyard.co.uk>

Go Green Experts

T: 07711 217205

<http://www.gogreenexperts.co.uk>

Greek Gourmet Ltd

T: 07449727956

<https://eatgreekgourmet.com/>

H & G Construction Safety Association Ltd

T: 01432 343626

<https://hgsafety.co.uk/>

HandiScoop Systems Ltd

T: 01531 888308

<https://www.handiscoop.com>

Harris Safety Training Services

T: 01905886379

<https://www.harrissafetytrainingservices.co.uk>

Hayley Reynolds Gallery

T: 01386 571201

<https://www.artisthayleyreynolds.co.uk>

Heartstart Malvern

T: 07926 615812

<http://www.heartstartmalvern.org.uk>

Home Farm Nurseries (Pinvin) Ltd

T: 01386 555354

<https://www.hfnlandscapes.co.uk>

IM Export Services Limited

T: 01527 521685

<https://www.imexportservices.co.uk/>

IM Freight Forwarding Ltd

T: 01527 910095

<https://www.imfreightforwarding.co.uk/about>

insight6

T: 07399116121

IT Enterprise Business Solutions Limited

T: 0203 9170103

<https://it-ebs.co.uk/>

Jobsworth Recruitment Solutions Limited

T: 0121 550 6667

JP Bookkeeping

T: 07553 062508

<https://www.jpbookkeeping.co.uk>

Key2Confidence

T: 07908205379

Weatheroak Low Road, Church Lench, Evesham. WR11 4UH

Ladies Fighting Breast Cancer

T: 0121 389 8926

<https://lfbc.org.uk/>

Leviathan Systems Ltd

T: 07803145332

<https://www.nammu-tech.com>

Lifescape

T: 07941 167285

<https://lifescape.uk>

Living Victorious

T: 07952 482334

Lollipop Youth Theatre

T: 07709 617793

<https://www.lollipopyouththeatre.co.uk>

Malvern Bitters Ltd

T: 07796 612513

<https://malvernbitters.ink/>

Mapcoach

T: 07446 017679

<https://www.mapcoach.co.uk/>

Maylite Ltd

T: 01886 888455

McPhillips (Wellington) Ltd

T: 01952 670440

<https://www.mcphillips.co.uk/>

MDKCLEANING LTD

T: 07468467040

<https://servicemasterofficecleaning.co.uk/worcester/>

Menopause Knowledge CIC

T: 07306 397981

<https://menopauseknowledge.org/>

Middlebrook Productions

T: 01386 800250

<http://www.middlebrookproductions.co.uk>

Mona Staff Ltd

T: 07703 052237

<https://www.monastaff.com/>

My Mortgage Wizards

T: 0330 043 8669

<https://www.mymortgagewizards.co.uk>

Numachine Ltd

T: 01432 279373

<https://numachine.co.uk/>

OCM Business Systems Ltd

T: 01386 555008

<https://www.ocmbiz.com>

Oh My Nosh Catering

T: 07467 579013

<https://ohmynoshcatering.com>

On-Site-Support (CAD)

T: 07976 263434

<https://www.inhousecadtraining.com>

Opus Claim Solutions Ltd

T: 01905 641664

<http://www.opusclaims.co.uk>

P.G.S Team Limited

<https://pgs-team.co.uk/>

Paladin Defence Ltd

T: 07522 427928

Peaceful Moments Therapy

T: 07931 256034

PUUC Architecture Limited

T: 01216302263

<https://puuc.co.uk>

Redwood Health Care LTD

T: 01562881414

Regent HR

T: 01926 895700

<https://www.RegentHR.co.uk>

Rightclick Media Ltd

T: 07349399980

<https://rightclickmedia.co.uk>

Russell & Co Solicitors

T: 01684 892 000

<http://www.russellandcosolitors.co.uk>

SAC Consultancy Ltd

T: 07880 704498

<https://www.ignitingdreams.co.uk>

Severn Packaging

T: 01905 759259

Simply Seedz Ltd

T: 01386 793840

<http://www.simplyseedz.co.uk/>

Sixways

T: 01905972692

<https://www.sixwaysstadium.co.uk>

SJC Security Installations Ltd

T: 01217691064

<https://sjcinstall.co.uk>

Slicker Recycling Ltd

T: 03301598325

<http://www.slickerrecycling.com>

Sorted!

T: 07399 323308

<https://www.alicejennings.co.uk>

Spring Forward Landscaping

T: 07534 228856

<http://www.springforward-landscaping.co.uk>

Squab Group

T: 01386 577477

<https://squabstorage.co.uk/self-storage-evesham/>

St Richards Hospice Foundation

T: 01905 763963

www.strichards.org.uk

St. Martin's Management Ltd

T: 01386 871300

<https://www.karmagroup.com>

Steve Liddle Financial Planning The Lonely Tomato Limited

T: 07790323207

<https://www.lonely-tomato.com>

The Vea Collection

T: 01531 800388

<https://www.veacollection.com>

The Workplace Equipment Hub Ltd

T: 07918 940729

<http://www.workplaceequipmenthub.co.uk>

Therapy Bay

T: 07435 193021

<https://therapybay.co.uk/>

Thermeco Energy Ltd

T: 07407 496765

<https://www.thermecoenergy.com>

Tipler Defence Global Ltd

T: 07351 146865

<http://www.tiplerdefence.com>

TJC Surveyors Ltd

T: 01905 975062

<https://www.tjcsurveyors.com/>

TR Health Ltd

T: 01905 918188

TR Solar & Roofing Ltd

T: 07875 756447

<https://trsolarandroofing.co.uk/>

Trelleborg Sealing Solutions UK Ltd

T: 01544 312600

<https://www.trelleborg.com>

Turner Corner Learning Solutions

T: 07834838521

<https://turnercorner.co.uk/>

V.I.P Versatility in Print

T: 01527 871500

<http://vipprinters.co.uk>

Vital Accounts Ltd

T: 07515 552126

<https://www.Vital-Accounts.co.uk>

Warehouse 701 Ltd

T: 01432 375510

<http://www.warehouse701.co.uk>

West Midlands Compressors Ltd

T: 01905347341

<https://www.wmcompressors.co.uk/>

Worcester Wine Merchants Ltd

T: 07702047516

<https://www.evertons.co.uk>

Yellowspot Ltd

T: 07813018091

<https://yellowspot.co.uk>

Your Herefordshire Ltd

T: 07581 321482

<https://yourherefordshire.co.uk>



CHAMBER HOPES DONALD TRUMP'S UK VISIT CAN CLARIFY TRADE TARIFFS

How higher charges also pave the way to new trade opportunities for British exporters

After a brief reprieve on US tariffs, UK exporters are paying more again. British Chambers of Commerce trade chief William Bain tells us why Donald Trump's UK visit might just help bring clarity...

When Britain and the US began a new agreement on tariffs in April, there was relief throughout global markets as the blanket 25% rate was largely reduced to 10%. But at the time, the White House said it would impose a quota on the "most-favoured nation rates for UK steel and aluminium and certain derivative steel and aluminium products".

That came to fruition last week with the addition of 407 British steel and aluminium derivatives being recategorized into the 25% tariff band on products ranging from wind turbines, mobile cranes, compressors and bulldozers to marine engines and motorcycles. It also includes items such as shampoo and perfumes which have aluminium in their packaging.

Mr Bain said: "These changes took immediate effect and have also affected other industries such as furniture and anything with steel or aluminium in their frames. Even for goods already in transit, companies have had to come up with the money to be able to export into the US.

"For other countries it is 50% but for the UK with the Economic Prosperity Deal, it is 25%. Tariffs are still the number one issue for British businesses exporting to the US."

NO LONGER DUTY-FREE

"The other big change is the US has abolished the de minimis threshold which allowed you to import up to \$800 worth of low-value commercial shipments essentially duty-free. This means 40,000 British companies exporting to the US, including SMEs, now have to complete customs declarations and pay duty on their goods."

The introduction of tariffs has different impacts on different countries depending on how they are imposed. For Britain, the agreed 10% was added to the existing 12% tariffs which means British exporters face a 22% tariff on their goods, while other countries were offered combined rates.

Mr Bain said: "A British company selling a product in the US had to pay import tariffs at 12% but the 10% announced in April is on top of the existing tariff, while EU countries selling the same product receive the Most-Favoured-Nation tariff and are paying a combined 15%, which puts British firms at a disadvantage.

"But there are other items such as clothes, textiles, footwear and whiskey and spirits from the UK which are being charged at 10% and from the EU it is 15% which gives British exporters a competitive advantage.

"For some goods, the difference between tariffs on British and EU goods is very small but larger on others and these differences are down to the different deals



WILLIAM BAIN

the US has done with different countries.

"These are the areas in which we are hoping for clarity from President Trump's visit."

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN

Another issue affecting tariffs is the origin of goods and their components. If a product is made with components from different countries, it could attract a higher tariff or even a combination of fees.

Other areas the Chamber is addressing concern imports from the US. As part of the trade deal, the UK government introduced a duty-free quota which allows 1.4 billion litres of US ethanol to enter the UK annually without tariffs. However, this equates to the UK's total annual demand and has raised concerns about the future





of ethanol production in Britain.

Another is the new preferential tariff-rate quota which allows up to 13,000 tonnes of US beef to be imported at a lower rate, replacing the original 1,000-tonne quota.

While areas for negotiation and clarity continue with the development of AI, digital and pharmaceutical, Mr Bain said the process of getting British imports through US Customs and Border Control has been smoother and more consistent than it was during the first three months of the new tariffs.

He added: "As was the case earlier in the year, we are calling for more clarity and hopefully President Trump's recent visit will help give us that."

NEW OPPORTUNITIES

One of the side-effects of President Trump's new tariffs was to encourage companies to explore territories new or expand into existing markets. Among them is India and the BCC has produced a 1,200-page document to help British manufacturers negotiate the requirements for trade links.

Mr Bain said: "We have been working with the High Commission and businesses to help set up a pipeline for British companies to be able to take advantage of lower tariffs on British exports which should be up and running at the end of next year.

"Another market which we are working with is the EU. Since 2021, British firms have had to fill out customs declarations

and meet other requirements to export to the EU. Before that, it was just like selling to someone in the next town.

"If we can maximise trade opportunities with the EU and India, it will give manufacturers other options in addition to their US trade. Once a company has started exporting, it is generally easier to include another market, but it takes time to make sure you are compliant and understand the different cultures."

As the EU's trade talks with Britain continue, issues such as defence and emissions will be key topics for negotiation.

And there are also issues such as agri-food certificates, which cost British producers £60 million a year for exports, that Mr Bain hopes will be resolved shortly.

He said: "Saving £60 million a year is a significant amount for British producers. We understand that negotiations will take about a year and everything should be in place for 2027 to make trade between Britain and the EU quicker and more simple."





ATA CARNETS: YOUR PASSPORT FOR GOODS WHEN TRADING INTERNATIONALLY

When exploring international markets, the paperwork and logistics involved in moving goods across borders can seem daunting. That's where an ATA Carnet – often called a “passport for goods” – can save businesses time, money, and stress.

An ATA Carnet is an internationally recognised customs document that allows you to temporarily export goods outside the UK without paying duties or taxes. Covering more than 80 countries, it's the simplest way to transport items such as commercial samples, exhibition equipment, or professional tools.

WHY WOULD YOUR BUSINESS USE AN ATA CARNET?

- **Cost saving** – Avoid paying import duty and VAT when goods are only leaving temporarily.
- **Time saving** – One document replaces multiple customs forms, helping you move through borders quickly.

- **Peace of mind** – Carnets are valid for 12 months and can be used multiple times, making them ideal for frequent trips.
- **Global credibility** – Recognised by customs authorities worldwide, Carnets make border crossings smoother and more predictable.

For local businesses attending international trade shows, sending teams abroad for projects, or demonstrating products to overseas clients, an ATA Carnet is often the most efficient solution.

The Herefordshire & Worcestershire Chamber of Commerce is authorised to issue ATA Carnets and can guide you through the process, ensuring your goods

reach their destination hassle-free.

In short: if your goods are travelling – but not being sold – an ATA Carnet is the tool that makes it happen with ease.

NAVIGATING CBAM – WE'RE HERE TO HELP

The EU's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) is beginning to affect UK exporters trading with the EU. From October 2023, reporting requirements have been in place, and by 2026, financial obligations will follow. If your business exports goods such as iron, steel, aluminium, fertilisers, cement, or electricity into the EU, you will need to comply. Our International Trade team can help you:



- Understand CBAM reporting requirements.
- Assess whether your goods are affected.
- Prepare compliance processes in advance of 2026. Get in touch with us for tailored advice and support.

You can use FREE CBAM Health check online, to see how ready you are.

BOOK YOUR PLACE – INTERNATIONAL TRADE FORUM AT MAZAK

We're delighted to confirm that our International Trade Forum will take place in January 2026, kindly hosted at Yamazaki Mazak in Worcester. After 2 sold out events in 2025 This flagship event is a chance to:

- Hear from trade experts and government representatives.

- Gain insights into global market opportunities.
- Network with fellow exporters and international traders.

Spaces are limited, so we encourage early booking to secure your place.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE TRAINING – OCTOBER & NOVEMBER 2025

We are committed to helping businesses build knowledge and confidence in global trade. Upcoming courses include:

October 2025

- 13th October – Import Procedures Including IP/OP
- 27th October – How to use the UK Trade Tariff & How to Reduce Import Duties
- 28th October – Incoterms® 2020

November 2025

- 4th November – How to Check a Customs Declaration & Getting Commercial invoices & Packing Lists right.
- 13th November – How to export to Northern Ireland
- 18th November – A Beginners Practical Guide to Exporting
- 25th November – Preference Rules of Origin

All courses are accredited and designed for businesses at every stage of their international journey.

To book training, forum places, or to discuss CBAM and trade agreements, please contact the International Trade team at

internationaltrade@hwchamber.co.uk

EMPOWERING GROWTH THROUGH SKILLS

Over the summer months of June and July 2025, the Herefordshire & Worcestershire Chamber of Commerce and Heart of Worcestershire College proudly delivered a transformative training partnership programme that illustrates the power of collaboration in driving professional development, business growth and prosperity across the two counties.

This strategic collaboration was built on a shared mission: to enhance productivity, employment and growth opportunities for businesses, while expanding access to essential and in-demand skills for individuals seeking to progress in the workplace. Through this initiative, both organisations reaffirmed their commitment to fostering a culture of continuous professional development across the region.

A total of **460** delegates were upskilled over the two-month period, with **401 eligible for free training**, demonstrating the programme's reach and accessibility. Training was delivered across a dynamic mix of **25 public training days** both face-to-face and virtual and **16 bespoke sessions**, tailored to meet the specific needs of individual businesses. This flexible delivery model ensured that learning was not only accessible but also relevant and impactful.

Delegates engaged in a diverse range of course topics, including:

- Information Technology
- Developing People
- HR, Legislation and Regulation
- PR and Marketing
- International Trade
- Leadership and Management
- Sales and Customer Care

These areas reflect the evolving demands of modern business and the importance of equipping teams with the skills to thrive in competitive environments. From overcoming those Excel dragons to developing assertiveness and confidence in communication, the summer course training schedule offered practical, high-value learning experiences that translated directly into workplace improvements.

Creating a culture of continuous professional development is no longer a luxury, it is a necessity to fill the skills gap businesses across the two counties are facing. Businesses that invest in their people see measurable benefits in productivity, innovation, and employee retention. This summer's training programme is a testament to what can be achieved when education and businesses work hand in hand.

Together, we are building a workforce that is not only skilled but empowered, ready to meet the demands of today and shape the possibilities of tomorrow.



OLIVIA WILLIAMS

Head of Events & Training



AMANDA SWINGEWOOD

Senior Training Co-ordinator

To view our upcoming courses, visit our website: www.hwchamber.co.uk/events-and-training-calendar/



THE LYGON ARMS

FESTIVE DINING AT *The Lygon Arms*

Let the honeyed walls and cosy log fires at The Lygon Arms welcome your party for the warmth and bonhomie of a home-from-home Christmas celebration. Sumptuous feasts and fine wines await, along with a glass or two of festive fizz.

Whether you choose indulgent dining in Grill, a relaxed get-together in Tavern, or an exclusive private event, you'll find the perfect setting for every festive gathering.

Book a celebration to remember at
The Lygon Arms.



COURSE DATES

OCTOBER COURSES DATES

- **Import Procedures including IP/OP**
Monday 13 October, 9.30am-3.30pm
£240+VAT Members / £300+VAT Non-members
Location: Virtual
- **Assertiveness and Confidence at Work**
Tuesday 14 October, 9.00am-4.00pm
£175+VAT Members / £220+VAT Non-members
Location: Worcester
- **Using AI for Businesses**
Wednesday 15 October, 9.00am-4.00pm
£175+VAT Members / £220+VAT Non-members
Location: Worcester
- **IOSH Working Safely®**
Tuesday 21 October, 9.00am-4.00pm
£175+VAT Members / £220+VAT Non-members
Location: Worcester
- **Managing Conflict in the Workplace**
Wednesday 22 October, 9.00am-4.00pm
£175+VAT Members / £220+VAT Non-members
Location: Worcester
- **How to Use the UK Trade Tariff**
Monday 27 October, 1.00pm-2.30pm
£40+VAT Members / £80+VAT Non-members
Location: Virtual
- **How to Reduce Import Duties**
Monday 27 October, 3.00pm-4.30pm
£40+VAT Members / £80+VAT Non-members
Location: Virtual

▪ Incoterms 2020

Tuesday 28 October, 1.30pm-4.30pm
£160+VAT Members / £200+VAT Non-members
Location: Virtual

NOVEMBER COURSES DATES

- **How to Check a Customs Declaration**
Tuesday 4 November, 9.00am-10.30am
£40+VAT Members / £80+VAT Non-members
Location: Virtual
- **Getting Commercial Invoices & Packing Lists Right**
Tuesday 4 November, 11.00am-12.30pm
£40+VAT Members / £80+VAT Non-members
Location: Virtual
- **Managing People in the Team**
Tuesday 4 November, 9.00am-4.00pm
£210+VAT Members / £260+VAT Non-members
Location: Worcester
- **Mailchimp & Email Marketing**
Tuesday 4 November, 9.00am-12.30pm
£95+VAT Members / £115+VAT Non-members
Location: Virtual
- **Managing Neurodivergent Employees**
Thursday 6 November, 9.00am-4.00pm
£175+VAT Members / £220+VAT Non-members
Location: Worcester
- **Intermediate Microsoft Excel – Fully Booked**
Wednesday 12 November, 9.00am-4.00pm
£175+VAT Members / £115+VAT Non-members
Location: Virtual
- **How To Export To Northern Ireland**
Thursday 13 November, 1.30pm-4.30pm
£160+VAT Members / £200+VAT Non-members
Location: Virtual
- **Role of the Team Leader**
Tuesday 18 November, 9.00am-4.00pm
£175+VAT Members / £220+VAT Non-members
Location: Virtual
- **A Beginners Practical Guide to Exporting**
Tuesday 18 November, 9.30am-12.30pm
£160+VAT Members / £200+VAT Non-members
Location: Virtual
- **Intermediate Microsoft Excel**
Thursday 20 November, 9.00am-4.00pm
£175+VAT Members / £220+VAT Non-members
Location: Worcester
- **Internal Auditor Training**
Thursday 20 November, 9.00am-4.00pm
£175+VAT Members / £220+VAT Non-members
Location: Worcester
- **Advanced Microsoft Excel**
Tuesday 25 November, 9.00am-4.00pm
£175+VAT Members / £220+VAT Non-members
Location: Worcester
- **Preference Rules of Origin**
Tuesday 25 November, 1.30pm-4.30pm
£160+VAT Members / £200+VAT Non-members
Location: Virtual

Courses may be subject to change from the time of printing.

Managing supply chain risk



Supply chain disruptions are no longer theoretical threats for businesses. From global shipping problems to local delivery challenges, businesses rely on a critical web of connections. Recent years have revealed starkly how these disruptions directly impact continuity, profitability and reputation. This isn't just about logistics; it's fundamentally about managing risk.

Some businesses, perhaps unknowingly, operate with critical vulnerabilities. It's easy to overlook these until a problem surfaces:

Over-reliance on single suppliers: Tempting for streamlining, but creates a single point of failure.

Lack of visibility: Stopping at immediate partners leaves unseen vulnerabilities further up the chain. External volatility: Global events like trade disputes or energy spikes demand agile responses.

Cyber risks: Increasingly digital

supply chains are targets; a breach at a supplier can halt production or compromise data.

Climate impacts: Extreme weather events are disrupting routes and resources with ripple effects.

A path to resilience

The good news is, effective resilience is achievable. Practical steps can reduce exposure significantly:

Map your supply chain:

Understand your entire supply chain, beyond direct partners. This is the first crucial step to identifying hidden dependencies.

Diversify your supplier base:

Identify alternative partners. Proactive diversification is a small upfront effort yielding significant long-term security.

Conduct regular assessments:

Don't assume 'business as usual.' Periodically review vulnerabilities, prioritising risks by impact and likelihood. This foresight is non-negotiable for true resilience.

Cultivate risk literacy: Arguably the most impactful step. Ensure your team understands supply chain risks and can openly discuss and articulate them. This shift from merely having processes to actively living them creates a significant competitive advantage.

Review insurance: Ensure you are adequately covered for supply chain and related business interruptions.

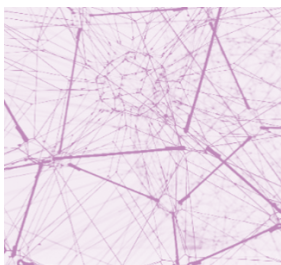
Mastering supply chain risk is no longer optional; it is fundamental for sustainable growth. Businesses that proactively manage supply chain risk not only survive disruptions but often emerge stronger. This isn't about avoiding every problem, but ensuring your business is systematically prepared to overcome the inevitable challenges, transforming potential threats into opportunities for resilience and long-term success.

If you're curious about managing supply chain and other risks contact us at: **www.imergo.co.uk**

Is your supply chain exposed?

Is your business truly prepared for the unexpected? Secure your business with Imergo.

At Imergo, we help businesses identify, assess, and mitigate the complex risks within their supply chains, ensuring your business stays resilient. In short, we help you make sense of risk.



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- Empowerment:** We embed risk literacy within your team, building capability.
- Confidence:** Operate knowing your business is ready for inevitable challenges.

For our free guide for managing supply chain risk visit: <https://bit.ly/45yoloK>, or select



Contact Imergo today for a consultation on strengthening your supply chain resilience.

[www. https://imergo.co.uk/contact/](https://imergo.co.uk/contact/)

NEW SKILLS BOOST FUNDING OFFERS UP TO £6,000 FOR CHAMBER TRAINING

Businesses across Herefordshire and Worcestershire can now access up to £6,000 in grant funding to support staff training, thanks to the return of the Skills Boost 2025–26 programme. Delivered in partnership with Worcestershire Growth Hub, the initiative aims to help organisations upskill their workforce through non-accredited training courses at a reduced cost.

Under the scheme, businesses can claim back 50% of their training costs, up to a maximum of £1,500 per employee and £6,000 per business. The

funding is available to organisations of any size, provided the employees live or work in eligible areas within Herefordshire or Worcestershire.

As an approved training provider, the Herefordshire & Worcestershire Chamber of Commerce is offering a wide range of courses that qualify for this support. Whether you're developing leadership, digital skills, or operational capabilities, now is the perfect time to invest in your team.

The scheme runs from 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026, and employers can claim

funding on training already completed within this period. Funding is limited and will be allocated on a first come, first served basis, so early application is strongly advised.

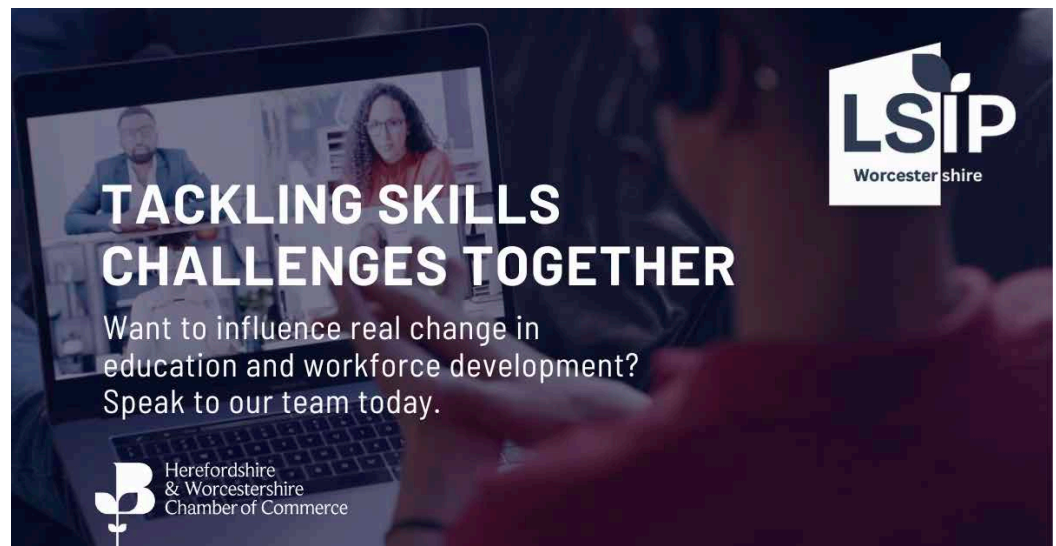
To book your training course, email training@hwchamber.co.uk. For more information on how to claim email - info@worcestershiregrowthhub.co.uk.



WORCESTERSHIRE LOCAL SKILLS IMPROVEMENT PLAN (LSIP)

This quarter, we are focusing on the Health and Social Care sector, a vital industry currently under significant pressure. Across the UK, the NHS is struggling with more than 100,000 vacancies, and forecasts predict a shortfall of over 360,000 staff by 2036/37. Adult social care is facing similar challenges, with more than 130,000 vacancies recorded in 2023/24 alone. These shortages are driven not only by the growing demand for services but also by the difficulties staff encounter in accessing training, career development, and clear pathways into the sector.

Awareness among young people of careers in health and social care remains limited. Despite there being over 350 different career pathways, many young people do not consider the sector as a long-term career option.



Research highlights several barriers: limited awareness of roles, inconsistent access to high-quality work experience, and a lack of tailored careers advice that would help them better understand the opportunities available.

This is why collaboration with employers is critical. By

engaging with us and sharing the challenges you face, you are directly influencing change. The insights you provide will form part of our report, which is submitted to the Department for Education.

Your input helps to shape future policy and support

initiatives that can address staff shortages and improve training access. In other words, by meeting with us, you are helping to build a stronger, more resilient workforce for the future.

Get in touch today:
laurena@hwchamber.co.uk

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At MH ISO Consultancy Ltd, we believe ISO standards aren't barriers, they're bridges to stronger, smarter, more sustainable businesses.

Founded on the principle that ISO doesn't have to be complex, our mission is to streamline your path to ISO excellence with clarity, confidence, and purpose.

In today's competitive landscape, growth isn't just about profit – it's about trust, resilience, and

responsibility. That's where ISO standards unlock real value.

By aligning with ISO 9001, 14001, and 45001, businesses aren't just meeting requirements; they're building credibility, empowering people, and securing long-term success.

Compliance is more than a checklist. We're not here to tick boxes – we're here to build strategies. Through a practical, people-focused approach, we embed ISO standards in ways that inspire innovation, sharpen impact, and strengthen resilience for the long term.

The future of business belongs to organisations that are bold enough to embed excellence at their core.

At MH ISO, compliance is just the beginning – we empower companies to strengthen culture, inspire teams, and achieve lasting success.

Services:

MH ISO Consultancy Ltd provides tailored support to help organisations achieve and sustain ISO excellence.

Our services include:

- **ISO Internal Audits** – Ensuring systems are effective, compliant, and adding real value.
- **H&S Toolbox Talks & Risk Assessments** – Engaging, practical sessions that keep safety front of mind.
- **Legal Compliance Registers** – Clear, up-to-date records that simplify regulatory responsibilities.
- **Management System Maintenance & Support** – Ongoing guidance to keep standards embedded and efficient.
- **Certification Preparation (ISO 9001, 14001 & 45001)** – From gap analysis to final audit readiness, we make the journey straightforward and stress-free.

Why work with us?

- **Certified expertise** across multiple ISO and Health & Safety disciplines
- **Straightforward, practical support** that's realistic, approachable, and jargon-free
- **Proven track record** with SMEs, manufacturers & more.

MH ISO
CONSULTANCY LTD

Melissa Hancox Tech IOSH, PCQI
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Website: www.mhiso.com
Location: Redditch, Worcs.

THREATS TO THE AI BOOM

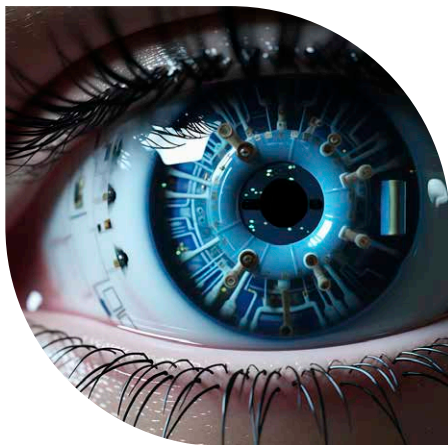
Why data foundations matter for Herefordshire and Worcestershire businesses

The Open Data Institute's (ODI) recent white paper warns that weaknesses in the UK's tech infrastructure could undermine the economic and societal gains promised by the AI boom. Alongside the risks, it sets out practical recommendations for creating diverse, fair, data-centric AI.

FIVE ACTIONS FOR GOVERNMENT

Based on its research, the ODI is calling for the new government to:

1. Ensure broad access to high-quality, well-governed public and private sector data to foster a diverse, competitive AI market.
2. Enforce data protection and labour rights in the data supply chain.
3. Empower people to have more of a say in the sharing and use of data for AI.
4. Update our intellectual property regime to ensure AI models are trained in ways that prioritise trust and empowerment of stakeholders.
5. Increase transparency around the data used to train high-risk AI models.



RISKS: WHY GOVERNANCE AND TRANSPARENCY CAN'T BE OPTIONAL

The white paper argues that the potential for emerging AI technologies to transform sectors such as diagnostics and personalised education shows great promise. Yet significant challenges are attached to widescale adoption. In the case of generative AI, reliance on a handful of machine-learning datasets that ODI research has shown lack robust governance frameworks poses risks to both adoption and deployment.

Inadequate data governance can lead to biases and unethical practices, undermining trust and reliability in critical areas such as healthcare, finance and public services.

These risks are exacerbated by a lack of transparency that is hampering efforts to address biases, remove harmful content and ensure compliance with legal standards. To provide a clearer picture of how data transparency varies across different types of system providers, the ODI is developing a new "AI data transparency index."

BEYOND THE HYPE

Sir Nigel Shadbolt, co-founder of the ODI, said, "If the UK is to benefit from the extraordinary opportunities presented by AI, the government must look beyond the hype and attend to the fundamentals of a robust data ecosystem built on sound governance and ethical foundations".

POLICY DIRECTION: MAKING DATA AI-READY

Labour's election manifesto outlined plans for a National Data Library to bring together existing research programmes and help deliver data-enabled public services. However, the ODI says that first, we need to ensure the data is AI-ready. As well as being accessible and trustworthy, data must meet agreed standards, which require a data assurance and quality assessment infrastructure. The ODI's recent research has found that currently—with a few exceptions—AI training datasets typically lack robust governance measures throughout the AI life cycle, posing safety, security, trust and ethical challenges related to data protection and fair labour practices.

INSIGHTS: WHAT TO WATCH

Other insights from the ODI's research include:

- The public needs safeguarding against the risk of personal data being used

illegally to train AI models. Steps must be taken to address the ongoing risks of generative AI models inadvertently leaking personal data through clever prompting by users.

- Key transparency information about data sources, copyright and inclusion of personal information is rarely included by systems flagged within the Partnership for AI's AI Incidents Database.
- Intellectual property law must be urgently updated to protect the UK's creative industries from unethical AI model training practices.
- Legislation safeguarding labour rights will be vital to the UK's AI Safety agenda.
- The rising price of high-quality AI training data excludes potential innovators like small businesses and academia.

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR HEREFORDSHIRE AND WORCESTERSHIRE FIRMS

For SMEs across our two counties exploring AI pilots or scaling existing tools, the ODI's says competitive advantage starts with trustworthy data. Practical first steps include:

- Map your data supply chain: know where training data, prompts and outputs originate, and document licences/permissions.
- Strengthen governance early: set quality standards, retention rules and human-in-the-loop checks before you deploy.
- Build transparency into procurement: ask vendors to evidence data lineage and moderation processes, especially for high-risk use cases.
- Protect people and IP: verify compliance with data protection, copyright and labour standards across your providers.
- Plan for data costs: budget for high-quality, rights-cleared datasets to avoid lock-in and reduce model risk.

www.theodi.org

10 GAME-CHANGING BENEFITS OF AI IN BUSINESS

In a world where time is money and innovation is the currency of success, businesses can't afford to stand still. Yet, too many leaders are trapped in the daily grind, struggling to find time for the big-picture thinking that drives growth.

Enter artificial intelligence. Embracing AI is a powerful ally that's reshaping industries, streamlining workflows, and unlocking opportunities you didn't even know existed.

And it isn't just for tech giants or Silicon Valley startups. It's a tool that businesses of all sizes can leverage to supercharge their productivity, creativity, and efficiency. While the idea of integrating AI into your operations might feel daunting, being afraid of it won't stop you from being left behind. The businesses that embrace AI today will be the ones leading the pack tomorrow.

Rob Smithson, business applications lead at Microsoft UK, highlights how generative AI tools can help businesses and employees alike focus on the "more meaningful parts of their role." According to Smithson, AI agents - customisable AI tools that work alongside you and your team - can handle everything from project management to research, freeing up valuable time for strategic thinking and innovation.

Here are 10 key ways AI can help you supercharge your business:

1. Automation of repetitive tasks

One of the most immediate advantages of AI is automation. AI-powered tools and software can handle repetitive, time-consuming tasks such as data entry, appointment scheduling, and customer support inquiries.

This not only speeds up processes but also reduces the likelihood of human error. Businesses can allocate human resources to more strategic and creative tasks, boosting overall productivity.

2. Enhanced decision-making

AI can analyse vast amounts of data in real time, allowing businesses to make informed decisions based on accurate insights. AI-driven analytics help companies identify trends, predict market changes, and optimise business strategies. For example, AI-powered business intelligence tools help organisations

understand consumer behaviour, detect anomalies, and suggest data-backed solutions.

3. Improved customer experience

Customer satisfaction is crucial for business success, AI is playing a key role in enhancing customer service. AI chatbots and virtual assistants provide instant responses to customer inquiries, reducing wait times and improving satisfaction. AI also enables personalised customer interactions by analysing purchase history and browsing patterns to recommend products tailored to individual preferences.

4. Better marketing and sales strategies

AI-powered marketing tools help businesses create targeted campaigns by analysing customer behaviour, preferences, and past interactions. AI can segment audiences more effectively and suggest the best ways to engage potential customers. In sales, AI-driven CRM systems help teams prioritise leads and predict which prospects are most likely to convert, ultimately increasing revenue.

5. Cost reduction and increased efficiency

AI helps businesses optimise operations by automating tasks and improving process efficiency, reducing labour costs and operational expenses. For example, AI-driven supply chain management systems can predict inventory needs and optimize logistics, minimizing waste and ensuring smooth operations. By streamlining workflows, businesses can allocate resources more effectively and maximise profits.

6. Fraud detection and enhanced security

AI is transforming cybersecurity by detecting suspicious activities and preventing fraud. AI-powered algorithms monitor financial transactions and identify anomalies that indicate potential fraud, helping businesses take preventive action before any damage occurs. Additionally, AI

strengthens cybersecurity by identifying and mitigating potential threats in real time, protecting sensitive business data.

7. Efficient supply chain management

AI optimises supply chain operations by predicting demand fluctuations, improving inventory management, and enhancing logistics. AI-powered tools analyse historical data, weather conditions, and market trends to provide accurate demand forecasting, reducing waste and ensuring businesses are always stocked with the right products at the right time. This leads to better customer satisfaction and reduced operational costs.

8. Gaining a competitive edge

Businesses that embrace AI gain a significant competitive advantage. AI-driven insights enable companies to innovate faster, identify emerging market opportunities, and optimize business strategies. Companies that leverage AI stay ahead of industry trends, making them more adaptable to changes in consumer behaviour and market demands.

9. Scalability and business growth

AI allows businesses to scale operations efficiently without significantly increasing costs. AI-driven automation helps companies handle increased workloads, expand customer support capabilities, and manage larger datasets without requiring a proportional increase in human resources. This scalability makes it easier for businesses to enter new markets and grow at a sustainable pace.

10. Augmenting human workforce

Rather than replacing jobs, AI enhances employee productivity by handling mundane tasks and offering valuable insights. AI-powered tools assist employees with data analysis, research, and decision-making, allowing them to focus on more creative and high-impact tasks. By working alongside AI, employees can improve their efficiency and job satisfaction.

UPCOMING CHAMBER CONFERENCES

HR Professionals Conference in partnership with Hewett Recruitment

Thursday 13 November 2025, 9.00am-3.00pm

The Bank House Hotel, Bransford, Worcester, WR6 5JD

Member price - £60.00+VAT / Non-member price - £80.00+VAT

This conference is aimed at HR professionals from companies of all sizes and sectors. It's an event not to be missed for those wanting to hear from inspirational speakers to understand the current challenges and future innovations of the industry. The event will also include a two course lunch and plenty of networking opportunities.

Health and Wellbeing Conference, sponsored by Lucart Hygiene & Workwell Herefordshire and Worcestershire

Friday 30 January 2026, 9.00am-3.00pm

Hilton Puckrup Hall Hotel, Puckrup Lane, Tewkesbury, Gloucestershire, GL20 6EL

Member price - £60.00+VAT / Non-member price - £80.00+VAT

Connect with fellow business professionals at this engaging health and wellbeing conference, featuring inspiring talks, interactive group workshops, and practical strategies to enhance your knowledge in the workplace. The event will also include a two course lunch and plenty of networking opportunities.

Meet the Buyer Conference

Friday 6th February 2026, 8.30am-12.30pm

Sixways Stadium, Warriors Way, Worcester, WR3 8ZE

Member price - £30.00+VAT / Non-member price - £50.00+VAT

Join the Chamber and our Private Sector Partners at the Meet the Buyer Conference, a half-day event offering practical insights into what suppliers need to succeed. Learn about essential experience, policies, and accreditations, discover how to find and access new opportunities, and explore how small businesses can benefit from bidding for tenders.

UPCOMING NETWORKING EVENTS

Netwalking in Hereford

Wednesday 8 October, 9.30-11.00am

Discover Parks, Peal Lake Country Holiday Park, Leominster, Herefordshire, HR6 9NQ

Maximise Your Membership

Tuesday 14 October, 9.30-11.30am

Hereford Racecourse, Roman Road, Hereford, Herefordshire, HR4 9QU

Annual Bank of England Briefing

Friday 17 October, 8.00-10.00am

The Bank House Hotel, Bransford, Worcester, WR6 5JD

Lunchtime Networking

Thursday 30 October, 12.00-1.00pm

Online, Via Zoom

Get Connected in Kempsey

Thursday 6 November, 9.30-11.00am

Edwards Motors, 19 Main Road, Kempsey, Worcester, WR5 3PA

Get Connected in Hereford

Wednesday 19 November, 12.30-2.00pm

The Beefy Boys, Old Market, Hereford, HR4 9HU



OLIVIA WILLIAMS

Head of Events & Training



YASMIN DUFFETT

Senior Events Co-ordinator

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Providing fractional CFOs to ambitious SME businesses

As the World's #1 provider of fractional Chief Financial Officers, The CFO Centre supports over 750 CFOs based in over 18 countries with expertise spanning over multiple industries.



Your local CFOs in Herefordshire and Worcestershire (above: left to right) **Richard Lee, Craig Butcher and Simon Neale.**

What is a CFO?

A Chief Financial Officer, sometimes known as an FD (Finance Director), provides expert financial leadership to a company.

What is a 'Fractional' CFO?

A fractional CFO is a part-time financial expert who provides strategic, flexible, and cost-effective CFO-level support tailored to a business's specific needs.

5 Benefits of The CFO Centre Service:

- **Cost-effective:** Avoids the overhead of a full-time CFO.
- **Flexibility:** Services can be adjusted to meet changing needs.
- **Specialized expertise:** Access to industry-specific skills.
- **Strategic support:** Helps with planning, budgeting, and forecasting.
- **Increased capacity:** Allows businesses to focus on core competencies while managing financial matters.

Who Benefits from a Fractional CFO?

1. **Startups** and growing businesses: Need financial guidance without the full-time commitment.
2. Companies undergoing significant **change**: Need support with mergers, acquisitions, or restructuring.
3. Businesses seeking to **scale**: Need expertise to manage growth and expansion.
4. Companies facing **financial challenges**: Need a strategic partner to navigate difficult situations.

Get in Touch

If you would like to speak to Richard, Simon or Craig about taking on a fractional CFO call on...

Richard Lee
Simon Neale
Craig Butcher

☎ **07989 704591**
☎ **07713 073778**
☎ **07771 577875**

✉ **richard.lee@cfocentre.com**
✉ **simon.neale@cfocentre.com**
✉ **craig.butcher@cfocentre.com**

Or contact us via: www.cfocentre.com



‘Freezer’ and ‘growth’ share schemes:

the future for family business owners?

Family business owners will be acutely aware of the changes to both inheritance tax (IHT) and Business Relief (BR) which will take effect from 6 April 2026.

Faced with the need to review their tax and succession planning, many business owners could reduce their exposure to IHT by implementing a ‘freezer’ and ‘growth’ share scheme.

How do ‘freezer’ and ‘growth’ shares work?

Freezer shares are shares whose value is frozen and are usually held by existing shareholders. These shares provide a specific value when the holder exits or winds up the business.

Growth shares gain value when the business reaches an approved threshold which is known as the hurdle rate. This type of share is usually held by younger members of the family or family trusts. They can also come with or without voting or dividend rights.

Who might benefit from freezer and growth shares?

If you’re a shareholder of a business and one of more of the following scenarios applies, a freezer and growth share scheme may be worth considering:

- Your investment or trading companies have a value in excess of £1m and aren’t expected to fully qualify for BR. A significant IHT saving may be possible as the growth in value of the company will fall outside your estate
- You need a source of income or access to capital. Freezer shares allow you to continue to receive dividends or the proceeds of a share sale up to the hurdle rate
- You want to retain involvement and control in the company
- You want to encourage the next generation – the use of growth shares will incentivise and reward their efforts.

What are the tax implications?

Before making any changes to shares, a professional valuation of the company is important to help establish the hurdle rate and associated tax implications.

IHT is likely to be a driver for this type of scheme with a clear benefit in capping the value of the shares however an

additional benefit is possible if the shareholder of the freezer shares draws out value through a dividend or share sale. The value of their retained shares then decreases, as does their IHT liability.

Business owners should also be aware that any allocation of growth shares is a disposal of the right to participate in the future growth of the company. Careful consideration of the value of such an interest is needed to clarify the IHT and capital gains tax (CGT) consequences. Initially the growth shares are likely to have minimal value but over time, as the business grows, this will increase.

If the growth shares are gifted immediately after issue, depending on the structure of the company and whether the recipients of the shares are an individual or a trust, a Potentially Exempt Transfer or Chargeable Lifetime Transfer will take place. Put simply, the transfer must be structured carefully to avoid an immediate charge to IHT. Existing shareholders will also need to survive for seven years from the date of the gift for the value of the growth shares to fall out of account when valuing their estates for IHT purposes.

When considering CGT, if the growth shares are not subscribed for at market value, a CGT charge may be triggered. Nevertheless, holdover relief may be available if the business is a qualifying trading business or if the shares are transferred to a family trust. If holdover relief is available, this will help in deferring any CGT charge until the recipient disposes of the shares.

There are also income tax consequences to consider. These will be unique to each individual and will require bespoke advice.

For more information, please contact



Katherine Hague, Partner (TEP), Head of Private Wealth

M: 07467 715 408 | **E:** khague@hcrlaw.com



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M: 07584 015 571 | **E:** levans@hcrlaw.com

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CHAIR'S REPORT

OCTOBER-NOVEMBER 2025

Over the years, I've run several SMEs (Small to Medium Size Enterprises) and am naturally interested in what's happening in the sector. As a result, and for this Chair's Report, I'm reflecting on the impact of SMEs on the UK economy.

MIKE FORRESTER



Since 6 April 2025, the criteria for defining an SME has been: a small business in the UK, defined by meeting two out of the following three criteria:

1. an annual turnover not exceeding £15 million
2. a balance sheet total not exceeding £7.5 million and
3. no more than 50 employees on average

As well as in interest in our two counties, and the surrounding area, the bigger picture looks like this:

- From the start of 2024, SMEs made up 99.8% of all private sector businesses - approximately 5.5 million in total. Small businesses (0-49 employees) accounted for 99.2%.
- SMEs employed around 16.6 million people, representing 60% of all private-sector employment; small businesses (0-49 employees) alone employed 13 million, or 47%. SME turnover stood at approximately £2.8 trillion, which is about 52% of private sector turnover.
- SMEs are widely regarded as the backbone of the UK economy - not just in terms of employment and turnover but also innovation, adaptability and growth.
- Adoption of technologies like AI is rising among SMEs. According to Intuit QuickBooks data, 36% are currently growing (up from 21% in mid 2024) and 77% of

AI adopters report increased productivity - some within just three months.

- However, 43% of SMEs still have no AI plans, meaning many are missing out on potential benefits; full AI integration could contribute as much as £470 billion to the UK economy by 2035.
- Research suggests that if SME e-commerce were better supported, boosting SME online exports could unlock an additional £7 billion in exports and create tens of thousands of well-paid jobs over the next decade.

In 2024, Herefordshire and Worcestershire saw more new businesses registered than ever before: 4,025 in Herefordshire and 5,059 in Worcestershire (including Micro businesses) bringing the combined two counties' total to around a total of 47,718 companies (including micro businesses) of which 7,065 are SMEs (ONS data).

With that said, it is critical that this sector of UK commerce is well supported. Indeed, the British Chambers of Commerce lobby government constantly to increase and improve the SME business environment - drawing much of their lobbying and policy preparation for the QES surveys we undertake across the UK.

We really do appreciate it if you've taken part in the latest QES - thank you, Mike.

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ELSTON HR APPOINT A NEW HR CONSULTANT



Elston HR is excited to welcome Géraldine Mannion as the newest member of its growing consultancy team. Géraldine joins as an HR Consultant, bringing extensive experience from her roles as HR Manager at Amco Services and Senior HR Generalist at Halliburton.

She will be working alongside Nadia Delgrosso, who is celebrating her one-year anniversary at Elston HR in September, as the consultancy continues to expand its expertise and client offering.

Claire Elston, Founder and Managing Director of Elston HR, commented: "It's fantastic to see the consultancy grow with such talented professionals. I'm thrilled to have Géraldine on board and to be building a team that delivers real impact for our clients."

With Géraldine's appointment, Elston HR continues to go from strength to strength, solidifying its reputation for being one of the top HR consultancies in the West Midlands.

MFG SOLICITORS STRENGTHENS WORCESTER TEAM

Chamber patrons mfg Solicitors has strengthened its Corporate and Commercial Property offerings in Worcester through two partner appointments.

Widely respected corporate law specialist Sophie Thornton has joined the firm from international law firm, Pinsent Masons. With a strong track record in mergers and acquisitions, corporate reorganisations, joint ventures and shareholder agreements, Sophie's arrival marks a significant addition to mfg's corporate capabilities.



L-R CLARE LANG, SOPHIE THORNTON, RUTH BOURTON AND BEN ROTHERY

The firm has also strengthened its Commercial Property division with the appointment of Ruth Bourton. She joins from LCP UK where she served as in-house Legal Counsel providing both strategic and day-to-day advice on its extensive property portfolio. Ruth advises on a range of commercial property matters, including landlord and tenant transactional work, acquisitions and disposals of commercial units, refinancing transactions, and corporate support.

www.mfgsolicitors.com

SURF TECH IT WELCOMES BEN JORDAN AS LEVEL 2 HELPDESK ENGINEER

Surf Tech IT is delighted to welcome Ben Jordan to the team as a Level 2 Helpdesk Engineer. Ben first joined the business through an ICT Level 3 Apprenticeship, delivered by fellow Chamber members The Development Manager Ltd (TDM).

Now 19, Ben has successfully completed his studies and brings energy, professionalism, and excellent customer communication to the helpdesk team.

"Ben is a fantastic asset. His enthusiasm and commitment to learning make him a perfect fit for our growing business," says Managing Director Matthew Parsons.

With a lifelong passion for IT—despite both parents working as paramedics—Ben is driven to expand his skills and progress within the company. His ambition and dedication reflect Surf Tech IT's commitment to nurturing talent and investing in the future.



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What sets Clever Commercial Finance apart is our commitment to building lasting relationships. We work with transparency, professionalism, and integrity, guiding clients through what can often feel like a complex and time-sensitive process. By leveraging our lender network and sector expertise, we simplify decision-making and ensure funding is secured with minimal stress.



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CHAMBER LEADERS SHARE THE KEY TO MEMBERSHIP SUCCESS

Marketing Agency Owner Ruby Edwards talks to Mike Forrester, Chair, and Sharon Smith, CEO, of the Herefordshire & Worcestershire Chamber of Commerce.

Ruby: Over the years I've recommended and provided outsourced marketing to support standard, strategic and patron members, helping them maximise on the benefits offered. What do you see as the single most useful part of the membership options?

Mike: *It's important that members at all levels appreciate that it's a two-way relationship. Being a member is only the door opener to networking & events and that's where the benefits lie. You have to build a network relationship, build your contacts list and be consistent in attendance. It's a usually a longer-term value add strategy, not a short-term impact.*

Sharon: *Being part of a local business community organisation, and all the support, connections and opportunities that this opens up.*

Ruby: I believe that being your unique self – with all your quirks – are your super-powers in business (and life in general) For example, I'm straight-talking and also a PR which, instead of being counter-intuitive, works well to gain trust and is also a little different in the marketing field. What do you see as your super-powers, that have supported you in business, and why?

Mike: *Being proactive, building a great team, giving the team space to achieve and grow.*

Sharon: *Being down to earth and acting with trust, honesty and integrity.*

Ruby: We support members and their businesses across the two counties with **marketing, websites** and **PR**. How would you describe your role at the Chamber in just three words?

Mike: *Supportive, Vision, Inclusive.*

Sharon: *Connect, Create, Celebrate.*

Ruby: What are your words of advice for businesses going into 2026?

Mike: *It never gets easier. Persistence and hard work always win. Nothing happens until someone does something.*

Sharon: *Never give up.*

Ruby: And finally, what's the one word you'd use to describe your colleague?

Mike: *Calm.*

Sharon: *Determined.*

Take a look online and learn a little bit more about the team at You Do Better: Elizabeth, Alice, Ray, Phil, Ruby and co: www.youdobetter.co.uk.

Marketing. PR. Websites. You Do Better. Herefordshire, Worcestershire and beyond!





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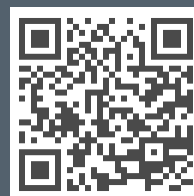
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28 & 29 November | 5, 6, 12, 13, 19 & 20
December, 7.45pm (7pm arrival)

Get the full Christmas works at one of our All-Out Christmas nights on The Courtyard Lounge. A 3-course Christmas dinner with a glass of mulled wine.

2 Courses £35, 3 Courses £40

CLASSIC CHRISTMAS LUNCH

1, 2, 3, 8, 9, 15 & 16 December
12pm (11.30am arrival)

A classic roast turkey dinner (or veggie alternative) and Christmas pudding... what better way to get festive?

2 Courses £25

Enquiries to foodanddrink@courtyard.org.uk

FREE AFTER-PARTIES

6, 12 & 19 December | FREE

Keep the vibe alive and party on after the curtain falls on Panto or Comedy Club. Join us in the Café Bar for some free live music or a DJ.

Book show tickets via courtyard.org.uk



JOIN US IN CELEBRATING **THE BEST** OF THE **SOCIAL HOUSING** SECTOR

The Housing Executive Awards are dedicated entirely to the social housing sector. The awards is a platform that aims to celebrate the most innovative projects in the sector, as well as the people that make them happen. In our first year, The Housing Executive Awards looks to put a spotlight on the great work being done to make sure those most in need in society have access to safe, affordable housing.

Taking place on Tuesday 14th October 2025, at Bolton Wanderers FC Stadium, awards nominations are available to all organisations who play a role in the social housing sector, and have contributed to providing affordable housing and changing lives.

Categories:

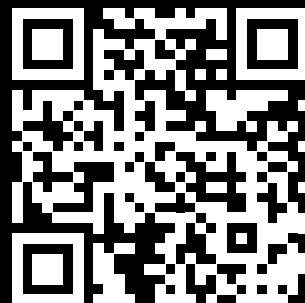
- Best Retrofit Initiative**
- Rising Star/Best Trainee Award**
- Best Decarbonisation Approach**
- Best Social Value Project**
- Best Affordable Housing Development**
- Best Housing Association of the year**
- Council of the year**
- Best use of data and technology**
- Women in social housing award**
- Partnership of the Year**



www.housingexecutiveawards.co.uk



Attend, Nominate, Vote



We'd like to extend our thanks to our current sponsors, who we can't wait to all see on stage announcing their awards on **October 14th**!

Headline sponsor - Metis

Best Retrofit Initiative - Langley

Rising Star/Best Trainee Award - Kingdom Academy

Best Decarbonisation Approach - Cyd Innovation

Best Social Value Project - NHMF Frameworkx

Best Affordable Housing Development - M3

Best Housing Association of the year - Global Guardians

Council of the year - Metis Energy Ltd

Best use of data and technology - Triple Value Impact

Women in social housing award - Morgan Sindall Property Services

Partnership of the Year - VSPG Housing

If you want to not only promote your business, but also align your business with the social good that we're looking to commend with any one of our Housing Executive Awards, Why not sponsor one of our remaining categories?

Sponsorship opportunities for the Housing Executive Awards are still available in the following categories:

• **Best Repairs and Maintenance Team**

For those looking to attend, tickets are **£100 each or £1,000 for a table of twelve**, with tickets to the event also including catering and complimentary drinks.

We can't wait to welcome you all to Bolton Wanderers Stadium for what promises to be a special night of celebration. The social housing sector supports and enriches so many lives, and it's only right that we give back to those who make it all possible.



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- 1 x social media edit upto 30 seconds
- Drone footage included

Bespoke Video

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- 1 x main brand video, upto 5 mins in length
- 5 x 10-30 second social media edits
- Drone footage included



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