

# **BUSINESS MANIFESTO**

## **2026-2027**



PATRON

MEMBERS



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**Sharon Smith**  
Chief Executive

**Herefordshire & Worcestershire Chamber of Commerce**

It gives me great pleasure to introduce the 2026/27 Business Manifesto for Herefordshire & Worcestershire Chamber of Commerce. Shaped by our Quarterly Economic Surveys throughout 2025 and ongoing engagement with businesses across both counties, this manifesto reflects the six key priorities our Members have identified for the year ahead.

As we enter 2026/27, businesses continue to navigate economic uncertainty, cost pressures, rapid technological change and evolving global markets.

In this environment, a clear vision and a strong, collective voice are more important than ever.

This manifesto sets out how the Chamber will champion our Members’ interests, influence policy and provide practical support to drive sustainable economic growth across Herefordshire and Worcestershire.

Our focus centres on the critical issues shaping today’s business landscape. We will continue to advocate for measures that ease operational cost pressures and strengthen competitiveness. Addressing skills gaps, supporting workforce development and investing in leadership and wellbeing remain essential to improving productivity and long-term prosperity.

We are committed to promoting inclusive and diverse workplaces, recognising that they drive innovation, engagement and performance.

At the same time, we will support businesses to strengthen cyber security, embrace digital transformation and harness emerging technologies to improve efficiency and unlock new opportunities.

International trade remains a vital engine of growth, and we will continue to champion policies and partnerships that facilitate market access and streamline processes.

Supporting revenue growth, profitability and access to finance will also be key to enabling businesses to invest, innovate and create jobs.

Sustainability and progress towards net zero remain central to future competitiveness, and we will help businesses balance commercial success with environmental responsibility.

This manifesto provides a clear roadmap for collaboration between business leaders, policymakers and stakeholders, ensuring the right conditions are in place for enterprise to thrive. I would like to thank all those who have contributed to its development and look forward, alongside the Chamber team, to delivering our commitments throughout 2026/27.



**Chris Walklett**  
President

**Herefordshire & Worcestershire Chamber of Commerce**

As we present the Herefordshire & Worcestershire Chamber of Commerce Manifesto for 2026–27, our two counties continue to demonstrate the ambition, ingenuity and crucially, resilience, that define our business community. Over the past year, business across Herefordshire and Worcestershire has navigated a national landscape of tightening margins and shifting demand. Yet despite those headwinds, local businesses have continued to innovate, invest, and adapt—sustaining jobs, developing skills, and strengthening our regional economy.

The Chamber’s work during the last year has been instrumental in supporting this progress.

From county-specific networking and sector roundtables to our flagship Expo, Members have been able to connect, showcase capabilities, and share practical know-how.

Through targeted communications, skills development initiatives and specialist hubs, we’ve helped businesses build resilience in areas such as cost control, people and skills, cyber readiness, export growth and sustainability. And through the national Chamber network, we’ve ensured the voice of our Members is heard by policymakers and financial institutions alike.

Looking ahead, the challenges and opportunities are clear. Rising operational costs, the imperative for digital security, global trading pressures, and the transition to more sustainable business models will continue to shape conditions. This manifesto sets out our collective commitment to address these priorities with clarity, ambition and unity—so that businesses here not only weather uncertainty, but seize the opportunities of a changing economy.

Together, we will continue building a dynamic, inclusive and future-ready economy for Herefordshire and Worcestershire—one that thrives within, and contributes meaningfully to, the wider UK landscape.



Herefordshire & Worcestershire  
Chamber of Commerce

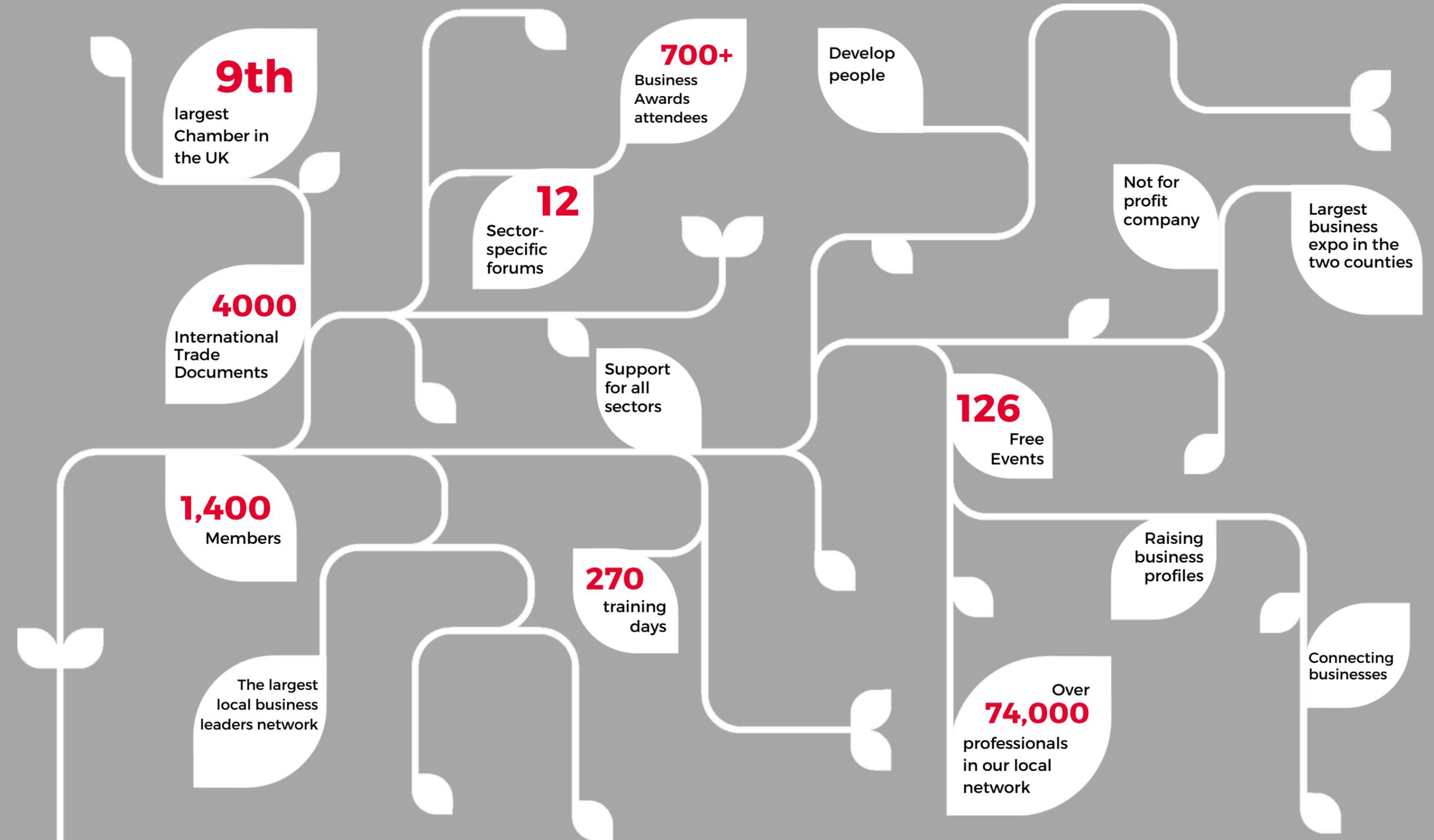
# ABOUT US



## Our Purpose:

To be the voice of business - leading, championing and connecting organisations across Herefordshire and Worcestershire through the provision of services, solutions, knowledge and opportunities, empowering them to succeed and drive a resilient, sustainable and growing local economy that creates lasting positive impact for our communities and environment.

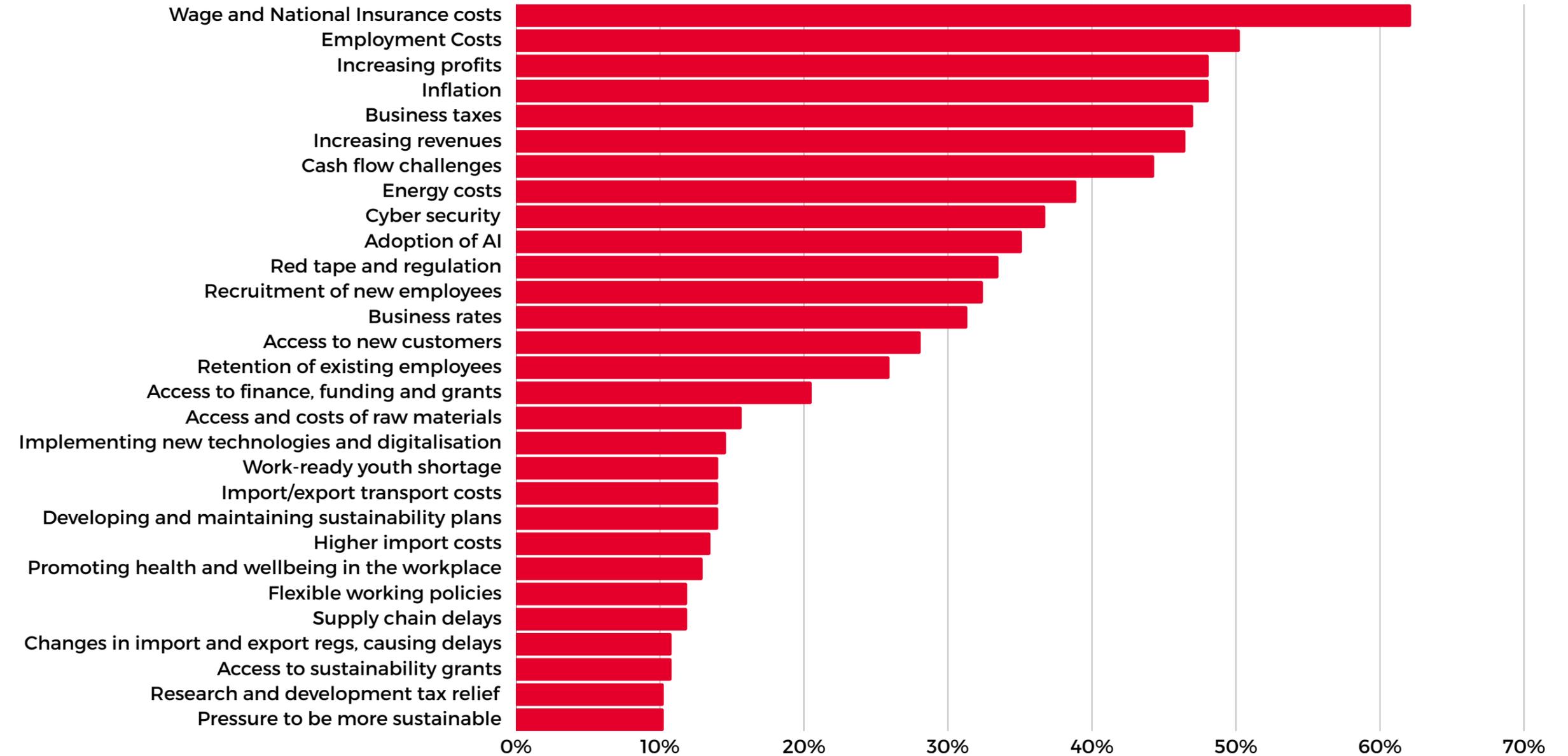
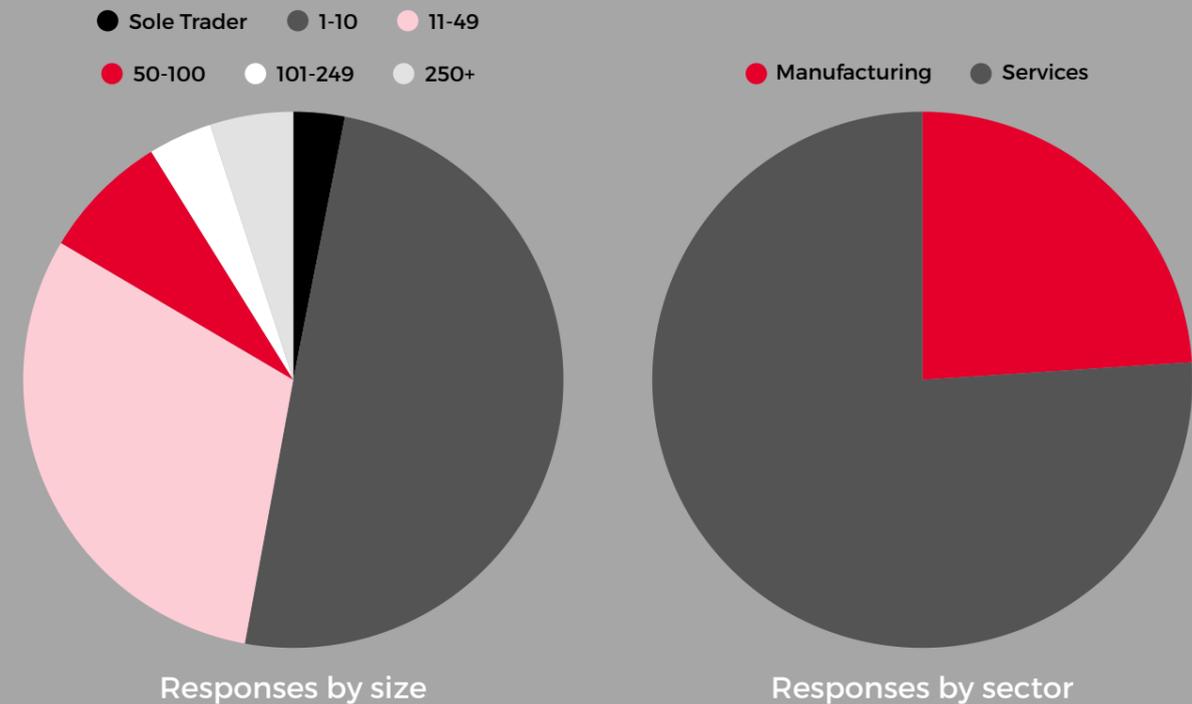
## Our Values:



# 2026-2027 BUSINESS PRIORITIES



Across the year, the Policy team gathers data from local businesses through the Quarterly Economic Survey. More than 300 businesses have identified the most significant challenges affecting their operations, illustrated on the following page.



## HOW DO WE CONTROL COSTS?

### CONTROLLING COSTS

In 2026, business costs remain a critical factor in shaping a company's performance and profitability. Elevated operating costs can strain financial resources, limit growth opportunities, and reduce the ability to invest in innovation or expansion. Conversely, effective cost management allows businesses to direct funds toward strategic initiatives, improve profit margins, and stay competitive in the marketplace. Changes in costs, including those for raw materials, labour, and overheads, also affect pricing strategies and customer demand.

Careful monitoring and management of business costs are therefore essential for long-term sustainability and success. Understanding cost challenges and their fluctuations throughout the year is particularly important. The Quarterly Economic Survey (QES) continues to provide valuable insights into these trends. In 2026, we remain committed to prioritising this resource and ensuring its findings are published and readily accessible to our Members.

The Quarterly Economic Surveys (QES) carried out during 2025 revealed largely consistent trends in business cost pressures, with minimal change over the course of the year. In the first quarter, 52% of businesses reported corporate taxation as a concern, and by November 2025 this figure remained broadly unchanged at 52%. Inflation followed a similar pattern: 45% of businesses highlighted it as a concern in Q1, with this proportion easing slightly to 43% by Q4. Meanwhile, concern about business rates stood at 24% in the first quarter and remained stable throughout 2025.

### WHAT THE CHAMBER WILL DELIVER IN 2026/2027:

Working with the national Chamber network and the British Chambers of Commerce, we will continue to lobby the government to ensure businesses receive the support they need to manage rising costs.

- Work closely with public sector partners including all Council and Growth Hubs across the two counties to ensure all Members receive timely information, guidance, and access to all relevant grant and funding opportunities. These will be promoted prominently through our website and social media channels.
- Maintain regular communication with Members through press releases and the Quarterly Economic Survey (QES) reports, providing updates on policy developments and sector trends while actively seeking feedback on emerging cost pressures.
- Deliver a programme of events and webinars, including our 12 sector-specific forums, to share best practice from Member businesses and explore practical approaches to reducing costs.
- Promote the 2026 Salary and Benefits Report as a valuable benchmarking tool to help Members assess wage pressures and strengthen their recruitment and retention strategies.
- Work in partnership with our affiliate partner Quest to provide Members with access to four essential services: HR support, Health & Safety guidance, Legal Advice, and Tax & VAT advice.

### Your challenges:

Our Q4 Quarterly Economic Survey found that 62% of businesses cited wage and National Insurance costs as their main concern for 2026/27, with 50% also highlighting wider employment costs.

Inflation and rising costs a continue to challenge businesses across Herefordshire and Worcestershire.

### Service Spotlight:

As a Member, you receive free access to four essential business support services: HR, Health & Safety, Legal, and Tax & VAT, delivered by our **QUEST** affiliate partner Quest. With a dedicated advice line, 700+ downloadable templates, and legal expenses insurance cover up to £1,000,000, you're equipped to support business growth while keeping costs managed and under control.



We host four Growth Forums each year, designed for businesses eager to share best practices and gain practical insights that help overcome barriers to growth.



## “ British Chambers of Commerce

### INFLATION EASES BUT BUSINESS COSTS STILL BITING

Responding to the most recent inflation figures from the Office for National Statistics, which show UK consumer price inflation slowing to around 3.0%, businesses will be cautiously encouraged by the downward trend. However, the broader picture still reflects persistent cost pressures, with many firms reporting that input costs and prices remain elevated and weighing on confidence and investment decisions.

Stuart Morrison, Research Manager at the British Chambers of Commerce, said that while headline inflation has eased, concerns among businesses remain high, with the cost of doing business continuing to squeeze margins and slow growth.

“With inflation showing signs of easing, firms will hope this reinforces the case for supportive policy,” he said. But he stressed that reducing the cost burden on companies, through measures such as lowering energy and regulatory costs, reforming business rates and making exporting cheaper, is crucial if businesses are to fully unlock their growth potential.



is really great

## HOW DO WE GROW REVENUE?

### GROWING REVENUE

In 2026, changes in profit and revenue remain key indicators of a business's overall financial health and performance. Revenue growth suggests that a company is successfully attracting new customers, increasing sales volumes, or strengthening its market position. Sustained increases in revenue can provide the foundation for improved profitability, greater resilience, and reinvestment in future growth.

However, higher revenue does not automatically translate into higher profits. Profit margins continue to be influenced by operating costs, wage pressures, supply chain expenses, pricing strategies, and overall efficiency. Businesses that can manage costs effectively while maintaining competitive pricing are better positioned to protect and grow their margins. In a climate shaped by inflationary pressures and rising employment costs, careful financial management, productivity improvements, and strategic planning are increasingly important to ensure that revenue growth converts into sustainable profit.

#### Your challenges:

The Quarterly Economic Survey monitors business confidence in turnover and profitability. In Q1 2025, 43% of businesses expected turnover to increase, rising slightly to 44% by Q4.

Profitability expectations were slightly weaker, with 37% anticipating improvement in Q1, falling to 33% by Q4. Meanwhile, the share expecting a decline rose from 26% to 31%.

## WHAT THE CHAMBER WILL DELIVER IN 2026/2027:

By leveraging the national Chamber network and the British Chambers of Commerce, we will help shape a supportive policy environment for businesses. Working with Government and the Bank of England, we will champion greater investment, practical business support, and long-term economic strategies. Through coordinated lobbying and clear evidence, we will ensure the voice of business is heard and promote the conditions needed for sustainable growth and confident investment.

### Service Spotlight:

The Chamber Business Expo unites local businesses, entrepreneurs, and community leaders for a full



day of networking, learning, and growth. Businesses can explore innovative products and services, attend expert led workshops, build valuable connections, and discover new suppliers and sales opportunities to grow their business.

We offer a range of advertising opportunities to suit every marketing budget. Leverage our network of 74,000 business professionals and 1,400 member businesses to expand your brand's reach.

Did you know?

- Deliver targeted industry and county events, networking opportunities, and informative webinars designed to strengthen connections, share expertise, and raise Members' profiles both locally and nationally.
- Host the Herefordshire & Worcestershire Chamber Expo 2026, providing businesses with a high-profile platform to showcase their brand, generate new leads and sales, and engage with experts on current and emerging issues.
- Promote Member opportunities, including training programmes, funding streams, and business support initiatives, through coordinated Chamber communications, e-shots, and publications to maximise awareness and uptake.
- Grow the Growth Forum as a collaborative space for businesses of all sizes to exchange best practice, address shared challenges, and build relationships that support sustainable, long-term growth.
- Provide valuable insight and strong advocacy through the Quarterly Economic Survey and regular Bank of England economic briefings, ensuring Members remain informed and their views are represented.
- Provide a variety of marketing opportunities to help businesses boost their visibility and extend their reach.



# BUSINESS

## Case Study

West Midlands Safari Park's focus on revenue growth is central to ensuring the long-term sustainability and success of the business, particularly in a challenging and increasingly competitive visitor economy. Despite welcoming approximately 750,000 day visitors last year - consistent with previous years but still below pre-pandemic levels - the Park recognises that relying solely on traditional visitation is no longer enough to secure financial resilience. It is becoming harder to stand out in a crowded market and compete with heavily discounted or commission-driven alternatives.

To overcome these pressures, WMSP has strategically diversified its revenue streams. The introduction of onsite accommodation and immersive Safari Lodges experiences has been a transformational step, providing new opportunities for overnight stays and premium, "Instagrammable" encounters that align with changing consumer preferences, where 24% of Britons place higher value on fun, memorable experiences over material goods. These high-value experiential offerings not only drive incremental revenue but also support long-overdue investment into infrastructure, giving the 53-year-old Park renewed relevance and the financial capability to thrive for decades to come.

Crucially, sustained revenue growth also underpins WMSP's mission-driven work in conservation, animal welfare, habitat protection, and community partnerships, ensuring that the Park can continue supporting breeding programmes, local wildlife habitats, charitable initiatives, and vital conservation organisations both in the UK and internationally. By expanding its commercial strength while remaining true to its values, WMSP positions itself as a future-ready business - innovative, resilient, and equipped to serve its visitors, its community and global conservation efforts for many years to come.

**JOANNE HAMMICK - WEST MIDLANDS SAFARI PARK**

Chamber of Commerce

Joanne Hammick  
Women in Business p13

# HOW DO WE SUPPORT OUR PEOPLE?

## PEOPLE, INCLUSIVITY AND DIVERSITY

People, inclusivity, and diversity are central to long-term business success. A diverse workforce encourages fresh thinking, innovation, and stronger problem-solving, while inclusive cultures drive higher engagement, productivity, and employee satisfaction. When individuals feel respected and valued, they are more motivated to perform at their best, directly strengthening overall business performance.

Embracing diversity also enhances a company's ability to understand and serve a wide range of customers. Organisations that reflect the communities they operate in are better positioned to meet evolving needs, build lasting relationships, and strengthen brand loyalty. A clear commitment to inclusivity not only broadens market opportunities but also attracts top talent and reinforces reputation, resilience, and competitiveness.

### Your challenges:

The proportion of businesses trying to recruit held relatively stable during 2025, standing at 46% in Q1 and 49% in Q4.

By contrast, at the close of 2024, the leading business concern was Wage and National Insurance costs, cited by 60% of respondents as their top priority.

### WHAT THE CHAMBER WILL DELIVER IN 2026/2027:

The Chamber will continue to drive the Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP), champion local apprenticeship and work-based learning opportunities, and ensure businesses have plentiful avenues to engage with nearby universities, schools, and colleges.

- Expand the Chamber's training programs to help members develop their workforce, offering customised and specialised courses that address the unique needs of individual businesses.
- Promote workplace equality and diversity through case studies, forums, and training initiatives, creating a positive impact on both society and the local community.
- Leverage the successful partnerships formed in 2025 with universities, further education institutions, and training providers to develop targeted local support programs.
- Sustain the delivery of New to Networking events to help emerging talent enhance their networking abilities, while continuing to provide forums and opportunities for HR professionals to share best practices and expand their expertise.
  - Advance the Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) by working closely with employers and training providers to identify local business skill requirements and strengthen collaboration between these groups.
  - Maintain collaboration with public sector authorities and further education providers to evaluate regional business skills needs and ensure employees have access to relevant, high-quality training opportunities.

### Service Spotlight:



Exclusively for Chamber Members, the Primary Health Plan lets staff reclaim costs for dental, optical, and therapy care, plus enjoy 24/7 GP access, counselling, expert medical opinions, gym discounts, and Westfield Rewards.

We deliver over 270 training days each year, offering a comprehensive portfolio of courses designed to meet all your training and upskilling needs.



## “ Case Study

As we look ahead to 2026 / 2027, the landscape of People, Inclusivity, and Diversity continues to evolve at pace, presenting both challenges and opportunities for employers across Herefordshire and Worcestershire. Ongoing challenges around being able to recruit the right skills at the right time remain a pressing concern, prompting businesses to broaden their approach to talent attraction and retention. Employers are increasingly recognising that fostering an inclusive, supportive culture is not only the right thing to do, but also essential for achieving sustainable growth and innovation. The shift towards flexible working arrangements is now firmly ensconced in the UK labour market, enabling a wider range of people – including parents, carers, and those with disabilities – to participate fully in the workforce. This flexibility, coupled with proactive diversity strategies, is helping organisations to access untapped talent pools and drive greater creativity and resilience within their teams. At Hewett Recruitment, we have witnessed first-hand how our clients embracing diversity – across age, background, ethnicity, and neurodiversity – leads to stronger, more adaptable businesses.

However, the journey does not come without its challenges. The cost-of-living crisis and mental health pressures are placing new demands on employers to provide holistic support for employee wellbeing. Progressive organisations are responding by investing in mental health resources, employee assistance programmes, and regular training to equip managers with the skills to lead diverse teams effectively. Looking forward, the integration of AI and digital tools must be done with care to ensure all employees have access to upskilling opportunities, thus preventing the risk of digital exclusion whilst maximising the benefits to the business of adopting new technologies.

Ultimately, those employers who proactively invest in their people and champion inclusivity will be best placed to thrive in the coming years. By embracing difference, supporting wellbeing, and adapting to the changing world of work, we can build a region that is not only economically successful but also fair, vibrant, and future-ready.

**BEN MANNION - HEWETT RECRUITMENT**



## HOW DO WE STAY SECURE? CYBER SECURITY AND TECHNOLOGY

Cybersecurity continues to be a critical priority for businesses in 2026, as cyberattacks become more sophisticated and frequent. With organisations increasingly dependent on digital platforms for communication, transactions, and data management, protecting sensitive information is essential to prevent financial loss, regulatory penalties, and reputational damage. A strong cybersecurity framework not only secures company data but also reinforces customer trust, helping businesses stay competitive. By implementing advanced security measures, organisations can minimise disruptions, maintain operational continuity, and provide a safe environment for employees and clients.

Equally, embracing emerging technologies is essential for businesses seeking growth and resilience in 2026. Innovations such as artificial intelligence, automation, cloud computing, generative AI, and advanced data analytics can improve efficiency, streamline operations, and create new opportunities. Adopting the right technologies enables businesses to optimise performance, enhance customer experiences, and make informed, data-driven decisions. Staying at the forefront of technological developments ensures companies remain competitive, adapt to evolving market demands, and unlock new revenue streams, positioning them for long-term success.

### WHAT THE CHAMBER WILL DELIVER IN 2026/2027:

Maintain efforts to influence government policy, securing funding and incentives that help businesses adopt innovative technologies and drive growth. At the same time, promote awareness of cybersecurity threats and equip businesses with the knowledge and tools needed to defend against cybercrime.

- Maintain collaboration with affiliate partner Cyber Essentials to raise awareness of the scheme and provide Members with discounted certification.
- Strengthen partnerships with local universities, including the University of Worcester and NMiTE, alongside other higher education institutions and training providers, to ensure educational programs reflect industry needs and emerging trends.
- Highlight and promote Technology and Innovation funding opportunities, helping businesses access financial support for growth and innovation.
- Partner with technology-sector members to showcase the value of emerging innovations to the wider Chamber community.
- Highlight cybersecurity risks and provide practical guidance to help businesses mitigate threats.
- Continue to deliver and expand training programs that support employees in maintaining existing skills while developing new capabilities.

- Access the BCC AI Academy, a practical, role-specific training programme powered by PAIR, to build AI skills that boost productivity, improve decision-making, and deliver real business results, with flexible online learning, personalised feedback, and shareable certification.

#### Your challenges:

In Q4 2025, 37% of businesses identified cybersecurity as a key concern, underscoring the rising risk of digital threats and the need for stronger defenses.

Meanwhile, 35% of businesses reported apprehension about potential risks from artificial intelligence, up from 15% the previous year.



#### Service Spotlight:



Chamber Members can strengthen their cyber security with Chamber Cyber Essentials, including an exclusive discount on certification, access to training, free self-assessment questions, expert guidance, and the Cyber Essentials Readiness Tool to prepare your organisation for certification. Members can also benefit from inclusive cyber liability insurance.

Did you know?

Access the BCC AI Academy, a practical AI training programme powered by PAIR, to build productivity-boosting skills, improve decision-making, and earn shareable certification.

## “ Case Study

As we move into 2026/27, Cyber Security remains the non-negotiable bedrock component of any credible digital / IT strategy. Cyber threat actors are becoming ever more sophisticated, attack methods are expanding, and our business world is becoming increasingly interconnected. Implementing and maintaining robust security controls, continuous monitoring, and a culture of cyber awareness in your business is absolutely paramount.

However, the landscape is shifting. Security cannot be treated as an inhibitor on innovation. To stay competitive and resilient, businesses must embrace emerging technologies, particularly Artificial Intelligence. That said, ensuring those technologies are deployed safely and responsibly is extremely important.

At EBC Group we can see that AI offers significant benefits across the security and technology landscape. It can enhance threat detection, automate routine tasks, improve decision-making, and unlock new efficiencies. Used well, AI can strengthen defences by identifying anomalies at scale and responding faster than human teams are able to do on their own. Beyond security, AI-driven tools can streamline operations, improve customer experience, and support smarter resource allocation.

Yet these advantages come with their own real risks that businesses should be aware of. AI systems can invariably introduce new vulnerabilities, from model manipulation to data-privacy concerns. Over-reliance on automation may create blind spots, and poorly governed AI can amplify unreliable outputs.

The challenge for 26/27 is to strike the right balance: adopting innovative technologies while embedding strong governance, transparency, security and human oversight. Organisations that manage this balance well will be better positioned to harness AI's potential without compromising security or their business.

**MIKE COOK - EBC GROUP**

## HOW DO WE OPERATE SUSTAINABLY?

### SUSTAINABILITY

In 2026, sustainability remains a key priority for businesses, addressing both environmental and social responsibilities while securing long-term success. Focusing on sustainable practices helps companies reduce their environmental footprint, conserve resources and minimise waste, which are critical steps in tackling climate change and protecting natural ecosystems. With consumers, investors and regulators increasingly prioritising environmental responsibility, organisations that embed sustainability into their operations enhance their reputation, build trust and strengthen customer loyalty. Beyond its ethical benefits, sustainability also drives innovation, cost efficiency and regulatory compliance, making it a strategic imperative for businesses seeking a competitive edge in a rapidly evolving marketplace.

#### Your challenges:

In Q4 2025, 39% of businesses cited rising energy costs as a key challenge.

Additionally, 14% were concerned about developing and maintaining sustainability plans, reflecting the growing need to balance environmental responsibility with operational demands.

### WHAT THE CHAMBER WILL DELIVER IN 2026/2027:

Advocate to government for accessible guidance and financial support that enables businesses to adopt more sustainable practices. Promote available funding, grants, events, and networking opportunities to help businesses mitigate the effects of rising inflation and energy costs.

- Plan and deliver four sustainability forums in 2026/27, bringing together businesses and industry experts to discuss climate challenges and practical strategies for improving environmental responsibility.
- Continue to monitor and share grant and funding opportunities available to businesses across both counties, helping them access resources to support sustainable initiatives.
- Review and advance the Chamber's own Net Zero Action Plan, targeting a 5% reduction in energy consumption and setting a strong example for members.
- Showcase additional case studies of best practices, giving businesses clear, actionable steps to enhance their sustainability efforts.
- Enhance the sustainability hub on the Chamber's website by working with partners, including local growth hubs, to provide the business community with up-to-date guidance, resources, and tools.
- Celebrate and highlight outstanding achievements in sustainability through the Chamber Business Awards, recognising organisations making a tangible impact on environmental responsibility.
- Remain committed to our B Corp values and actively collaborate with other local B Corp companies to share best practices and inspire more businesses to embrace responsible and sustainable practices.

#### Service Spotlight:

We deliver four Sustainability Forums each year for businesses across all sectors. The forums share best practices for reducing environmental impacts and improving energy and resource efficiency, featuring industry expert presentations with practical tools, actionable advice, and tips to implement in your organisation.

Our annual Chamber Business Awards include a Sustainability category, a great opportunity for your business to be recognised for its environmental initiatives. Why not consider entering?



### “ Case Study

Unsurprisingly, when the Government was planning its approach to Net Zero 5 or so years ago, it became clear that horticulture was seen a key player. Lots of the conversations circulated around the use of peat, water consumption, Carbon Footprints and Biodiversity.

Cue many discussions within Wyevalle about our approach. Several projects have been based around peat (where goal posts, like kids' jumpers in the park, either been strategically moved, replaced or taken away altogether) and water. Progress here has been clear, with around 80% reduction in the use of peat and approximately 30% of our water now being recycled thanks to 2 new reservoirs. Biodiversity goals have also been reached.

The truth is, however, that we, like all other industries, have our own carbon footprint which we need to minimise. Sure, we grow plants and trees, and trees, in particular, have a long-term positive impact with carbon sequestration but you should still minimise what you do produce. Having established our base footprint, and got our accreditation, the big learning is that the footprint is always much larger than you think. Taking the time to get the whole perspective is vital but do not to lose sight of what definitely exists; fuel, electricity, distribution, waste; the list goes on. We have been busy addressing this, but the approach has been piecemeal. We are now in the process of establishing a clear approach and overarching strategy; something to be done, in every organisation, even before having the complete picture

**KERSTEN CAELLA - WYEVALE NURSERIES**



## HOW DO WE COMPETE GLOBALLY? INTERNATIONAL TRADE

International trade continues to be a crucial driver for businesses, enabling them to expand market reach, increase sales, and diversify revenue streams. By engaging with global markets, companies can reduce dependence on local demand, access new resources, drive innovation, and maintain competitiveness in an increasingly interconnected economy. International trade also presents opportunities for long-term growth and sustainable business success.

Businesses in Herefordshire and Worcestershire actively participate in both imports and exports, navigating processes such as securing sales, arranging logistics, receiving goods, and exploring emerging markets. Over recent years, the UK's trading environment has undergone significant changes, influenced by post-Brexit regulations, shifts in trade policy, and fluctuations in shipping and customs costs. Global events, including supply chain disruptions and geopolitical tensions, continue to affect businesses operating internationally.

The Herefordshire & Worcestershire Chamber remains committed to supporting local businesses by collaborating with regional, national, and international partners. This includes providing guidance and advocacy to help companies trade efficiently with both EU and non-EU markets, ensuring they can seize opportunities, overcome challenges, and contribute to regional economic growth in 2026 and beyond.

### WHAT THE CHAMBER WILL DELIVER IN 2026/2027:

Through the Chamber network and the British Chambers of Commerce, we will continue offering businesses expert guidance to help them navigate the evolving landscape of international trade.

- The Chamber's International Trade and Membership teams will continue providing guidance to businesses globally, maintaining links through the International Chamber of Commerce and over 120 Embassies and High Commissions. We will also support the British Chambers of Commerce in implementing their Trade Strategy Manifesto.
- The International Trade Forum will continue to offer a platform for Members and Non-members to share knowledge, best practices, and market insights. Export Documentation and Import/Export Customs Declaration services through Chamber Customs will remain available.
  - Trade training programs will be expanded to help businesses of all sizes develop skills and stay informed on key topics. Temporary export services, including ATA Carnet and declarations, will be enhanced to ensure compliance in a dynamic market.
  - The Chamber will regularly share updates on contracts, trade initiatives, and best practices to keep businesses informed and ready to act on global opportunities.

#### Service Spotlight:

**moneycorp**

Members can benefit from moneycorp's business services, including access to over 120 currencies, fast and secure 24/7 online payments, competitive exchange rates, market updates to stay informed on currency movements, and pricing powered by more than 14 liquidity providers.

Did you know?

We provide a comprehensive suite of international support, advice, services and training. We support businesses of any size or export and import experience to trade internationally.

#### Your challenges:

Recent domestic political and economic changes have made it challenging for businesses to keep up with evolving regulations.

Around 34% of importers and exporters cited regulatory compliance and administrative barriers as major obstacles, while 14% reported concerns over import and export transportation costs at the end of 2025.

## “ Case Study

For Southco, competing on the global stage now requires a sophisticated blend of operational excellence and strategic foresight. To maintain a competitive edge, our belief is that a business cannot sell to a world it doesn't understand and that our diverse workforce acts as an internal "focus group" for serving a global customer base, with our approach being anchored in market agility, quality and a customer-first culture.

Logistical precision is one of our primary levers for reliability. By utilising a diversified carrier network and through our commitment to compliance, we transform international trade from a bottleneck into a streamlined asset. Our multilingual sales and technical support complete the value chain by grounding global reach in local excellence.

However, the 2026-2027 landscape presents a formidable gauntlet of challenges. Geopolitical instability redrawing shipping routes, strategic alliances and asymmetrical demand creating capacity imbalance, together with the financial burden and the uncertainty created through the tariffs threaten supply chain predictability. Simultaneously, the regulatory environment is tightening; the EU CBAM Definitive Phase and the UK CBAM imminent launch in 2027 are introducing significant financial costs for carbon-intensive operations. These, alongside the EU "Made in Europe" Act, risk excluding UK firms from vital strategic supply chains.

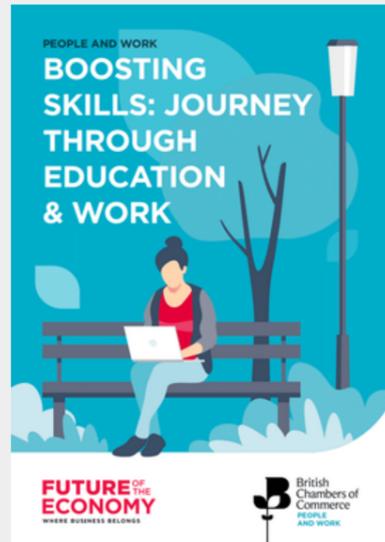
Success in this complex environment depends on resilience and modernisation. By ensuring regulatory compliance and through a lean, adaptable operational model, we continue to turn global challenges into opportunities for long-term growth.

**IONUT EPURE - SOUTHCO MANUFACTURING**



# BRITISH CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE POLICY REPORTS

Our expert business support is concentrated in five core areas: Global Britain, People and Work, Local Economy of the Future, Green Innovation, and Digital Revolution. These areas have been carefully selected based on our unparalleled insight into British and global business communities. Regardless of your sector, size, or location, we strive to address your diverse needs in the modern business landscape. Businesses trust us to be their advocates, and we're passionate about helping them trade and grow.



**PEOPLE AND WORK**  
**BOOSTING SKILLS: JOURNEY THROUGH EDUCATION AND WORK**  
 To grow our economy we need more skilled, engaged and motivated people to contribute to the workforce in every part of the UK. In recent years, however, we have had record levels of job vacancies. Employers have experienced a shortage of job candidates and a mismatch of skills on offer. It's had a damaging impact on firms' ability to fulfil order books, take on new work and operate profitably.

[Read Report Here.](#)



**LOCAL ECONOMY OF THE FUTURE**  
**A BUSINESS-LED PLAN FOR THRIVING COMMUNITIES**  
 Businesses play a pivotal role in shaping the economic landscape of the UK, and their impact extends far beyond the national level. Local economic development is an essential facet of a thriving society, and businesses are integral to its success. Their role is more than simply the generation of profits; it encompasses a commitment to the well-being and growth of the communities in which they operate.

[Read Report Here.](#)



**GREEN INNOVATION**  
**BUILDING SUSTAINABLE FUTURES FOR UK BUSINESSES**  
 The UK has the potential to lead the world in green innovation. We have a strong economic base, and a legal and policy framework designed to ensure we reach net zero emissions by 2050. To reach those targets and address our shared environmental challenges, businesses must play a leadership role.

[Read Report Here.](#)



**GLOBAL BRITAIN**  
**ACCELERATING GROWTH: DRIVING TRADE AND INWARD INVESTMENT**  
 How does Global Britain present itself on the international stage? In considering this question we have heard from many about a long-term optimism, but juxtaposed with short-term anxieties. This is a great country. And with it a great belief in our cultural capital, our talent, our institutions and our capacity for innovation.

[Read Report Here.](#)



**DIGITAL REVOLUTION**  
**CONNECTED, SECURE AND DYNAMIC: NAVIGATING OUR DIGITAL FUTURE**  
 The digital revolution opens a wealth of opportunities for UK businesses of all shapes and sizes. This report outlines a clear roadmap for action from policymakers across a series of interconnected areas. Without better broadband and wireless connectivity – and improved cyber security – businesses will not be able to engage with Artificial Intelligence (AI). In short, businesses want to be connected, secure and dynamic.

[Read Report Here.](#)



**Robert Elliot**  
 Director of Business Engagement and Policy  
 roberte@hwchamber.co.uk



**Georgia Williams**  
 Head of Marketing and Communications  
 georgiaw@hwchamber.co.uk

## Upcoming research and report dates

**Q2 2026**  
 Fieldwork: 11 May to 8 June  
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**Q3 2026**  
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 Publication: October 2026

**Q4 2026**  
 Fieldwork: 9 November to 7 December  
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**Salary & Benefits 2026**  
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**POLICY**

**CONTACTS**