

SOUTH CHESHIRE

**SOUTH CHESHIRE
CHAMBER
OF COMMERCE & INDUSTRY**

**British
Chambers of
Commerce
Accredited**

CHAMBER BUSINESS

News and views from the South Cheshire Chamber of Commerce & Industry | **Q1 2023**



**KNIFE ANGEL
ARRIVES IN CREWE**

PAGE 9

LOCKUP TO LOGISTICS



UNIT B WOODFORD PARK
Winsford
9,000 sq ft



TOTAL PARK
Middlewich
15,000 – 35,000 sq ft



MATRIX
Chester
109,000 sq ft



UNIT 1 VALLEY COURT
Middlewich
7,000 sq ft



1F CHESHIRE GREEN
Wardle
17,000 sq ft



UNITS A & B WESTON ROAD
Crewe
200,000 sq ft



PHASE 3 DEE VIEW
Chester
20,000 sq ft



CHARTER 55
Ellesmere Port
55,000 sq ft



ROTHERAM 80
Yorkshire
80,000 sq ft



TRIDENT
Llangeffni, Anglesey
1,000 to 9,000 sq ft



DEESIDE 63
Deeside Industrial Park East
63,000 sq ft



TOTAL PARK
Widnes
20,346 sq ft & 24,706 sq ft



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UPCOMING EVENTS & NETWORKING



Round The Screen Networking

16/05, 20/06, 11/07



Final Friday

26/05, 30/06, 28/07



Business Lunch

June 16th

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SOUTH CHESHIRE CHAMBER PATRONS



CHOOSE THE RIGHT PACKAGE FOR YOUR BUSINESS

ESSENTIAL
MEMBERSHIP**Vital solutions for
your business****Essential features:**

- + Connect with the largest business community in South Cheshire
- + Raise your online profile through increased SEO
- + Promote your business through the Chamber channels
- + Access to Chamber online events
- + Trusted, local business information

£15 / MonthSIGNATURE
MEMBERSHIP**Tailor-made for
developing businesses****All Essential features plus:**

- + Access to 40+ networking events
- + Access to 35+ informative events
- + Train your young team through our Chamber Young Member Network
- + Talk to like-minded businesses in our Chamber Peer group
- + Key local and national updates
- + Information on business support programs
- + International Trade Information and guidance
- + Discounted export docs
- + Access to the BCC Global Business Network

£35 / MonthEXECUTIVE
MEMBERSHIP**Optimised for
established businesses****All Signature features plus:**

- + One to One annual meeting with Chamber Manager
- + Access to Chamber Leadership Insights program
- + Shape your future workforce with free places to our Chamber Young Member Network
- + Government updates and key legislation
- + Local regeneration updates (Business Council)

£80 / Month

All prices inclusive of VAT, minimum sign up term 12 months and information subject to change.
Check www.sccci.co.uk for updates.

Next issue due out on June 30th 2023. Editorial and advertising deadline June 16th 2023.

For advertising Sales and Articles, please contact Jon Barnes: 01270 445409 or jon.barnes@sccci.co.uk

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WELCOME

to the Chamber's magazine
'South Cheshire Business'

Crewe has recently received disappointing announcements, that the town will not be the headquarters for the government's newly formed Great British Railways (GBR) organisation, and that HS2 Phase 2a will be delayed. Not becoming the GBR headquarters is news none of us wanted to hear, but Crewe had a strong public and private sector bid backed by the local business community. Though we lost out to Derby, who themselves have a strong rail heritage and who ran an excellent campaign.

Within a couple of weeks, we also heard that HS2 phase 2a would be delayed by two years. More disappointing news, but the Government is still committed to delivering HS2 Phase 2a between Birmingham and Crewe. The country has seen significant inflationary pressure and increased project costs, so they will rephase construction by two years, with an aim to deliver high-speed services to Crewe and the North West as soon as possible after accounting for the delay in construction. It's still coming and we can and should continue to make the most of this opportunity.

The Chamber will continue to push local politicians and the Government, through the British Chambers of Commerce (BCC) to develop and create an environment for

our businesses to prosper in. This includes infrastructure, business support and skills provision. In terms of skills, the Chamber has been delivering the 'Local Skills Improvement Plan' (LSIP) for Cheshire & Warrington, which will provide the private sector the opportunity to influence the local skills provision and work more closely with our local educational establishments.

The Chamber will always evolve to meet the needs of the business community and our activities have never been more aligned to support employers. Please visit our website at www.sccci.co.uk and look at the products and services available to support your business.

I hope you find this magazine informative and if your company has news to share or you would like to take advantage of the advertising opportunities, please do not hesitate to contact Jon at the Chamber.

May I take this opportunity to wish your business every success in the forthcoming months.

Paul Colman Chief Executive @SCCCI_CEO

MEET THE CHAMBER TEAM

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WHY JOIN THE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE?

A chamber of commerce is a collection of local businesses who have come together to further their own interests and those of their community.



BECOME PART OF A BUSINESS COMMUNITY

Network with other local businesses to create connections and opportunities.



ENHANCE YOUR BUSINESS PROFILE

Promote your business on our website, social media, Members Portal and magazine.



ACCESS TO BUSINESS SUPPORT AND RESOURCES

Access to an online library of 700+ documents and templates as well as advice lines.

WE WELCOME ALL OUR NEW MEMBERS

The South Cheshire Chamber of Commerce is an amazing place to connect to your local business community, but don't just take our word for it:



"Being a new member of the Chamber, we have found the initial stages very useful and welcoming. The communication and updates from the team are really clear and helpful. We have found joining the 'Meet the Chamber' meeting a great start, to guide us in the right direction. Our team are looking forward to utilising the website, connecting with local businesses and accessing the many beneficial services available through the Chamber."

Daniel Matthias Architecture Limited

If you would like to share a testimonial, please send it through to jon.barnes@sccci.co.uk

	Grehan Consulting Ltd 11 Argent Close, Shavington Crewe, Cheshire, CW25TF matt@grehanconsulting.co.uk 07813 666304
	Healthshield Electra Way Crewe Business Park Crewe, Cheshire, CW16HS healthshield.co.uk 01270 588 555
	Kleo Digital Sandbach Cheshire House, 29 The Commons Sandbach, Cheshire, CW11 1FJ gary@kleodigital-sandbach.co.uk kleodigital-sandbach.co.uk 01270 765057

	Longmans Quality Farm Produce Ltd Whitchurch Road Nantwich, Cheshire, CW58DJ longmansfarmshop@yahoo.com longmansfarmshop.co.uk 01270 814535
	Peter Wilson Fine Art Auctioneers Limited Victoria Gallery, Market Street Nantwich, Cheshire, CW5 5DG auctions@wilson55.com wilson55.com 01270 623878
	RSK Group PLC Spring Lodge, 172 Chester Road Helsby, Cheshire, WA60AR hkeen@rsk.co.uk rskgroup.com 01928 726006

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Date set for new Chamber Business Lunch



Guest speaker Alan Boyd

The Chamber is delighted to announce the launch of its Business Lunch which will take place at Rookery Hall Hotel on Friday, June 16.

This is a new date on the Chamber events programme and already there has been considerable interest from members keen to attend and support this new networking opportunity.

Guest speaker will be Alan Boyd, CEO of the global drug development consultancy in Crewe. Alan will speak about his career in pharmaceuticals and the development of life-saving medicines used worldwide.

Chamber Events & Marketing Coordinator Dominic Hibbert said: "Our Business Awards are eagerly anticipated every autumn and we were

keen to offer a flagship event which can take place every summer.

"The Business Lunch has the hallmarks of becoming equally successful and we would love to hear from businesses who can support as sponsors of this prestigious new offering."

The Business Lunch will take place in the Worleston Suite at Rookery Hall Hotel & Spa and will include a two-course meal. Price is £30 plus VAT per person.

For more information on sponsorship opportunities email Dominic.Hibbert@sccci.co.uk or call him on 01270 445408.

Crewe Hall checks in with Chamber



South Cheshire Chamber of Commerce is delighted to welcome back one of the region's most prestigious hotels as a Chamber member.

Crewe Hall, a stunning Grade I-listed Jacobean mansion, offers guests a chance to step back in time and enjoy opulent interiors and scenic landscaped gardens.

The 17th century landmark, part of the QHotels Collection, also offers plush spa, dining and conference facilities – all within easy reach of Crewe town centre and the M6 motorway.

Chamber Chief Executive Paul Colman said:

"We delighted to welcome Crewe Hall back onboard as a Chamber member. It's an architectural gem and asset to our area.

"There's no escaping the wow factor every time you approach down the drive. We look forward to a long relationship with Crewe Hall and adding it to our events programme."

For more on Crewe Hall and its history visit: www.crewehallcheshire.co.uk

Safe Opportunities Intern joins South Cheshire Chamber of Commerce for placement alongside Motherwell



Safe Opportunities, Crewe student, Charlotte is taking part in an internship placement at the Chamber alongside Motherwell Cheshire CIO.

She says: I joined Safe Opportunities in September 2022. Safe Opportunities gives young adults with Special Educational Needs experiences of working and the chance to become employed. The process for me started with the first step which was knowing what I actually wanted to do and then finding placements that were suitable for my Career. I went through the interview process and gained 2 placements to learn new skills at. At my internship work placements, I am supported by a job coach who helps me to learn how to do tasks that are given to me independently. I go to Safe Opportunities once a week where I study Functional Skills English and a course called Aim Awards which teaches me the vital workplace skills that I need for the future.

One of my placements is called The South Cheshire Chamber of Commerce. My roles include social media, branding, advertising, and magazine-based tasks. When I am at Motherwell my roles there include volunteering in the Community Share Hub and daily computer-based tasks such as admin submitting feedback forms to online surveys, putting together leaflets to send to clients and creating events posters.

"I am gaining lots from my placements, but the main thing I've gained is better communication and teamworking skills, alongside my knowledge and skills with technology and social media usage"



Leading on from my Internship, I am hoping to get into employment and in the near future, to take up a place at University to study a BA Hons in TV and Radio Production.

Helping South Cheshire to prosper with Leadership Insights



Reaseheath College will be the venue for the next HR Forum as part of the Chamber's Leadership Insights program

South Cheshire Chamber of Commerce has created a platform where Executive Members can join forces to share their knowledge and expertise as part of our new Leadership Insights program.

The program includes special forums where industry experts meet with employers from different sectors to talk about key topics such as HR, health and safety, mentoring, international trade and procurement opportunities.

Leadership Insights form part of an extensive package of benefits available to Executive Members and Patrons including Government updates and key legislation, local regeneration updates through the Chamber Business Council and free places on the Chamber Young Member Network to help shape future workforces.

HR and Cyber Crime Forums have got off to a flying start with many well-known local employers keen to share their knowledge round the table. Also planned are forums on Net Zero and Skills as well as site visits and peer to peer discussions.

Chamber Manager Jon Barnes said:

“Leadership Insights began with the danger of cyber crime, an issue every business must get to grips with. The event focused on how to protect business systems from cyber criminals and how to communicate the risks to employees.

“It proved a lively and informative platform where members benefitted from expert advice and the opportunity to talk about how they each combat the threat.

“We are currently developing the Leadership Insights program and would be delighted to hear from Executive members who can bring their specific knowledge to the wider business community.”

Meanwhile South Cheshire Chamber has partnered with long standing Chamber Patron SG World to form a HR Management Forum. The first meeting focused on the hot topic of recruitment and its practical experience of hiring in a tight labour market.

“The Chamber brings together a diverse business community and by facilitating the Leadership Insights program we create a culture where we can all work together to create a brighter future for South Cheshire,” added Jon. “We would be delighted to hear from established businesses who would like to share their expertise.”

For more information on becoming an Executive member please contact our Membership Co-ordinator Angela Wilkinson angela.wilkinson@sccci.co.uk

Chamber HR Forum holds Inaugural Meeting

Many Human Resources professionals will recognise that the job can be sometimes be a lonely one, especially in a standalone role or small department. When Emma Stevens (pictured) joined SG World as HR Manager, one of her objectives was to reach out into the wider business community and bring together a network of local HR people to share their advice, experience and support. Working with the Cheshire Chamber of Commerce, the recently formed HR Managers group, held its inaugural meeting in March.

Chairing the meeting, Emma reported back: “It was a great event - a place to exchange ideas, knowledge and shared workplace issues. In this recent session, recruitment was the hot topic and we were able to share our practical experience of hiring in a very tight labour market. We can bring that shared learning back to our own workplace for everyone's benefit. We're already looking forward to our next meeting on June 7, focusing on Employment Law and welcoming new members to the group.”

If you are an Executive Member of SCCC working in a HR role and would like to get involved, you can email Dominic Hibbert at the Chamber on dominic.hibbert@sccci.co.uk

Women in the Workplace campaign helps earn major award for Motherwell Cheshire



A health and wellbeing charity based in Crewe is celebrating a prestigious award as it launches new initiatives to empower women and protect those at risk.

Motherwell Cheshire, which runs a Community Share Hub on Beech Drive, has received the High Sheriff of Cheshire award for Outstanding Community Engagement.

The award, presented by Cheshire High Sheriff Jeannie France Hayhurst, recognised the charity's dedication to 'Encourage, Inspire and Empower' women and girls across the county which includes a new campaign to support women's health at work.

Businesses are encouraged to sign up to Motherwell's 'Women in the Workplace Pledge' and commit to having Menopause Champions and Infant Loss Champions to offer support to female employees.

The initiative aims to promote a safe and inclusive environment for women at work and

break down stigmas around women's health including menopause and menstruation.

Motherwell Cheshire founder Kate Blakemore: "Women over 50 are the fastest growing demographic in the workplace yet the stigma around the menopause and the problems they encounter still forces too many to give up work which is a loss to employers.

"Good employers now recognise the need to make adjustments for women on their period days or as they journey through the menopause and experience symptoms such as hot flushes and brain fog.

"We hope this campaign will break down the taboos and create a better understanding about women's health across our local business community."

The charity runs Menopause café's across Cheshire and a popular social evening, the Menopause Party, at Tom's Tap in Crewe.

It offers a vast range of women and family-centred services from its Community Share

Hub including its hugely popular school uniform recycling scheme where mothers can access pre-loved clothing and baby necessities free of charge.

Other services include Believe, a special project supporting vulnerable women whose children are subject to a Child Protection Plan and are at risk of being taken away.

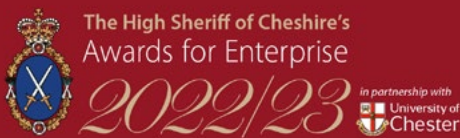
Kate, from Crewe, added: "Motherwell is a community of women, run by women for women. We are on a mission to expand our community and inspire women of all ages to speak out and make positive change."

Motherwell Cheshire is backing a national campaign to end period poverty and offers Period Wellbeing Packs containing necessities for the time of the month.

Charity officials have sent their best wishes to England football players who will wear blue shorts instead of white at this year's Women's World Cup after they expressed period concerns.

Meanwhile Motherwell Cheshire has marked the King's Coronation with a Tea Party. Visitors enjoyed tea and homemade cakes at the charity base on Beech Drive.

For more information on all Motherwell Cheshire services and upcoming events go to motherwellcheshirecio.com



Nantwich Clinic scoops 'Outstanding Family Business' award



Tom and Gill Fox were delighted to collect the High Sheriff's Award for Outstanding Family Business at The University of Chester Business School on behalf of The Nantwich Clinic.

The Nantwich Clinic is a family business offering a one-stop Health Hub, their mission is to enable people to access quality health care services quickly so that they can live a higher quality life.

The aim of the clinic is to work alongside the NHS, relieving the strain, to help everyone directly or indirectly to find a solution to their health issues.

"We're proud to have won the High Sheriff's award for outstanding family business, it's a credit to our team who we're really grateful to. It means a lot to have our charity work as well as our day-to-day work recognised," said Tom Fox.

Currently the health hub offers hearing

tests and hearing aids, ear wax removal, podiatry, sports therapy, rehabilitation after injury or operations, a sports injury clinic, personal training, lymphatic drainage, services for urinary incontinence, fat reduction and skin tightening, medical skincare services and coming later this year, a private GP service and prostate clinic.

The clinic opened in February 2022 after Tom & Gill moved their podiatry business to the new premises, on Newcastle Road, Nantwich, with the idea of extending the services offered. They have since extended their team by seven employees including their eldest daughter who joined the team in the summer of 2022.

The clinic welcomes new patients for all services with no referral being needed, just book online, phone the clinic on 01270 627118; or if you prefer, drop in and say hello.

To register your interest in the upcoming private GP service, log your details here: <https://thenantwichclinic.co.uk/private-gp-surgery-interest/>



Photo credit: British Ironwork Centre.

Striking Knife Angel sculpture to visit Crewe



Crewe Town Council has worked in partnership with the Safer Cheshire East Partnership and Crewe Local Policing Unit to bring the renowned Knife Angel sculpture to Crewe.

Created by sculptor Alfie Bradley in conjunction with the British Ironwork Centre, the Knife Angel has been created from 100,000 seized blades collected by 43 police constabularies. The sculpture is multi-purpose, helping to educate communities about the negative impacts of knife crime whilst also acting as a poignant memorial to those who have lost their lives to it. During its visit, young people will be encouraged to sign up as Anti-Violence Ambassadors.

The Knife Angel will be located in Memorial Square between Wednesday 3rd and Wednesday 31st May 2023. There will be an opening ceremony to welcome the Angel and a torchlit ceremony will be held at the end of the month to signal the closing of the event.

In summer 2022, Crewe Town Council was approached by the local Beat Sergeant for Crewe to request support

to bring the Knife Angel to the town. It is hoped that the presence of the statue and accompanying programme of engagement will inspire social change not only in Crewe but also the wider area.

Funding for the project has been given by Crewe Town Council and the Safer Cheshire East Partnership supported through funding from the Police Crime Commissioner's Office.

A supporting programme of activities is also planned for the month:

- Theatre activities, gang culture workshops and engagement in local schools
- First aid demonstrations and training (including use of defibrillators and bleed kits)
- Knife amnesty
- Safe space bus

These activities are currently in the planning stage and announcements will be made via the Crewe Town Council Knife Angel webpage:

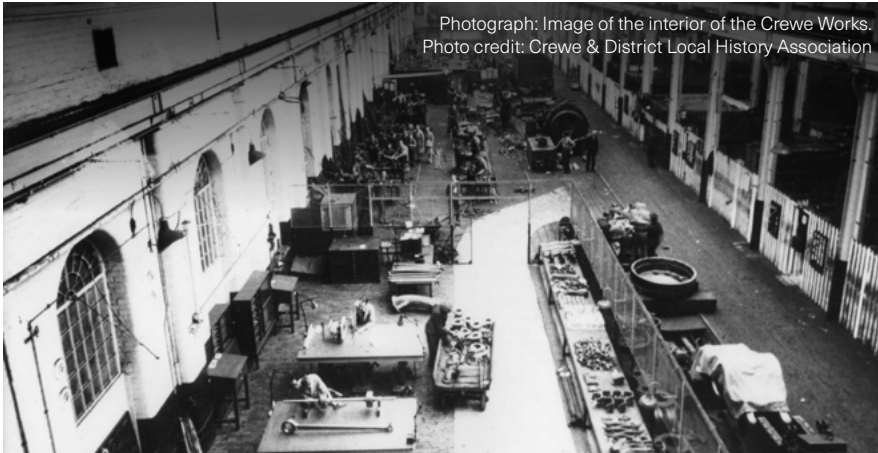
<https://www.crewetowncouncil.gov.uk/whats-on-events/knife-angel/>

A source at Crewe Town Council said:

“The Knife Angel has toured major cities in the UK and to bring it to Crewe is an ambitious undertaking. We are excited to see it come to our town and hope that it will draw a lot of people from the surrounding areas and that they will take the opportunity to view the sculpture during its residency here.”

More information about the Knife Angel can be found here: <https://www.britishironworkcentre.co.uk/the-knife-angel-official/>

Theme announced for exciting 180th anniversary celebration of Crewe Works



Photograph: Image of the interior of the Crewe Works. Photo credit: Crewe & District Local History Association

This year marks the 180th anniversary of the Grand Junction Railway Engineering Works moving from Edge Hill to Crewe.

To celebrate this historic event, Crewe Town Council is in the midst of planning an exhibition at Crewe Heritage Centre which will run from 1st July to 10th September 2023 on weekends and Bank Holidays. The exhibition theme will be How Locomotives were a catalyst for change in Crewe and visitors will be able to explore the following topics:

Crewe Works:

- Experience the sights and sounds of arriving for a shift at Crewe Works
- Understand why Crewe Works was built and what was made there
- Sit in the Drawing Office and design your own loco or learn what tools were used in the Erecting Shop
- Meet the workers and learn about their lives
- Drive a train

Visitors can find out how the technologies and innovations from Crewe Works influenced railway development across the world and discover Crewe's record holders and award-winning locomotives. They can explore how the Works contributed to the war effort in 1914 and 1939 and how railway accidents at the Works informed developments in health.

The aim is to show how the Works shaped Crewe and add to a community exhibition highlighting pride in the town. A wraparound programme of pop up events will also be on offer, including drama, town trails, school's session, heritage skills demonstrations and talks. To be involved or to find out more, contact: heritage@crewetowncouncil.gov.uk

Meanwhile Crewe Town Council is planning the return of the Heritage Open Days this autumn. For updates and announcements about 2023 talks, tours and more - keep an eye on the Crewe Town Council website www.crewetowncouncil.gov.uk/whats-on-events/heritage-open-days

Council gives update on Royal Arcade progress



Foundations are being laid for a new bus station and multi-storey car park in Crewe town centre.

Now that Crewe's former bus station has been demolished, construction equipment has arrived at the Royal Arcade site to build and form the foundations of a new bus station and multi-storey car park.

Works on the new structural frames are due to start towards the end of April, with the project on track to open as planned at the end of the year.

Cllr Nick Mannion, chair of Cheshire East Council's economy and growth committee, said: "It has been great to see first-hand the progress that has been made to deliver these two new facilities – facilities that are an important part of the town's

ongoing regeneration and are key to us being able to move ahead with several other schemes that will benefit the town, its communities and the wider borough.

"I would like to reiterate my thanks to the public and local businesses for their patience while work on this project is carried out, and we continue to work closely with our contractors and colleagues to ensure that information is available on site and that staff are available should people need support while the temporary bus arrangements are in place."

The multi-storey car park will provide a more modern, safer, and better-quality facility for people visiting the town, with the capacity needed to allow the council to free-up some of the current, older, surface car parks.

This will enable the council to move forward with other development projects that will help strengthen the town centre by creating more active uses and attracting more people and investment.

The multi-storey will provide 388 spaces including 24 accessible spaces and an initial 20 spaces for electric vehicle charging facilities. While the construction works are taking place, eight temporary bus stands remain in use alongside temporary passenger shelters, cycle stands and welfare facilities for the bus operators.

More information about phase one of the Royal Arcade scheme and the stages of the bus station and multi-storey car park works can be found at cheshireeast.gov.uk/royalarcadecrewe

New vision for Cheshire's archives reaches key milestone



Plans to build a new state-of-the-art history centre in Crewe town centre to co-host the region's archives have been approved – along with a scheme to transform the public space around it.

Cheshire Archives and Local Studies – a shared service of Cheshire East and Cheshire West and Chester Councils – looks after the county's unique and irreplaceable written and pictorial history and is driving forward a project to rehouse the collections in two new bespoke history centres.

Now plans for a completely new history centre in Crewe – on the site of the town's former library, next to Memorial Square – have been given the go ahead, along with a separate application to transform the civic and cultural space between the Lifestyle Centre and Memorial Square, which will include a new two-storey entrance to the Magistrates' Courts. It means that work to clear the site of the former library is now currently expected to begin in summer.

Earlier this month, Cheshire West and Chester Council also received planning approval for a history centre in Hoole, Chester. The centres will replace the archive service's current facility. Together, the two new centres will provide a suitable and long-term home for the archives and open up the collections to a whole new audience across Cheshire – for information, learning and enjoyment.

Cllr Jill Rhodes, lead for archives at Cheshire East Council, said:

“This is fantastic news, and we are now a significant step closer to being able to better protect and share Cheshire's historic records. I look forward to seeing physical works on these centres beginning, and to local people being able to share their personal and communities' histories by



accessing the archives in a way they have never been able to previously.”

The history centres are both expected to be completed in early 2025. They will have climate-controlled environments and include large event and gallery spaces to host performances, workshops and exhibitions, more spaces for people to carry out research, and better spaces for staff and volunteers to work with the collections to make them more accessible.

The delivery of the centres is supported by a grant of £4.45m from The National Lottery Heritage Fund, which has been made possible through money raised by National Lottery players. The grant will also support a Cheshire-wide outreach programme.

In Crewe, as well as the new history centre, the plans will see the delivery of the first part of a new and attractive pedestrian link through the cultural and civic quarter of the town centre. New planting, lighting, and seating will revamp the area and provide a new high-quality space for the public to enjoy. The project includes clearing the site of the former library and the structure over the existing Civic Centre car park, which would then give the clear site needed for the new history centre.

There will also be a new car park and a new two-storey entrance to the Magistrates' Courts. The project is part of a package of projects being progressed following Cheshire East Council's successful £14.1m bid to the government's Future High Streets Fund and is also supported through

Crewe's allocation of up to £22.9m from the government's Towns Fund.

Cllr Nick Mannion, chair of Cheshire East Council's economy and growth committee, said: “This project will extend the current public space around Memorial Square and improve links to the south of the town centre – linking up with proposed schemes to improve pedestrian and cycle routes between the town centre and railway station.

“Along with the history centre, the project will also take us a significant step towards completing our vision for the civic and cultural quarter of Crewe town centre, which includes the Lyceum Theatre and Market Hall, as well as the Ly2 scheme – work on which began in January and will see Lyceum Square transformed into an exciting events and performance space.”

Completion of a second and final phase of public realm works next to the planned history centre, which is also supported by the government's Towns Fund, is planned to be delivered following construction of the centre.

A message from our President



Two of the principal talking points over the past few months have been the announced delay to HS2 and the decision to locate the Great British Railways Headquarters at Derby, both of which are not what we wanted to hear.

However, whilst this is disappointing news, we must not despair as Crewe will always have a huge part to play in the national Rail Network System and the railways will always remain central to the future economic prosperity of this area.

Crewe's geographic location as a major railway junction has always been a factor in attracting industry and commerce to the area, and the engineering skills and expertise within the workforce will always be in demand.

There will obviously be wider benefits to this area from HS2, which we are already beginning to see. However it is the provision of rail services on the existing network where Crewe's immediate strengths and opportunities exist and it is important that priority should now be given to ensuring that the necessary investment in improvements and maintenance of services takes place.

Indeed, one of the main objectives of HS2 is to create more capacity on the conventional rail network but this is nearly always overlooked with more attention being given to speed and reduced journey times.

With regard to the GBR Headquarters, there are also several other towns and cities who lost out and are no doubt equally disappointed and although it would have been a prestigious thing to have, the scale of the operation has not yet been quantified and it is not going to be hugely detrimental to Crewe's future in the long term.

On a brighter note, it is good to see that the Town Board has had further success in advancing another couple of projects as part of its overall programme for Crewe which will bring more investment and facilities into the Town.

We are of course entering the busy season for major events and there is a lot of planning and arranging going on in the background by the various organisations for what promises to be yet another successful season of activity.

I would encourage all of our members and indeed all business in our area to get involved in these events whether it be the Nantwich Show, the Food festival or the many community events and functions that take place and to take advantage of the great sponsorship and promotional opportunities that are available.

John Dunning
President



A message from our Chair

At the time of writing, it is exactly 12 months since the final Covid-19 restrictions were lifted and almost three years since they were originally put in place, and we all experienced the effect of these changes when the workplace was forced to adapt to those restrictions.

Many of these changes have been transitory but there are others that will remain with us. The consulting group, McKinsey identifies three trends that have emerged from the pandemic, which are likely to continue into the future, namely: remote work and virtual meetings; Ecommerce including other virtual transactions such as telemedicine, online banking, streaming medicine; and digital technologies such as automation and AI. These changes were adopted across the board, and were used to reach new markets, control costs, and digitalise transactions thus increasing growth in delivery, transportation and warehouse jobs. So too they were deployed in warehouses, grocery stores, call centres and in manufacturing to deal with surging demand.

The common denominator is the advance in technology, cross cutting across

all sectors and impacting on every business. We are in the fastest period of innovation ever, and 21st Century technology is equivalent to the 19th Century Industrial Revolution, with advances in AI, Climate Tech, Bio-Tech rapidly taking shape. I was recently listening to Radio 4's Today programme and heard Tony Blair and William Hague united (despite representing different political parties) in their claim that the UK is lagging behind many countries in driving innovation. They claim that UK politics needs to stop arguing over marginal differences in tax and spending but that planning for infrastructure projects and for climate change projects has to be much more ambitious.

The private sector is working hard to drive these changes forward but needs the support of government to be able to do this. For example, the results of the British Chamber of Commerce's (BCC) Quarterly Economic Survey (which many of you respond to) identified that fewer than one in ten (8%) Small/Medium Sized Enterprises (SMEs) fully understand what the Government's 2050 Net Zero target means for them. And yet despite that, 79% are taking action to reduce their carbon footprint and increase their efficiency.

However, 21% still believe that green technology will decrease the productivity of their company. This demonstrates how businesses need to be at the heart of the strategy, understanding the role of technology in order to achieve the 2050 drive net zero target.

Politicians and Chambers of Commerce need to play a huge role in supporting businesses to take action, and you are probably aware that South Cheshire Chamber has been selected to lead the Government funded Local Skills Improvement Plan for Cheshire. We are turning to employers to feedback to us the skills required to help move forward in this time of rapid change. We have already been working with businesses to identify their own skills needs, but this project is continuing until 2025, and it is clear that local businesses, large and small must drive this agenda. So please continue to provide us with feedback and in turn we will deliver the Skills Improvement Plan that reflects your needs in this new world of work.

Dr Diane Wright PhD MA BA (Hons)
Chair of the Chamber



In the Spotlight with...



EST. 2009

TRCREATIVE

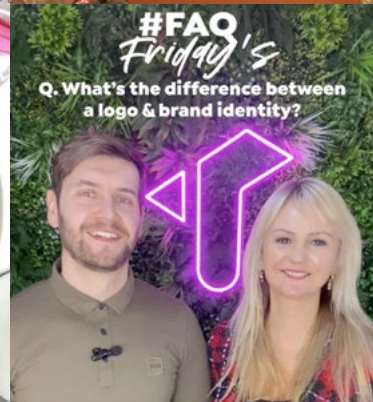
BRANDING • WEB • SEO • DIGITAL MARKETING

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01270 610441

TRCREATIVE, Riverside, 3 First Wood St, Nantwich, Cheshire, CW5 5EG



Founded in 2009, TRCREATIVE is a boutique digital agency that transforms ambitious ideas into successes through branding, web design, SEO & digital marketing for passionate, small to medium-sized businesses in Cheshire and beyond who dream of taking their company to the next level in this creative and enterprising digital age.

From their studio just off Welsh Row, Nantwich, we meet the dynamic duo behind the name - Digital Director Mike Lawson and Creative Director Lynsey Edwards.

1. TRCREATIVE is a long-standing Chamber member and has just announced becoming Premium Members. Tell us how the Chamber has supported your business growth.

When we started our business in 2009, we were only in our mid to late twenties. By becoming members of the Chamber, we felt more validated and accepted into the business community.

In 2014, Mike won Young Business Person of the Year, and in 2015 we were awarded Highly Commended for Best Small Business.

This helped raise our profile locally and get consistent and bigger clients.

2. What's your background, and how did you form your business partnership?

Fate definitely had a hand. After I left College and Lynsey graduated from university about 20 years ago, we applied for the same job in a small agency in Crewe. As luck would have it, we were both taken on and formed the base of the company's newly established design and development team. Although we didn't stay there long and went our separate ways to work in other agencies up and down the country for a couple of years, we found ourselves working in two more agencies together in Cheshire before setting up TRCREATIVE along with our partner, Richard.



As an agency, we believe in a future where businesses of all sizes can compete on a level playing field in the digital space.

3. You have worked with many national clients and big names locally, such as Mornflake, Clive Christian, Clare Balding, Whitby Morrison, Hibberts, Nantwich Food Festival, St Luke's Hospice and the South Cheshire Chamber. Where do you get your ideas?

One of our brand behaviours at TRCREATIVE is to 'Learn something new every day', and we live by it. We believe inspiration is everywhere, you just have to want to find it. So we're constantly consuming new information, taking courses, and webinars, listening to podcasts and audiobooks, reading books, blogs, watching vlogs, and visiting galleries.

We're both also members of global mastermind groups and have monthly meet-ups. Mike for SEO and me for Brand Strategy. This means we're constantly learning from everyone in our groups to give our clients the best value.

We're lucky that we love what we do and don't really switch off.

4. How important is it for a business to have a unique brand identity?

Very! Now, millions of businesses across the world are trading using logos they've created for free using online generators. Which means all of those businesses share the same logos. The holy trinity of marketing is to show integrity, relevance and difference.

5. How do you enjoy being a member of the Chamber?

We love being part of the Chamber, which is why we're now Premium Members. The business support, promotion opportunities and networking it provides are valuable for any local business.

6. Give us one tip for businesses to get the most out of their Chamber membership.

If businesses are already networking, we'd recommend advertising in the Chamber Business magazine.

7. As creative souls, you will be used to 'thinking out of the box' to get the best for your clients. Can you give our readers some tips on how to raise their business profile?

Get involved in the community, sponsor and attend local events. Register your business with Google My Business. It would help if you also had a strong brand and social strategy and an optimised website with monthly SEO and digital marketing.

8. Social media has revolutionised how businesses market themselves. What's the best way to use it?

The first would be to know your audience. What you post on LinkedIn might not be as receptive on TikTok. And the second, consistency, is key.

Use a mixture of posts, reels and stories across channels and share your knowledge, product demonstrations or service processes and behind-the-scenes info.

If you sell online, link your products to Facebook and Instagram shopping and open a TikTok shop.

9. Finally, you each have young children and busy lives away from the design studio. How do you strike a good work-life balance?

We both have children the same age and understand how quickly time passes, so we try to make time and get away when we can. It's not always easy. All you can do is try your best.



Selling beyond the UK: Here's how our members do it!

Exploring the potential to sell your products and services beyond the UK market can drive your company's growth, enhance your company's competitiveness and resilience, and create and safeguard jobs. South

Cheshire Chamber of Commerce is delighted that so many of our members are enjoying success in countries all over the world and we are proud to support you in your international trade endeavours.

In this article we feature three of our members – all SMEs. We feel sure their stories and valuable insight will inspire you to explore sales opportunities for your own products and services beyond the home market.

Tidy Planet



Tidy Planet, based in Macclesfield, has fast become a brand known as the 'food waste experts', with 20 years of experience in developing innovative food waste recycling technologies.

This company was borne from a very personal need when engineer Simon Webb designed a composter device to help his father, a keen gardener, who had a stroke. This mechanical composter was the perfect solution to dealing with waste on the family's smallholding. At the turn of the century in 2000 the foot and mouth outbreak took hold due to farm animals eating infected meat. New laws came into place which stipulated farm animals could no longer eat meat waste, which provided an opportunity for the family to turn their product into a commercial proposition. Testing took place in 2005 with DEFRA and, shortly after, the products were being sold to universities and prison services across the UK as a cost-effective means of managing food waste. From listening to client needs, mechanical engineer Simon was able to develop and expand the product range to include a machine that takes the water out of food and also a waste food dryer.

Expanding their reach beyond the UK

Companies from overseas started to learn about the product range through the website and in 2009 a New York-based company expressed interest in becoming a distributor for the products. With support from the Department for Business and Trade the team then increased their focus on overseas opportunities, to help to grow their distributor network, particularly in Europe. Now Tidy Planet have assigned distributors in over 10 countries across the world.

Sales to the Middle East have been of significant value for this SME in recent years due to a small number of major capital projects focussed on oil and gas fields which incorporated the requirement for on-site food waste solutions. In countries where temperatures reach highs of 40 degrees in the summer and lows of minimum 40 degrees in winter, Tidy Planet Gobi food waster dryers are essential in isolated work communities. These contracts took the company's turnover up to £2.3million in one year alone.

Huw Crampton, Sales Manager at Tidy Planet, shared how the business has managed to stay ahead of competitors by recognising the importance of their website presence from the outset: "In the early days of the business, we placed a lot of value on ensuring our website was fully optimised,



and we have maintained this process over the years. Google is the silent watcher of any business so it is vital that our website is up to date with laws and legislation changes, remaining relevant within our sector. The website content is key to how our enquiries are generated and received."

Jane Booth from South Cheshire Chamber commented

"Our Chamber has worked with Tidy Planet for over 5 years. As a micro company solving very local needs they were excited and keen to embrace the enquiries from overseas but could not really afford to get things wrong. They approached the Chamber, attended events such as the Chamber's Brexit Webinar, which they found very useful, and we hand-held them through the process of successfully getting their goods to market and getting paid! It is tremendously satisfying to see a local company such as Tidy Planet, borne

out of innovation to solve a personal need, now selling to companies across the world, including to blue chips and island resorts. We are proud to be part of their export journey."

Huw went on to say that once international orders were received, the support of South Cheshire Chamber of Commerce proved to be invaluable in completing export documentation and understanding the process of exporting. Over the years the team have built a strong relationship with the Chamber and received incredible one-to-one support which has enabled their international growth.

Plans for the future?

With the increasing importance of sustainability and renewable energy sources Tidy Planet are now expanding the product applications into the waste-to-energy market enabling the dried food waste to be used as a biomass fuel, to generate heat and hot water. This will open up further opportunities in the UK and across the world.

To read more stories from local businesses succeeding overseas visit the <https://cheshireandwarrington.com/growth-and-skills/growth-hub/exporting/> page or type "Cheshire and Warrington exporting" into your search engine.

For more information on Tidy Planet visit <https://tidyplanet.co.uk/>

Training ByteSize

Nantwich-based Training ByteSize is an international project management training company offering e-learning courses as well as virtual and face-to-face training all over the world. Managing Director Victoria Graham tells their story in a short interview aimed at encouraging local businesses to consider sales to customers overseas as a means of growing their business.

"During the pandemic that was actually our best year yet. This was due to a lot of people self-studying our online courses and it also opened up the world to us because our qualifications are recognised everywhere. So, no matter where you are in the world, you can do a training course and an exam.

"We have very strong relationships with the exam boards that we offer the training for and they give us the exam statistics and tell us where in the world our courses are most popular. Maybe there are territories we don't know about that we should be doing training in, so we'll look at those territories and see if it's worth the investment to go into those countries."

Victoria continues:

"Our markets are mainly English-speaking countries, so the Middle East, Australasia



and European countries are our biggest market outside the UK. When we first hear of a territory we'd quite like to go into to grow the business we tend to partner with people who are already on the ground. They might do face-to-face courses but not the online training. They come to us asking if they can white label our product to look like their product and that way we can see if it's worth investing our time and money into that

market. The partners tend to have relationships with government organisations and education, so once they are successful and growing that business for themselves, we tend to go after a different market, which will be the business to consumer market."

In the full 5-minute interview Victoria shares their experience of how to look local when working from the UK across different time zones, researching overseas markets, language, culture and setting up an office in Australia...but most of all not standing still!

"Quality, customer service and great products are all key," Victoria concludes. "If you've got that passion and that drive that will get you into any territory."

To watch the full interview go to https://youtu.be/J8-CA_86JkA or find it in the suite of local video case studies by typing "Cheshire and Warrington exporting video case studies" into your search engine.

For more information on Training ByteSize visit <https://www.trainingbytesize.com/>

Everything Dinosaur



Mike Walley and partner Sue run Everything Dinosaur in Middlewich. They are passionate about dinosaurs and prehistoric animal models and sell these models, including museum quality replicas, to customers all over the world. Mike was also interviewed about the company's export success as part of a project to help inspire others to follow their dreams.

Mike explains: "As our business has grown it got involved in exporting. I'd be a liar to say that we had a long-term strategic plan, exporting kind of happened by accident. We're a niche business, we're a niche market but people on social media in Canada and the USA started to follow us, people in Europe got interested in what we were doing and what we were selling

and, slowly but surely, we've grown a global customer base.

"You ask about the territories we export to at the moment.. well, it would be easier perhaps to say where we don't sell to. Our business is primarily business-to-consumer and we sell to Australia, New Zealand, the Far East also doing quite a lot into America and Canada. We've got a number of customers in South America now, particularly Brazil, and of course, we sell a lot into the European Union."

Mike advises that, "Whether you're working with customers around the corner or around the world, you've got belief in your product, you've got belief in your service, and if you've got a good product and a good service then why not try to penetrate different markets? It's a challenge, it can be difficult but there's plenty of help out there ... and if an old fossil like me can do it, well then what's stopping you?"

In the full 6-minute interview Mike shares Everything Dinosaur's story on how they built their web-based business, targeting overseas markets, the challenges

they have faced and their guidance for businesses thinking about selling beyond the UK.

To watch the full interview go to <https://youtu.be/JzzjXfDqXx8> or find it in the suite of local video case studies by typing "Cheshire and Warrington exporting video case studies" into your search engine.

For more information on Everything Dinosaur visit <https://www.everythingdinosaur.com/>

Further information:

If you are interested in exploring or increasing sales to countries outside the UK please contact Jane Booth at SCCCI jane.booth@sccci.co.uk. We work synergistically with the local trade team at the Department for Business and Trade (<https://www.great.gov.uk/>) so, whatever stage of this journey you are at, we are sure we can add value.

If you are already selling overseas and would like to share your international sales journey to inspire fellow members, then please also contact Jane Booth jane.booth@sccci.co.uk. We will work with you to create your story.



ASSURANT®

Assurant and My CWA announce partnership to combat domestic abuse



Assurant a leading provider of specialty insurance products and related services, has partnered with My CWA, who are a Cheshire-based charity dedicated to supporting victims of domestic abuse. This partnership is a significant step towards supporting the victims of domestic violence and abuse in the local community.

The partnership is an extension of Assurant's commitment to community engagement and social responsibility. Earlier, Assurant had supported the charity by making a cash donation to support a Santa's grotto, which received an overwhelming response from the community.

Now, Assurant employees will support My CWA by volunteering, sharing skills, and participating in fundraising activities. The partnership aims to provide long-term support to My CWA and assist the charity in its efforts to help individuals and families affected by domestic abuse.

My CWA is a local charity that provides free and confidential support to individuals affected by domestic abuse. The charity

works tirelessly to empower survivors of domestic abuse by offering counselling, advocacy, and practical support to help them rebuild their lives. The partnership with Assurant will provide much-needed support to the charity, enabling it to expand its services and reach out to more people in need.

Assurant's commitment to social responsibility extends beyond providing financial support to charitable organisations. The partnership with My CWA is a testament to the company's dedication to making a positive impact on the communities it serves.

The partnership with My CWA is part of Assurant's broader commitment to the communities where they live and work, which includes initiatives to support diversity, equity, and inclusion, employee well-being, and environmental sustainability.

Commenting on the partnership, Assurant's President, Europe, Christian Formby, said, "We are delighted to partner with My CWA and support their efforts to help victims of domestic abuse. We recognize the critical role that organizations like My CWA play in supporting individuals and families affected by domestic violence and abuse. We are committed to making a positive impact in the communities where

we operate, and we look forward to working with My CWA to support their vital work."

My CWA commented: "We're so looking forward to working with the Assurant team in the year ahead and can't wait to update you on the positive impact their support has on the lives of those in need.

Domestic abuse affects all genders, ages, cultures, traditions, and economic backgrounds. And it can happen in any type of relationship – regardless of sexual orientation, with or without children. It can also affect wider families and friends. Community partnerships have such a significant impact on the work we do and the people we help - they help raise awareness, build long-lasting connections and help employees give back to their local communities".

The partnership with My CWA is a crucial step towards addressing the issue of domestic abuse and empowering survivors to rebuild their lives. With Assurant's support, My CWA can continue to provide much-needed support to those affected by domestic abuse, ensuring that they receive the help and support they need to move forward.

For more on Assurant go to www.assurant.co.uk



BENTLEY

Bentley celebrates best ever financial results in 2022

Bentley Motors has revealed record financial results for 2022, with operating profits up nearly €1 billion compared to 2018. The latest annual figures show a profit of €708 million, representing an 82 per cent growth in profit from a four per cent growth in volume.

Turnover reached €3.38 billion, up 19 per cent over the same period. The announcement follows record sales in 2022, when Bentley delivered 15,174 extraordinary cars – the first time it has retailed more than 15,000 cars in a year. This rapid financial transformation of the company underpins a future investment programme unrivalled in the luxury car sector, enabling Bentley to revolutionise from the world's biggest 12-cylinder engine producer to an all-electric car company within a decade.

Return on sales climbed to 20.9 per cent in 2022, an impressive rise from 13.7 per cent in 2021 and the highest in Bentley's 104-year history. The increase was due to customers choosing higher specification derivatives, higher option uptake and the sale of Limited Editions and Coachbuilt collectibles.

Adrian Hallmark, Chairman and CEO of Bentley Motors, commented:

"Since the low point of 2018, the whole team at Crewe has been working intensively to restructure the business model, in parallel



with launching successive segment leading new models and features. Last year marked a milestone in this journey. An almost €1 billion profit turnaround has been achieved since 2018 despite an unprecedented period of disruptions and crises including Brexit, Covid, Semiconductor supply, Ukraine and UK economic instability.

"We have built a sustainable financial basis for the long-term, a competitive cost structure and unique market positioning, resulting in an historically strong cash generative that is providing the funding for the most ambitious race to full BEV and carbon neutrality in the luxury sector. Our order bank and order intake rate so far in 2023 show strong potential to sustain our performance, although the business environment is becoming more volatile and risk factors are increasing.

"We will maintain focus on customer value rather than sales volume and adapt our plan according to the emerging market

situation, however our well-balanced export success, disciplined cost management structure and ability to maximise personalisation in an industrialised way, driving profitability, are good foundations to continue this success."

The continued demand for SUVs ensured Bentayga remained Bentley's number one model, selling more in its sixth year of sales than ever before, accounting for 42 per cent of total sales and establishing itself as the most successful luxury SUV in the world.

The Continental GT and Convertible accounted for nearly a third of sales, with the performance-orientated GT Speed, the most dynamic road car Bentley has ever built, claiming almost 31 per cent of the model mix. The Flying Spur, the world's finest luxury four-door grand-tourer, achieved 28 per cent of Bentley's total sales, helped by the introduction of an environmentally-friendly Hybrid.

Bentley's latest financial results support the company's industry-leading Beyond100 strategy, as it looks to electrify its entire product range and achieve carbon neutral status by 2030. That includes a €3 billion, ten-year investment programme in future models and at the Pym's Lane factory in Crewe where all Bentley models are built.

For more on the company go to www.bentleymotors.com

Cheshire and Warrington set to benefit from £14.2m investment to support Higher Technical Skills



Cheshire and Warrington region has been selected by the Department for Education (DfE) and Institute of Technology (IoT) to lead on a highly prestigious project between employers and colleges that will see £14.2m invested within the region.

The IoT initiative is part of a wider government plan to equip young people with the technical skills they need in priority areas, such as advanced manufacturing, digital and cyber security, health and life sciences, agri-tech, construction, science and maths, which will also benefit local employers.

The project will mean direct investment for employers, local businesses and colleges in the Cheshire area with £14.2m capital investment, giving students within the region access to state-of-the-art equipment and facilities, providing them an ideal environment for learning and the opportunities to gain higher level technical qualifications.

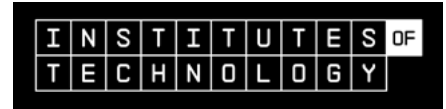
Cheshire College – South & West is leading this joint venture, which also includes Warrington and Vale Royal College, Macclesfield College, Reaseheath College, University of Chester and Priestley College.

The IoT work to ensure world class training and education opportunities in

the region and is a unique collaboration between employers, colleges and universities that specialise in offering high-quality higher technical education and training. In Cheshire, this training will be provided by top organisations such as Encirc, Warrington and Halton NHS Trust, Bruntwood SciTech at Alderley Park and JCB, keeping the region at the forefront of industry developments.

Lee Procter-Wright, Head of People Development at Encirc360, commented: "The IoT provides a gateway to access and develop world-class technical skills that will feature heavily in the future skills market, enabling genuine employment opportunities. Our commitment to support the IoT through work-based education activities aligns well with our focus on future skills and opportunity in a Net Zero world."

Dr Kath Mackay, Director of Life Sciences and Managing Director of Alderley Park, Bruntwood SciTech, said: "Connecting the companies based at our campus with the right skills and talent is imperative to creating and retaining jobs in the region. With over 4,500 people now working at Alderley Park, I'm excited to be supporting the next generation of innovators and providing a platform into science and technology careers for our learners."



The collaboration between the Cheshire and Warrington colleges, employers and universities is to ensure young people entering the workforce have the skills needed by employers to keep the region at the forefront of industry.

Mark Ireland, General Manager – Service at JCB, added: "Our partnership on the Cheshire and Warrington IoT will enable facility and equipment improvements at Reaseheath College that amplifies the delivery of a high-quality education and ultimately releases students into our Dealer businesses that are truly ready for work."

Lucy Gardner, Director of Strategy and Partnerships, Warrington and Halton Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, added: "There are national challenges to recruitment and retention in healthcare, including roles with technical education and training. The Institute of Technology will enable us, in partnership with our local colleges, to train local people for local jobs, supporting recruitment to vital healthcare roles."

– For more on college courses go to www.ccsw.ac.uk

Success on a plate for Cheshire College – South & West



An open evening offered information about Apprenticeships



Success in the Zest Quest Asia 2023 competition

Cheshire College – South & West was elated after a team of its Hospitality and Catering students won the Spice it Up with Schwartz Prize at the Zest Quest Asia 2023 competition.

Level 3 Professional Cookery students Alena Bishdary, Finn Kinsella and James Parker, all from Ellesmere Port, qualified for the finals in January 2023, after an intensely competitive shortlisting process.

Zest Quest Asia has been an established culinary competition for a decade, celebrating the creativity, knowledge, understanding and appreciation of Asian cuisine. In preparation for the finals, the team created a bespoke Sri Lankan-inspired menu.

The live cook-off took place at the Radison Red London Heathrow during a Gala Awards Dinner. The team's dishes were presented to a board of judges, headed by Steve Munkley, vice president of the Craft Guild of Chefs.

As winners in the Spice it Up with Schwartz category, the team will receive a tour of McCormick's Factory. McCormick's is famed for its spice, mix and sauce manufacturing, and the Cheshire College team will also get sensory experience with McCormick's as part of their prize.

Lecturer Adam Gaunt-Evans said that the team's success was a "testament to their determination, hard work and creativity. Professional cookery competitions are an exercise in focus and precision, and the team did Cheshire College proud!"

Meanwhile the College has hosted an Apprenticeship Open Evening highlighting the benefits of becoming an Apprentice and providing information about Apprenticeships to members of the public.

Cheshire College has over 1,000 Apprentices, works with over 500 local, national and international employers and delivers Apprenticeships across a wide range of sectors including, Health,

Public Services & Care, Engineering & Manufacturing, Construction & Building Services, Information & Communications Technology, Retail & Commercial Enterprise, Education & Training and Business, Administration & Law.

Karen Roberts, Assistant Principal – Apprenticeships and Employer said: "We had a diverse cohort of employers at the event, who are all passionate about apprenticeships. With our strong corporate partnerships and exciting learning programmes, there's never been a better time to start an apprenticeship at Cheshire College."

– To find out more about becoming an Apprentice, visit www.ccsw.ac.uk If you are an employer interested in benefitting from an Apprentice, email employers@ccsw.ac.uk or call 01244 656499.

Embrace digital transformation with funded Made Smarter programme – now open for applications



Smarter's North West Adoption programme, the government-funded, industry-led initiative to increase technology adoption among small businesses.

Made Smarter is designed to fit around the demands of SME leaders, and it's a blend of in-person and online workshops. The programme helps senior managers to develop a set of practical tools, a digital transformation strategy, and access to further support opportunities including potential funding for new technology.

Manchester Metropolitan University's Centre for Enterprise is pleased to announce the launch of Made Smarter.

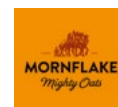
This new, fast-track leadership programme helps SME manufacturers in Greater Manchester to accelerate their digital transformation. The programme

allows leaders to identify critical priorities to drive business forward, looking at where digital tools and processes can help.

Sitting within the triple-accredited Business School, the team at the Centre for Enterprise transforms academic research into practical toolkits. The funded programme has been designed by Made

To find out more visit bit.ly/Made-Smarter or contact us at cfgrowth@mmu.ac.uk

Mornflake steps forward as Cheshire Woman of the Year top name sponsor



the event taking place at Chester Racecourse on June 21. The Cheshire Woman of the Year Awards have run for 34 years and celebrate professional achievement, community service and personal courage of women across Cheshire and the Wirral.

Since it launched, more than 2,000 women have been honoured and the event has raised almost £300,000 for children's charities through sponsorship, with funds going directly to the NSPCC to support children and families in Cheshire and the Wirral.

Sylvia Cheater MBE, Chair of the Cheshire Woman Award Society, said: "The Cheshire Woman of the Year celebration is a way of paying tribute to all the women across our region who have made a real difference to their communities, many are unsung heroines.

to Mornflake for stepping forward as a headline sponsor for a second year."

More than 40 women have been nominated in this year's search. Categories recognise great personal courage, outstanding professional success and exceptional service to local community.

Mornflake managing director James Lea said: "The Awards recognise the amazing achievements of local women and although there can be only one winner, all the nominees have inspirational stories to tell. The Awards also raise vital funds for the NSPCC. It was our pleasure to offer our support once again."

For information on supporting the awards see www.cheshirewomanaward.org.uk/ sponsorship

For more on Mornflake Millers of Mighty Oats since 1675 go to www.mornflake.com

The Cheshire Woman of the Year Award scheme has won backing from Mornflake for a second year running. Organisers have said a 'big thank you' to the company after appealing for sponsors to support their fundraising for the NSPCC.

Mornflake is a headline sponsor of

"Thanks to the generosity of our sponsors, it also raises much-needed funds for the NSPCC. All the money raised is used to help children and families in Cheshire and the Wirral – including support for ChildLine.

"However in the current economic climate attracting sponsorship has become more of a challenge so we are very thankful



Reaseheath College and First Bus welcome Roads Minister during National Apprenticeship Week



Roads and Local Transport Minister Richard Holden MP (centre) with senior staff from Reaseheath College and First Bus and apprentices Reuben Brooksbank, Madison Simmons, Liam Blyth and Finlay Reed

Reaseheath College welcomed Roads and Local Transport Minister Richard Holden MP onto campus during National Apprenticeship Week to see the progress of the UK's first dedicated Bus and Coach Engineering Academy

The academy is the result of an innovative and forward-thinking partnership between Reaseheath and First Bus. As well as delivering in-demand skills training in green technology to the company's apprentices, it also creates a clear pathway for future talent to progress into the industry.

First Bus apprentice engineering technicians receive tailored training on both current and next generation zero emission vehicles at Reaseheath's bespoke engineering apprentice academy on the Hurlleston Business Park near to the main campus in Nantwich.

Eighty-two apprentices are currently on the programme, with the majority specialising in mechanical and electrical engineering and coach building and a small number in trade supplies.

Richard Holden MP toured the academy with First Bus Chief Operating

Officer Andrew Jarvis, First Bus Head of Engineering Excellence Tony Cockcroft and Marcus Clinton, Principal and Chief Executive of Reaseheath College.

The Roads Minister said: "Driving good skilled jobs across engineering and science and discovering new-age technologies to tackle pollution go hand in hand. Apprenticeships are at the heart of the Government's mission to boost skills and employment and it has been brilliant to see this great partnership between First Bus and Reaseheath College paving the way for exciting careers in a zero-emission bus future."

Marcus Clinton said: "By working closely with First Bus we have been able to shape a relevant curriculum delivering a first-class combination of technical and employability skills which meet the specific needs of the company and also guarantees jobs for the apprentices."

"This very successful model puts First Bus firmly in the driving seat and demonstrates the very best example of an educational institution working in unity with an industry partner."

For more about the bus and coach apprenticeship at Reaseheath www.reaseheath.ac.uk/engineering-apprenticeships/bus-and-coach

Are your staff happy? SG World asked and they answered . . .



They say never ask a question you don't want the answer to. SG World asked their employees 21 questions in a far-reaching survey, gathering feedback about roles and responsibilities, support, senior management, career development, rewards and recognition.

"It was a major project, initiated by our CEO, Mark Haase," said Emma Stevens, SG World HR Manager. "We wanted to give people a voice and invested over 47 hours in face to face interviews listening to our staff. On the whole the feedback was incredibly positive and a valuable starting point for future initiatives focusing on the things that matter to our people."

SG World is a family firm which prides itself on fostering a real sense of community, this was strongly represented in some impressive headline statistics: over 90% of staff had a clear understanding of what was expected of them, wanted to do the best work they could, felt part of a helpful, supportive team and were treated with fairness and respect. This puts SG World well ahead of the pack in terms of worker engagement in the UK manufacturing sector. Of course, the survey also revealed areas for development, Emma explained "the feedback shows we are getting a lot of things right but there's always room for improvement and now we know where to focus our efforts, starting with leadership development and employee wellbeing."

"SG World have a tradition of nurturing home-grown talent, this means our supervisors and managers will often be promoted on their technical ability. The survey highlighted the need to give our supervisors and managers more help and support in developing a leadership skillset. Consequently, as a business we are investing in a 12 month Leadership Development Program to help our people managers lead by example, innovate and enable our best people to do their best work."

Unsurprisingly mental health plays a huge role in employee morale and "Employee wellbeing is an area where we already have a great head start," explained Emma, "over 85% of SG World employees are happy with their work/life balance, which makes a significant contribution to mental health. We believe our forward-thinking policies on a 4 day week and flexible working contribute significantly to this outcome. We also invest in an external Employee Assistance Program, offering 24/7 counselling and debt management services but we realised we need to work harder to promote these benefits. This will form part of an internal health and wellbeing plan "Thrive in 5", featuring a program of activities focusing on specific areas raised by employees. For example, SG World are currently working with Mentell for Mental Health Week in May as part of their Business Blue campaign to raise awareness of men's mental health across UK Business."

Commenting on the project, Mark Haase added: "The last few years have been challenging for every business, it feels like we've been firefighting for a long time but SG World plan to thrive not survive. I firmly believe that engaged and motivated staff are the key to a successful future."

To find out more visit www.sgworld.com

New writing competition offers cash prizes for Crewe and Nantwich schools



Steven Goodwin, Faye Kerry, Gareth Williams, Scott Doherty, John Evans

Crewe & District Writers Circle members Steven Goodwin and Gareth Williams (front) and Construction Linx Facilities Supervisor Faye Kerry and Operations Manager John Evans

Budding young writers can win cash prizes for their schools by letting imaginations go wild in a new story-telling contest for Crewe and Nantwich children.

Crewe & District Writers Circle has launched a Story Starter competition backed by South Cheshire commercial property maintenance company Construction Linx whose owner Gareth Williams is a keen writer and poet.

Gareth, a member of the writing group, said: "The Crewe & District Writers Circle are a passionate group of local writers who love to spread the joy of literature and writing in all genres.

"The group was founded in 1964 and for many years it has run a successful International Poetry competition but this

year the aim is to do something different and very local for younger budding writers.

"The competition is an opportunity for KS2 pupils to flex their writing skills and add their own spin on a fantastical story set in and around the area."

Construction Linx, based on Crewe Hall Enterprise Park, has sponsored the competition offering a £250 cash prize for the school of the winning entry and £50 Amazon Voucher for the star writer.

There will be runner up prizes of a £30 Amazon voucher for the youngster in second place and a £20 Amazon voucher for the third.

The competition is open to pupils aged 9-11 enrolled in schools within Crewe and Nantwich and entrants must use a story beginning provided by the group and pick a location for an 'unexpected event' on a perfectly normal day at their school, Queens Park, the BMX track or all over Crewe.

The story starter begins: The day was just like any other in June, with the sun shining and Crewe alive with activity. But something lurked beneath the surface, something sinister and strange. The morning started off innocuously enough, with the school bells ringing and the children filing in, greeting their teachers with the customary 'Morning Miss' or 'Morning Sir.'

And continues: It was an ordinary day, but there was something not quite right, something that made the hairs on the back

of your neck stand up and then, something unexpected happened...

Construction Linx carries out maintenance on several South Cheshire schools and Gareth, a published poet, is keen for pupils to look beyond technology for inspiration.

He added: "Construction Linx is closely connected with the local community through our charity efforts. Supporting the writing competition is a way to give back to younger residents of Crewe and Nantwich.

"In these days of AI and Chat GPT we would love for children to develop a flair for crafting their own stories and wordsmithing skills that will last a lifetime."

The competition will be judged by Crewe & District Writers Circle members. Deadline for entries is May 26.

Spokesman Steven Goodwin said: "We are very grateful to Construction Linx for sponsoring this competition. We hope it encourages local students to bring their stories to life and explore the creative process.

"We look forward to reading their entries."

Winners will be announced at an open day to be staged by the group at the Hope & Beams Centre, Broad Street, Crewe on July Saturday, July 8.

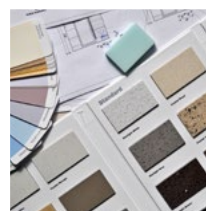
For more information on how to enter call 01270 848700 or email gareth@constructionlinx.co.uk



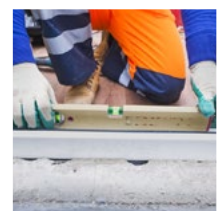
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Crewe Engineering & Design UTC: Working with Whitby Morrison



Working closely with industry partners is central to Crewe UTC's proposition and teaching of engineering. This involvement with industry helps students develop their skills in engineering and design, alongside their studies, so they are ready to move into careers in the sector with work-ready experiences already under their belts. Industry partners support our students with:

- Employer talks and masterclasses
- Real-world industry projects
- Work experience placements

T Level Engineering: In addition, Crewe UTC is one of the first Sixth Form colleges in the UK selected by the government to deliver T level Engineering. This 'gold standard' technical qualification is the

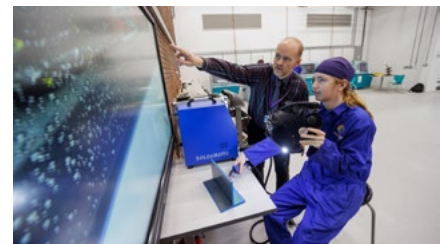
equivalent to three A Levels, and includes an in-depth, 45-day industry placement, making our relationships with engineering partners even more vital. And we are very proud to have recently started working with Whitby Morrison.

Whitby Morrison Operations Director Ed Whitby says: "Whitby Morrison are delighted to partner with UTC, there's so much common ground that it'd nonsensical for two local icons to not be working together. UTC has access to the very best students, and these are the people who can revolutionise Ice Cream Vans and take them to another level. In turn, Whitby Morrison has a world-renowned product and respected brand that provides students with the opportunity for hands on involvement (and influence) in multiple disciplines and skillsets. The best way to learn is by doing, and Whitby Morrison with UTC will provide the perfect opportunity."

Will Chitty, Principal, adds: "If you would like to learn more about Crewe UTC and how your business could become involved with our industry partner programme, we'd love to hear from you. And if you'd like to see our industry-leading facilities for yourself, I'd be delighted to show you around our West Street campus." Email w.chitty@utccrewe.org.uk

For more information go to www.utccrewe.co.uk

For more on Whitby Morrison go to www.whitbymorrison.com



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Q&A

Q. How can I improve my website myself?

Do it Yourself tips to improve your website's ranking in Google

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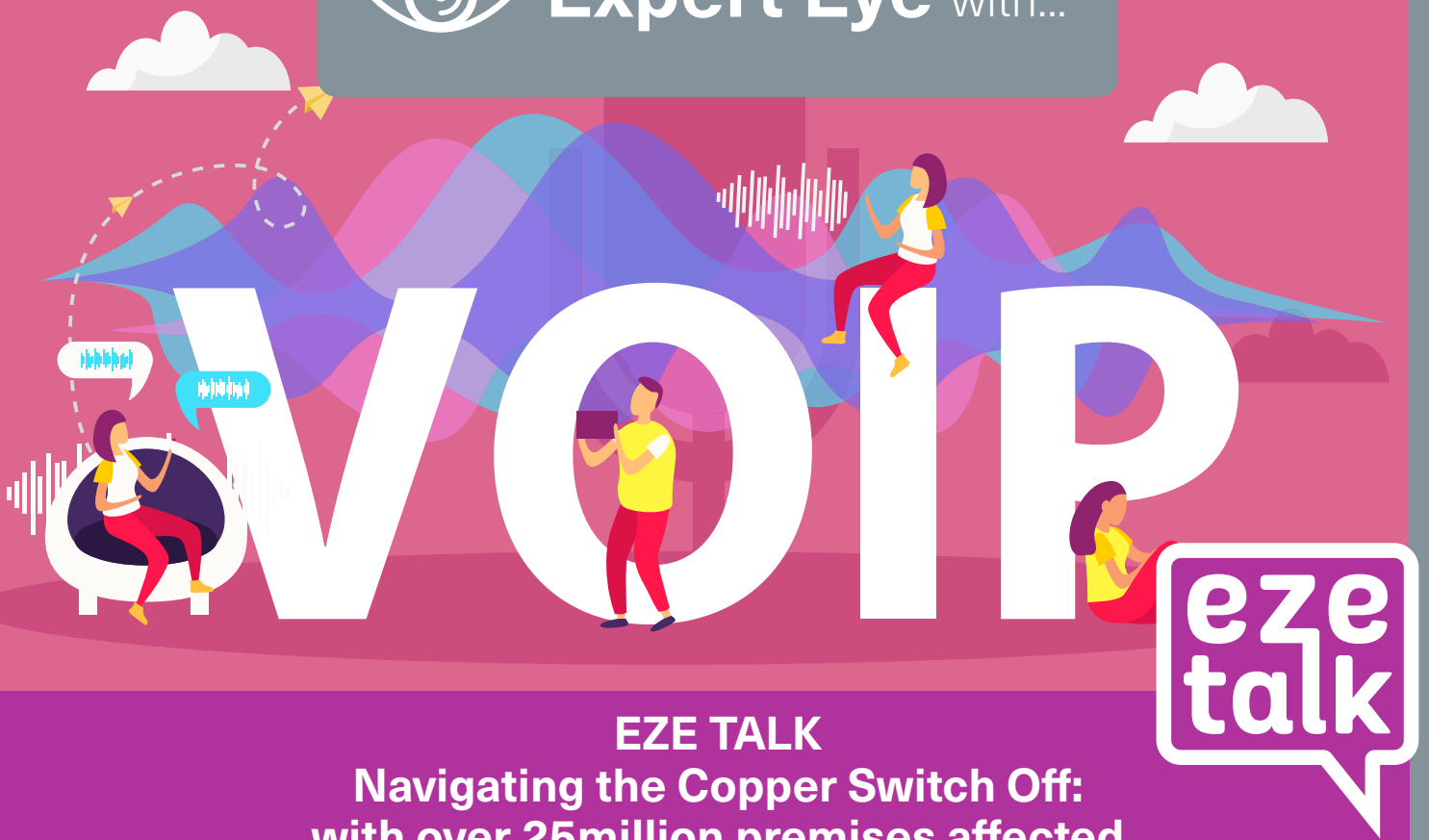
- 1 Register with Google My Business**
Go to [Google.com/business](https://www.google.com/business)
- 2 Optimise Keywords**
Add them in headers, titles, sub-headers and body copy.
- 3 Optimise your site speed**
Easy DIY fix - make sure the file sizes of your images are as small as possible.
- 4 Use internal linking**
Adding contextual linking throughout your site helps search engines better understand your websites structure.
- 5 Quality content**
Unique images, videos and content with at least 500 unique words on each page.

+ your site **MUST** be Responsive meaning it must resize for mobile, tablet and desktop.

Let's take your brand to the next level



Expert Eye with...



EZE TALK Navigating the Copper Switch Off: with over 25million premises affected

Expert telecoms firm Eze Talk has been serving the homes and businesses in the UK for over twenty years, providing services from broadband to mobile and IT services. The company is dedicated to working with its customers to ensure their switch is Eze and hassle free. Directors, Mike Walsh and Jane Bibbey understand customers can't afford down time which is why Eze Talk's service is second to none.

The successful business owners have shared their expertise on a huge migration project, The Copper Switch Off 2025, and how this will affect the nation, its people and its businesses.

Active since 1876, the copper network has served homes and businesses with telephone communications across the UK, and more recently has also been used to provide access to the internet.

Following the ISDN (Integrated Service Digital Network) and PSTN (Public Switched Telephone Network) shutdown in 2025, the telecommunications industry is turning to VoIP (Voice over Internet Protocol), a faster, more reliable, and cheaper solution. Put simply, the ever-growing demand for bandwidth cannot be met by the outdated copper network and Openreach is phasing it out in favour of a robust, modern network platform – Fibre Optic, or Full Fibre (FTTP) technology.

An initiative backed by the Government and supported by telecommunication firms

across the UK, the fundamental upgrade to the nation's digital infrastructure into a new full fibre network will benefit residential and commercial customers alike.

A total of 4million homes and businesses across the UK can already access a full fibre service however, there is a long way to go to migrate the rest of the country to VoIP before the Copper Switch Off at the end of 2025.

Unfortunately, there are several challenges that the communications industry face before this is complete.

Coverage

The Copper Switch Off is a momentous advancement for the comms industry, and Eze Talk is ready for it. But we must be realistic about what it means for people who will not be able to get access to the new full fibre platform. Some areas of the country are just too remote for full fibre to be cost-effective. For those people, other services will need to be considered for them to stay connected, such as 4G or 5G.

Critical need for connectivity

The migration from the old copper network to VoIP and FTTP technology will provide the nation with easier, safer, and more secure access to the internet. This will enable many vulnerable groups to live at home for longer; it will also help in providing public services and healthcare to people faster and cheaper.

Success

To successfully migrate customers from the copper network to the fibre-to-the-

premises network, telecommunications companies need to be adept at delivering and servicing VoIP.

The withdrawal of outdated copper lines will allow the commercial industry to focus on making the UK's communication network as great as possible, without worrying about maintaining old and expensive platforms. As an industry, we need to commit to providing customers with information and choices that will help them make the transition from copper-based to fibre-based services efficiently and with minimal disruption.

OpenReach has announced it will run both services until everyone has upgraded, to ensure no one misses out on their service. The UK's communication providers will have the same dynamic, where they will be serving multiple platforms. As the ratio shifts, maintaining the old copper network will cause cost rises to the end customer and will further encourage migration.

Jane said: "We know you don't have time to waste and neither do we. That's why we've developed a process that works with your existing plan to offer a smooth transition into the world of full fibre internet and VoIP. Eze Talk will be there every step of the way, helping make sure all our customers are connected successfully, both ahead of and following The Copper Switch Off."

Get in touch with Eze Talk to find the right solution for you.
0333 200 0801 | hello@eze-talk.com

Bentley Motors – Inspiring Young Women into the World of STEM



On the 8 March 2023, we facilitated a unique opportunity that allowed female students to visit Bentley Motors and inquire about STEM apprenticeships within Bentley Motors. Throughout the day, students learned more about the history of the world's leading manufacturers of luxury cars, and the future goals of the business as well as being able to see the incredible cars up close.

The female students (Year 10 – Year 13) were able to learn and hear from extraordinary leading female role models in the business and experience practical

activities from manufacturing. The day was a great success, where the students gained a lot of knowledge surrounding career pathways within Bentley, as the leading car manufacturers shared what it would take to be a successful candidate for those looking to apply for Bentley's Early Careers programme.

It was great to see all the students actively getting involved and learning about different STEM career pathways.

Bentley Motors Early Years Careers

Bentley's world-class apprenticeships offer a range of pathways across Manufacturing, Engineering, Business,

Digital, Project Management and more. You'll work towards an externally recognised qualification whilst developing your skills and experience with on-the-job training and experiences. Applications welcomed from school or college leavers or those looking for a change of career.

Get in touch

It is important for us at The Cheshire and Warrington Pledge Partnership to continue to provide and facilitate opportunities for young people to experience the real world of work, businesses and understand how to communicate with employers. We are also passionate about bringing schools and employers together to discuss the skills gap and how we can come together to support local businesses and schools.

You can get in touch with our friendly team to find out how you can get involved by emailing Pledge@cheshireandwarrington.com

Making a difference ...



Cheshire Connect matches the skills and expertise of local businesses and professionals, kindly offered for free, with the requirements of the voluntary and community sector... not merely a box ticking exercise, but to have a direct impact on real people within the local community.

Skill donor volunteers have an opportunity to expand their range of skills while they use their business expertise to support a local grass roots charity, which in turn helps your business to attract talent, encourage staff retention, engagement and productivity.

It's a win win – the charity gain expertise, your organisation makes a meaningful contribution to the community,

you and your employees gain values-driven experience generating that special 'feel good factor' for all!

Plus providing your skill donor support experiences could attract more customers. People are more likely to buy from a business with shared values and can demonstrate that they are living by those values and making a tangible difference to their local community.

Get in touch with the local Crewe and South Cheshire East Business Connector - Dianne Parrish on 07946 639394 or email: dianneparrish@cheshireconnect.org

Or to find out more about Cheshire Connect, please visit our website www.cheshireconnect.org

... a small amount of skill donor time can make a huge difference to charitable organisations, helping to support people in our local community.

“Cheshire Connect have given me the tools and introductions to skill donors to realise the potential of what the Stroke Survivors Group could become. Our Business Connector is very personable and totally gets what we are about. It's wonderful to know that I have this support, especially as we progress from a new start-up to now developing and expanding our services in neighbouring areas. I can't wait to see where this journey takes our Group with Cheshire Connect.”

Liz Bedson, Founder and Leader: Stroke Survivors Speech and Language Support Group

Hal Payments Consultancy announce sponsorship of Nantwich Town Football Club



Hal Payments Consultancy Ltd have announced a new partnership with Nantwich Town Football Club. They have been very happy to help Nantwich Town with funding for their new digital scoreboard and believe it will be a great asset to the club.

The scoreboard was unveiled at their first game of the New Year against Warrington Town. It was put to use within in minutes of the game starting with a goal after 20 seconds!

Tim Crighton, Marketing Director at NTFC said: "We are over the moon with

the new digital scoreboard and the media team have already got to grips with showing the line ups, goal flashes and sponsor adverts. The feedback and comments from supporters has been fantastic so far."

Andy Myers, Chairman of HAL Payments Consultancy comments:

"Delighted to have partnered with Nantwich Town and this new project was right up our street with HAL being in the technology sector. Pleased to be supporting the local community and we look forward getting to know the fans and other commercial partners more in the months and years ahead."

For more on payment solutions contact enquiries@halpayments.com



Are you Self Employed or receive annual bonuses? Now could be the time to prepare your mortgage application



As April brings in a new Tax Year, employees will be receiving their P60 and individuals who are self-employed will have their latest Tax Returns. With all that in mind, whether you're a first time buyer, looking to move to a new house or looking to start your landlord portfolio - now could be a good time to apply for a mortgage.

Latest Tax Returns

With your latest tax returns available, those who are self-employed will now have proof of their income from the last 12 months. With this information, lenders can calculate a more accurate affordability assessment of your circumstances.

Furthermore, if the business has generated more profits than the previous year, your latest copies can be used as evidence to demonstrate higher affordability.

Annual and Quarterly Bonuses

As a mortgage lender will usually ask for your latest three months of payslips (they can request more or less than three months depending on the lender) these may not include an annual, bi-annual or quarterly bonus.

For example, if you're looking to apply for a mortgage in April and you received a large annual bonus in December, your last three payslips will not display this bonus.

As a P60 demonstrates how much you have earned in the last 12 months, any bonuses throughout the last tax year can potentially be used for your affordability check. Consequently, it can be an opportunity to increase the affordability that you can present to a potential mortgage lender

What if my mortgage is due to expire this year?

If your current fixed mortgage product is due to expire this year, you could potentially secure a new mortgage product 6 months before your existing one is due to end. With a new rate secured, you can avoid any further increases that may occur.

As we actively keep checking our

lender's rate, if the rates were to decrease further we will endeavour to secure you the lower rate where this is possible.

If you are currently on a standard variable rate (SVR) or a tracker mortgage, your monthly payment will be affected by any future announcements from the Bank of England (increases or decreases). You could potentially save money by switching to a fixed rate to avoid any future increases, however you will need to check for any potential early repayment charges (ERCs) which may be owed were you to exit your current mortgage product early.

Unsure of what's the best thing to do? Speak with a mortgage broker

Navigating the mortgage market can be difficult with numerous lenders available, all with their own unique set of criteria. This is where a mortgage broker like Amplo Mortgages & Financial Solutions can help, we can search the whole of the market for you to find the mortgage product which best meets your requirements.

If you would like to find out more please contact our team on 01270 443510 for a free initial consultation, alternatively you can make an enquiry online: ampломortgages.co.uk.

As a mortgage is secured against your home or property it could be repossessed if you do not keep up the mortgage repayments.

Phil Gray announced in the 2023 Credit 500 index of the most influential people in consumer and commercial credit



Watts Commercial Finance is delighted to announce that their Managing Director, Phil Gray has been recognised in the Credit 500 index for the third consecutive year.

The Credit 500 is an exclusive index of executives and senior professionals working across consumer and commercial credit and includes individuals who hold roles with influence over regulation, risk policy, conduct and financial assistance, across financial services, utilities, telecoms and the public sector.

With a lifetime's dedication to the financial services sector, this announcement further recognises Phil's continued contribution to the industry and is testament to his many years of hard work and dedication over the past 33 years.

Commenting on the announcement, Phil Gray, Managing Director of Watts Commercial Finance said: "I am both honoured and humbled to have been named within the Credit 500 index alongside some of the finest in the consumer and commercial credit industry for the third consecutive year.



"This achievement is testament to my team who I am immensely proud of. As a multi-award winning brokerage, we pride ourselves on our outstanding industry knowledge, professionalism and service and we remain on course for another record year of trading in 2023."

The Watts Group of companies has been established for over 25 years. Its commercial managers cover the whole of the UK, working with clients from small sole traders to large limited companies and from all sectors.

Park View branches out with tree planting scheme



Following the Queen's Green Canopy tree planting initiative in 2022, the Jubilee year, Park View Business Centre has now started a Coronation Planting of Oak trees.

David Hotchkiss, Maintenance Manager at PVBC has nurtured and now planted the first of these saplings at the business centre.

He says - "This has been a great thing to do. It will give me years of pleasure seeing the tree expanding into its new space. I'll now have something to prompt me to remember this special year every time I notice it growing on."

Park View Business Centre, situated between Nantwich and Whitchurch takes its green credentials seriously whilst striving to provide small to medium sized businesses with great value offices from which to run their business. This programme of new broad-leaf planting will continue in the autumn and echoes the renewable energy activities already working on the site. Ultimately, 100 new trees will be planted around the centre.

For more information on Park View Business Centre, call 01948 661 600.

Artificial intelligence and the impact on software development



Rare Earth Digital in Nantwich looks at how AI is transforming the software development industry. They are already witnessing AI tools and technologies being integrated into many software development processes. From automated testing and debugging to code analysis and optimization, AI is fast becoming an integral part of the software development pipeline.

Automation of routine tasks:

One significant impact of AI on software development is the automation of routine tasks. For example, coding, testing, and debugging are some of the tasks that can be automated using AI-powered tools. With

automation, developers can spend more time on tasks that require human input, such as architecture design and problem-solving. This not only increases productivity but also improves the quality of the software being developed.

Generating code: Another impact of AI is the ability to generate code. Developers can use AI algorithms to generate code based on specific requirements and guidelines. This can save developers a significant amount of time and effort, especially when working on repetitive tasks.

Fixing bugs in software code: AI-powered tools can also assist developers in identifying and fixing bugs in software code. By analyzing large amounts of data, these tools can detect patterns and anomalies that

might not be apparent to human developers. This can help developers to identify and resolve issues more quickly, reducing the time and resources required for testing and debugging.

Improving software security:

AI can also help to improve software security. By analysing vast amounts of data, AI algorithms can identify potential vulnerabilities in software code and provide recommendations on how to fix them. This can help to reduce the risk of security breaches and improve the overall security of software systems.

And finally... While AI can help automate some aspects of software development, such as testing and debugging, it cannot replace the human intuition and judgement needed to make critical decisions and the element of collaboration and communication that is essential for successful software development. Instead, AI is likely to be integrated into the software development process to help developers work more efficiently and effectively, and to create new opportunities for innovation and creativity.

—
For more on technology related news visit www.rareearthdigital.com



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New Chamber member enjoys record first year



Introducing recruitment company, Driver Hire Crewe, a new Chamber member. It's a franchise business, part of a one hundred nationwide network. Owner, Lee Statham, initially bought a share in the Crewe franchise in 2018 before making it his own in 2021.

Driver Hire provides temporary and permanent drivers and other logistics staff to local and national organisations in both the public and private sector. If they're short of

staff – perhaps because of illness, holidays or seasonal demand – Driver Hire Crewe will supply them with a suitable replacement.

Lee's first year was a record for the office. Working alongside his team, they've grown the business substantially, triggering a move to new offices at 226 Nantwich Road – a busy and high-profile spot with plenty of passing traffic and high footfall. Ongoing investment in new staff is reflected in a trading performance currently 20% up year-on-year.

“Our new premises has a shopfront enabling us to make a much more prominent display of job opportunities,” says Lee. “It’s already having a positive impact on the number of enquiries from potential candidates and local businesses. It also means that we have more space and improved facilities for training and to welcome drivers from our current team.”

Lee adds: “Our expansion means we'll be able to serve existing customers better and, hopefully, meet the staffing needs of other local businesses and organisations right across our territory, which includes the whole of the CW post codes.”

Looking back on two highly successful years as the business owner, Lee comments: “It's all about delivering great customer service. My team are passionate about what they do. Our office move and expansion opens a new chapter in our story of success.”

Contact Drive Hire Crewe on 01270 250001.



Increase your brand awareness and visibility



New Chamber member Claire Smith of Evolve Together supports business owners with their sales, marketing and events. Here she gives an insight into developing a successful marketing strategy.

Marketing is a complex field that encompasses a wide range of activities, from product development to branding, advertising, sales, and customer service. At its core, marketing is all about understanding the needs and desires of your target audience and creating products and services that meet those needs in a compelling and meaningful way.

One of the key goals of marketing is to

increase brand awareness and visibility. This involves developing a strong brand identity that resonates with your target audience and then promoting that identity through a variety of channels, such as advertising, public relations, content marketing, and social media.

Another critical aspect of marketing is lead generation. In order to grow your business, you need to attract new customers and build a pipeline of potential sales opportunities.

Once you have generated leads, the next step is to convert them into paying customers. This is where sales and customer service come into play. By providing exceptional customer service and support, you can build trust and loyalty with your customers, which can lead to repeat business and referrals.

Marketing is also an ever-evolving field that is constantly being shaped by new technologies, trends, and consumer behaviour. As such, it is important for businesses to stay up-to-date with the latest marketing tactics, tools, and strategies. This requires a willingness to experiment,

take risks, and adapt to changing market conditions.

Marketing is a critical component of any successful business, regardless of its size or industry. By investing in marketing, businesses can build their brand, generate leads, convert prospects into customers, and create long-term relationships with their target audience.

In today's digital age, an effective marketing strategy requires a strong online presence. This means having a well-designed website, active social media accounts, and engaging content that resonates with your target audience. It also requires a deep understanding of search engine optimization (SEO) and other digital marketing techniques, such as email marketing and pay-per-click advertising.

A successful marketing strategy is not something that can be developed overnight. It requires careful planning, research, and analysis to determine the most effective tactics and channels for reaching your target audience. It also requires ongoing monitoring and optimisation to ensure that your marketing efforts are delivering the desired results.

If you need any help with your marketing strategy, get in touch with Claire. Email: claire@evolvetogether.co.uk

Health and wellbeing charity backed by Coronation Street star



Coronation Street star Sally Carman is helping to raise the profile of Motherwell's new Vinted fundraiser selling dresses and occasion wear

The first quarter of the year has been an eventful one for Motherwell Cheshire, the Crewe-based charity behind a wide range of projects to support the health and well-being of local women, girls and families.

It began with a cash boost for Motherwell's Believe Project which supports mums with children at risk of being removed from their care. An award of £282,401 from the National Lottery Community Fund has allowed Believe to continue offering emotional and practical support to vulnerable women and children.

There was much press attention as Motherwell's celebrity Patron Sally Carman, who plays Abi in Coronation Street, joined in celebrations and later attended the charity's crowd-pulling Women's Day event at Cheshire College, South & West.

Hundreds turned out to mark the day which included many women-centred charities and businesses as well as music and dance. The event also offered Springfield School youngsters work experience, with tasks including designing posters, packing gift bags and making a promotional video.

Meanwhile Motherwell, a long-standing Chamber member, has opened up a satellite Share Hub at Underwood West Academy in Crewe. AO.com helped set up the facility where families facing hardship can access school uniforms, period products, children's winter coats and many more essential items – without the need for referral.

It's an expansion of the popular Share Hub run by Motherwell at its base in Crewe where Vinted, an exciting new project is now also underway. Dresses and other items of occasion wear are sold at bargain prices to help raise funds. The Fairy Prom Mother project also offers a range of prom dresses for less than £25.

Motherwell founder, Kate Blakemore, said:

“It was a huge relief to receive the Lottery backing for Believe after funding dried up and it will help

keep things going for a while. Long term, we are reaching out to the business community for sponsorship and running training courses to generate income for this project.

“Across the board we are seeing growing demand for our services as the cost of living bears down on local women and children. Our Share Hub, for example, has proved a lifeline to families struggling to clothe their children.

“We would love to hear from businesses who can sponsor us, we have packages from as little as £100. The sponsorship can be directed towards a specific Motherwell event or service and offers many benefits to raise business profile.”

Motherwell continues to host its Menopause Cafes at 11 locations across Cheshire including Brio Leisure and Everybody Lifestyle Centres. A spin off event, the Menopause ‘Hot Flush’ Party, was staged at Tom's Tap and Brewhouse in Crewe where Motherwell introduced its new Community Engagement Manager Stephanie Burgess.

Stephanie said:

“Motherwell's annual report shows we offer a £34 social return on every £1 spent which is more than double what most charities offer. We have given mental health support to over 300 women and girls, with 417 hours of counselling.”

“We have also provided over 400 school uniforms to the local community and have given out period packs, toiletries and baby/maternity packs. We have supported women into employment and have run wellbeing programmes for 10 of our team. And we keep things local with 91% of our expenditure being with local businesses or VCSE suppliers.”

Anyone who can support Motherwell Cheshire, either by becoming a sponsor or donating clothing to its recycling schemes are asked to call at its Beech Drive hub or phone 01606 557666.

For more information go to motherwellcheshirecio.com



Motherwell Cheshire welcomed many visitors to its Women's Day event

Do you want cheap and clean heat and cooling for your business? Deep geothermal might be the answer.



Higher energy bills affect everyone and every business, from local SMEs to large multinationals, writes Crewe and Nantwich MP, Dr Kieran Mullan. The events of the last year have shown that we can no longer depend on the status quo - at the mercy of volatile global oil prices dictated by international events and crises. We need to find new ways to meet our growing energy needs.

Several years ago, Crewe was identified as one of the best places in the UK to utilise 'deep geothermal heat'. In short, this involves drilling down into the Earth into the hot porous rocks that form part of the Cheshire Basin, providing a cheap and clean source of heat.

I have been pushing hard for us to be able to take full advantage of this opportunity.

Now I know what you are thinking – this must be too good to be true! However, I have visited one of the hundreds of Geothermal Plants across Europe - seeing for myself how they work and keep energy bills down. 250,000 homes in Paris are heated with this technology. Although it might not immediately make sense, the technology can also be used to cool as well as heat.

I am now working with geothermal companies and local businesses to develop a project for Crewe. As part of this, we are trying to understand local companies' heating and cooling demands to build a business case.

Some businesses will have significant energy demands, but to make the best case, we are also interested in the needs of smaller premises such as offices.

So please do get in touch with me to register your interest. All we need is for you to share your need. You will not be charged anything to be a part of the business case development.

Geothermal presents a massive opportunity to bring jobs and investment to our area, but it also has the prospect to revolutionise the local energy balance as a cheap and clean energy source. Be a part of this revolution and have the opportunity to pay less for your heating and cooling needs.

Email kieran.mullan.mp@parliament.uk to register your interest, and someone will contact you to assess your heat and cooling needs.



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South Cheshire Chamber Events Programme



How to Maximise your Membership

Held Monthly

Whether you are considering joining the Chamber, have been a member for some time, or have employees who may not be fully aware of all the benefits of Chamber membership, this event will enable you to fully utilise your membership. This event is open to members and non-members.



Speed Networking

Held quarterly

Speed Networking events are a regular and efficient fixture for meeting other Chamber members. This structured event enables you to meet all delegates attending in addition to offering guidance and tips on making the most of your networking. This event is open to members only. *Ideal for new members who are new to networking.



International Trade Forums

Planned for return in 2023!

With a range of expert speakers, this event provides an excellent source of information, knowledge and contacts for any business that is currently, or plans to, trade internationally. This event is open to members and non-members



Final Friday

Held on the last Friday of the month

Hosted by a different Chamber member each month, this event offers great networking and regularly attracts over 40 different businesses. The Final Friday is designed to allow you to meet other Chamber members and make new contacts at the start of the working day. The host will provide a short presentation on their business and tours of their premises. This event is open to members.



Local and Economic updates

Held quarterly January, April, July, October

This event features an update and comparison of the local, regional and national responses to the latest British Chambers of Commerce Quarterly Economic Survey. In addition, the event will feature a second speaker who will provide an update on local project activity e.g. HS2, Crewe Town Centre. This event is free to members. Non-members may attend subject to capacity and will be charged an attendance fee.



Round the Screen Networking

Held Monthly

The aim of this event is to get members talking again in a road-the-screen fashion. Each participant will have 60 seconds each to introduce themselves, their organisation and how they may be able to assist other businesses. This is a very direct way to network with other Chamber members at the comfort of your home or office.

For further details and dates of forthcoming Chamber events visit www.sccci.co.uk/portal/event/

For more information and event listings or if you wish to promote your own event please visit the Chamber Member Portal: www.sccci.co.uk

Our Vision

Inspiring and supporting our vibrant business community.

Our Mission Statement

We support the ambition of our members and help create greater prosperity for South Cheshire.

For more information on how the Chamber can help your business please contact **Angela Wilkinson** on angela.wilkinson@sccci.co.uk



We welcome your feedback and ideas for Chamber events. A short feedback questionnaire is available on www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/972R6KN and we would encourage you to complete this to assist us with event planning.

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