

**SOUTH CHESHIRE**

**SOUTH CHESHIRE**  
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

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Commerce  
Accredited

# CHAMBER

# BUSINESS

News and views from the South Cheshire Chamber of Commerce & Industry | **Q1 2026**

**UK TOWN OF CULTURE**

# CREWE

UK TOWN OF CULTURE BID

# 2028

PAGE 6

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## UPCOMING EVENTS

- 
**ANNUAL GOLF TOURNAMENT**  
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- 
**PADEL TOURNAMENT**  
**CREWE VAGRANTS SPORTS CLUB**  
 14/07/2026 | 09:30 – 13:00
- 
**SOUTH CHESHIRE CHAMBER 2026 BUSINESS AWARDS**  
 13/11/2026 | CREWE HALL  
 - OPEN FOR ENTRIES

The next issue of South Cheshire Chamber Business Magazine is due out July 17th.

Deadline for copy is July 1st 2026.

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

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## WHICH SOUTH CHESHIRE CHAMBER MEMBERSHIP IS RIGHT FOR YOU?

SIGNATURE	EXECUTIVE	PREMIUM
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# WELCOME

Welcome to the latest edition of *South Cheshire Business*

As we move further into 2026, it is clear that South Cheshire continues to be shaped by ambition, resilience and a strong sense of collective purpose. Across our towns and communities, businesses are continuing to adapt, invest and look ahead, and this edition of the magazine reflects that spirit.

A major focus in this issue is our new Annual Business Conference, Shaping the Future of Crewe, which took place at Crewe Hall in April. This proved an important new event for the Chamber, reflecting our commitment to creating meaningful conversations around the future of our economy, our towns and the role local businesses can play in shaping them. At a time when Crewe is seeing major change and renewed attention, the conference provided an opportunity to bring together business leaders, decision-makers and local voices to discuss the progress being made, the challenges that remain, and the opportunities ahead. It is exactly the kind of convening role the Chamber should play, and I am proud that we are leading that conversation.

This edition also highlights another example of how the Chamber works on behalf of its members, our support for businesses affected by the ongoing restrictions at Baddington Bridge. This issue matters because it demonstrates clearly that the Chamber is not only here to celebrate success, but also to represent business interests when infrastructure failures and policy decisions have a direct impact on costs, productivity and confidence. The disruption caused by the bridge restrictions is

significant for local firms, and we will continue to make the case for urgency, accountability and practical solutions. Supporting businesses through challenges like this is a core part of our role as the voice of business in South Cheshire.

Alongside these key features, this magazine also showcases the breadth of activity taking place across our network. From the continued momentum behind Crewe's Town of Culture bid, to updates on skills, apprenticeships and workforce development through the Local Skills Improvement Plan, there is a clear sense that collaboration across business, education and the public sector is becoming ever more important. We also feature inspiring stories from our members and partners, demonstrating once again the innovation, commitment and community spirit that make this area such a strong place to live, work and do business.

The Chamber itself continues to evolve, bringing businesses together, championing their interests and creating opportunities for visibility, influence and growth. Whether through major events, policy representation, skills leadership or practical support, our purpose remains the same: to help our members succeed and to strengthen the wider economy of South Cheshire.

I hope you enjoy this edition of South Cheshire Business and find it both informative and encouraging. As always, thank you to all those businesses, partners and contributors who help make the Chamber such a valued and active network.

Wishing you and your business continued success in the months ahead.

## MEET THE CHAMBER TEAM

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 **Paul Colman** Chief Executive ✉ @Sccci\_CEO

## SOUTH CHESHIRE CHAMBER PATRONS



## WHY SHOULD YOU JOIN A 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.



### PROMOTE YOUR BUSINESS

You gain access to a wealth of promotional opportunities. List your business on our online members directory. Share your successes with our social media audience. Why not showcase your expertise with an article in our magazine or newsletter? If you're hosting an event, promote it on our online members area or even sponsor one of our Chamber events.



### NETWORKING IN CHESHIRE

We host a variety of events – both online and offline – throughout the year. Ranging from Final Fridays for an informal networking breakfast to our Annual Awards dinner where we celebrate the hard work and achievements of our community.



### BUSINESS SUPPORT

No matter the size or age of your business, everyone needs support at times. Chamber membership offers you support which, for smaller businesses, may not be available in house. You can access 24/7 advice lines covering HR, Legal, Health & Safety and Tax. As well as an online library of 700 documents and templates such as employee handbooks and interview forms.



### INTERNATIONAL TRADE

If you're looking to trade internationally, we help local businesses go global. Our experts can guide you through the documentation and latest regulations. Members can receive up to 50% off export documents!

## Meet the South Cheshire Chamber of Commerce & Industry NEW MEMBERS



**Ascendancy Active**  
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**Original Objective**  
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## MEMBER FEEDBACK



**Michael Carr**  
Managing Director



As a growing financial services business, being part of the South Cheshire Chamber of Commerce & Industry has been invaluable to our development and visibility across the region.

The Chamber provides far more than networking opportunities - it creates a genuine community of ambitious, supportive businesses that are committed to driving the local economy forward. The events are consistently well-organised, professionally delivered, and attended by decision-makers who value meaningful connections. Through our membership, Amplo Group has built strong relationships, increased brand awareness, and accessed useful resources that support both strategic growth and day-to-day operations.

The Chamber team is proactive, approachable, and always looking for ways to create opportunities for its members. We are proud to be part of such a dynamic and forward-thinking business community and would highly recommend membership to any organisation looking to grow its presence in South Cheshire and beyond.

If you would like to share a testimonial, please send it through to [jon.barnes@sccci.co.uk](mailto:jon.barnes@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 further details and dates of forthcoming Chamber events visit [my.sccci.co.uk/events.html](http://my.sccci.co.uk/events.html)

» 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](http://www.sccci.co.uk)

For more information on how the Chamber can help your business please contact Manager Jon Barnes on [jon.barnes@sccci.co.uk](mailto:jon.barnes@sccci.co.uk)

» We will always strive to help our businesses shape the economy for the better, and you can feedback to us on the issues affecting your business. We report both directly to local government and regional bodies and to central government through the British Chambers of Commerce network, so please get in touch with the team or email us at [info@sccci.co.uk](mailto:info@sccci.co.uk)



The bid was publically unveiled at Crewe Market Hall. The event highlighted what the bid is all about, how to get involved and what scooping Town of Culture would mean to Crewe - not just the status but £3m to deliver an ambitious programme of cultural activity in 2028.

Filipino cultural festival Crewe Barrio Fiesta at Queens Park and Crewe Day in the town centre were a riot of colour drawing thousands of visitors last summer



Photography by Paul Harrison, Studio One Photography



## Chamber backs Crewe Town of Culture bid

Crewe's bid to become the country's first Town of Culture has attracted high-profile support as the campaign gathers momentum.

The UK Town of Culture is a new competition launched by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport to shine a spotlight on the important roles towns, like Crewe, play in national life.

The winning town will receive £3 million, while two finalists will each receive £250,000 to deliver an ambitious programme of cultural activity in 2028.

Dubbed Change@Crewe, the bid campaign is led by the Crewe Cultural Consortium and CreweCreates CIC, a well-established partnership including Crewe Lyceum Theatre, Crewe Town Council, Cheshire East Council, Crewe Heritage Trust, Cheshire Archives, Crewe Library, UTC, Cheshire College South & West, Mid Cheshire Hospitals Charity, Discover Crewe and South Cheshire Chamber of Commerce.

### Here's what they have to say:

#### Arts Council Place Partnership Project - CreweCreates CIC

"Crewe has a powerful cultural story, rooted in its heritage, shaped by its communities, and alive in its creativity today. Applying for Town of Culture is about recognising that strength and building on it together" - Novae Baghurst, Director, CreweCreates CIC.

#### Crewe Heritage Trust

"Crewe has always been a town built on innovation, industry, and community spirit. Crewe Heritage Centre proudly celebrates the town's rich history as a railway hub and its vital role in shaping transport and engineering across the UK. Today, as the Centre undergoes an exciting transformation to become Crewe's museum and a destination visitor attraction, we are committed to showcasing the town's remarkable heritage alongside its vibrant arts and cultural diversity. Becoming Town of Culture would not only honour Crewe's past but also drive its future—creating opportunities for creativity, inclusivity, and community engagement that will inspire generations to come" - Gordon Heddon, Chair, Crewe Heritage Trust

#### Crewe & Nantwich MP - Connor Naismith

"I fully support Crewe's bid for UK Town of Culture in 2028. Take one look at the Lyceum Square, where community events like Crewe Pride, the Science Spectacular and Crewe Day Festival all took place last year and it's clear we are a strong contender. That's before we even mention the Lyceum Theatre, one of the longest standing cultural institutions in our town, which regularly hosts community theatre events as well as touring national shows.

"In the charitable space, organisations like CreweCreates are doing brilliant work to make cultural activities accessible to everyone, putting on artist-led creative workshops right in our town centre.

"I know this bid represents a huge collaborative effort between numerous partners, including Cheshire East Council, Crewe Town Council, the Library and Archives, the Lyceum Theatre, CreweCreates and even the NHS and I am extremely proud that so many organisations are supporting our area to get the recognition it deserves as a cultural hub."

#### South Cheshire Chamber of Commerce

**"Crewe's bid to become the UK's first Town of Culture is about far more than arts and events, it's about confidence, pride and opportunity. Culture plays a vital role in economic growth, helping to attract investment, talent and visitors while strengthening local identity and community cohesion.**

**"For businesses, this is a chance to be part of a positive national story about Crewe, one that recognises our heritage, supports our creative industries, and inspires future generations. The Chamber is proud to support this bid and the collaborative ambition behind it"**

– Chamber CEO, Paul Colman

#### Crewe Town Council

"Crewe is a town with a proud past and an exciting future. We are committed to putting culture at the heart of our community, as our application for Town of Culture status clearly demonstrates, and this process will create exciting opportunities for residents and visitors alike" - Town Council leader, Cllr Jill Rhodes.

#### Chair of the Events and Culture Committee, Cllr Martin Edwards, added:

"Crewe is a vibrant and diverse town that has grown from its roots as a unique railway colony that brought people together from all over the UK and sent trains around the world. As the 'Voice For Crewe', we look forward to showcasing the cultural stories of our residents and celebrating our diverse community on a national platform."

The campaign group hopes the whole of Crewe will get behind the bid – including businesses.

A spokesman said: "For businesses, supporting the bid means increased profile as national media coverage grows, stronger local visibility, and being seen as champions of the community your staff and customers care about. As the bid progresses, partners will benefit from promotion across events, campaigns and platforms, helping raise awareness, pride and confidence in Crewe as a place to live, work and visit.

"There are many ways to get involved, from sponsorship to sharing stories, skills or space and we're keen to work with businesses to find what feels right for them. This is about working together to back Crewe, boost footfall and engagement where relevant, and create a positive legacy that goes well beyond a single year."

» **Want to get involved?**  
Email [change@crewecreates.com](mailto:change@crewecreates.com)

The message is: Whether you're a creative, business, community group or proud resident - the opportunity is there to get involved!  
**Scan the QR Code to take part in the survey.**



## Chamber Conference showcases growing optimism for the future of Crewe and South Cheshire

**South Cheshire Chamber of Commerce has hailed its new conference focusing on the regeneration and future growth of Crewe and the wider region as a major success, attracting more than 70 business leaders and stakeholders.**

The Future of Crewe – Unlocking Crewe and South Cheshire's Potential, held on April 29 at Crewe Hall, brought together decision-makers, investors and local businesses for a day of insight, discussion and collaboration.

The event featured keynote speaker Mark Edwards, Director at Capital & Centric, who shared perspectives on urban regeneration and the key ingredients behind its successful town and city transformation projects including Goods Yard, Stoke – a former warehouse now a buzzing neighbourhood of homes, bars and social spaces.

Speakers from a range of influential organisations contributed to the programme, including the British Chambers of Commerce, Cheshire East Council, Mid Cheshire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust and representatives from Crewe's UK Town of Culture bid.

Among them were Lyceum Theatre director and Chair of Crewe's bid for UK Town of Culture Graham McKnight who spoke about Crewe's cultural ambitions, and Russ Favager and Chris Knights, who provided an update on the £1.3bn Leighton Hospital development – the size of 14 football pitches.

Further contributions came from Head of Corporate Governance & Business Environment Policy at the British Chambers, Jonny Haseldine outlining the national business landscape, Cheshire East Council deputy leader Michael Gorman who discussed Crewe 360 regeneration around the station and a long-term vision to see Crewe hailed Best Small City.

The conference opened with an address from Chamber Chief Executive Paul Colman who also joined a business panel discussion alongside Adam Sullivan CEO Baywater Healthcare and Bentley Motors Director of Government Relations & CSR Sally Hepton with an update on electric vehicle production and a special anniversary – 80 years of car manufacturing in Crewe.

Paul Colman said the event marked an important milestone for the area:

**"For the first time there has been a dedicated space to talk about the regeneration of Crewe and South Cheshire as a whole.**

**"The conference focused on what's happening now, where the opportunities are, and how local businesses can play a part.**

**"It was incredibly encouraging to see such strong engagement. Bringing together over 70 stakeholders has helped galvanise support for Crewe and capture the growing momentum behind its future development.**

**"Overall the conference was a big success and already we are planning the next."**

With major change taking shape in Crewe including The Dome Youth Zone and Heritage Centre, there was an undercurrent of confidence for Crewe's future.

Supporting this is One Crewe, the good news platform driven by the Chamber, which is leading the way in changing perceptions, spreading positivity and helping to restore civic pride.



## Major new festival unveiled for Crewe this summer



Crewe is set to welcome an exciting new cultural event this summer as Cheshire Afro Festival launches, promising a colourful explosion of African-inspired music, dance and community celebration.

The festival, believed to be the first of its kind in the region, offers an opportunity for local people to 'dress up and dance to the carnival beat' alongside a host of attractions in Queen's Park on June 6.

Designed for all ages and backgrounds, Cheshire Afro Festival aims to transform the park into a beating hub of rhythm, movement and unity – and already it's creating a buzz on the Cheshire what's on scene. Principal organiser is Amaka Lawton, founder of the award-winning Alpha Omega Women Peace & Security (WPS) Foundation based in Crewe and Nantwich Street Angels.

**"AfroFest is about bringing people together,"**

said Amaka, who was born in Nigeria.

"African culture is rich, vibrant and full of life, and I wanted to create something in Crewe that celebrates that while welcoming everyone, no matter their background. Moving from Nigeria to Crewe gave me a deep appreciation for this local community. This festival is my way of giving back, creating a space where diversity is celebrated and everyone feels they belong."

'AfroFest' will provide opportunities for Cheshire artists, community groups and volunteers to get involved, reinforcing the festival's mission to support local talent alongside international cultural influences.

Sponsorship offers local businesses an opportunity to raise profile and show their support not just for the event but for Crewe and South Cheshire as a whole. Benefits include brand visibility across event signage, media and social platforms, VIP access and hospitality opportunities as well as branded zones, giveaways and interactive displays.

Applications are also open for vendors to showcase their artistry and craftsmanship at AfroFest Market featuring African print clothing, handcrafted jewellery, hair and beauty products, art and sculpture and other cultural items.

Amaka (pictured), added: "Our planning team is inviting local businesses to partner with us in delivering a vibrant, carnival-style



celebration of African and Caribbean culture. We're encouraging everyone to dress up and come ready to dance to the carnival beat. There will be street food, a wide variety of stands and a great vibe bringing the whole community together."

Organisers hope to hear from sponsors and volunteers. She added: "Cheshire is blessed with a good number of festivals but this is something new, vibrant and totally different. AfroFest offers a chance to invest in community pride, champion inclusion and play a vital role in a joyous celebration of unity. People will see for themselves this summer. African music and dance are infectious. Once you hear the drums and feel the rhythm, you just can't stand still!"

» **For updates, follow AfroFest on social media or go to [cheshireafrofest.co.uk](http://cheshireafrofest.co.uk)**

To get involved as a sponsor, in cash or kind, email [amaka@cheshireafrofest.co.uk](mailto:amaka@cheshireafrofest.co.uk)

## What local businesses should know about the new recycling standards

**New national Simpler Recycling rules are changing the way workplaces across England manage their waste.**

From 31 March last year, any business with 10 or more full-time equivalent employees has had to separate their core recyclable materials before collection - including paper, card, plastics, metals, glass and food waste.

To help businesses navigate these requirements, Cheshire East Council's environmental services team can provide clear advice on what the new rules mean in practice.

Smaller organisations with fewer than 10 employees have slightly longer to adapt but need to follow this new legislation from March 2027.

For many SMEs, these changes won't require a complete overhaul, but they may mean reviewing existing setups to ensure the right materials are being separated.

The rules apply to all types of workplaces - offices, shops, hospitality, personal services, workshops and more - and allow organisations to choose the container sizes and collection frequencies that best fit the amount of waste they produce.



The aim behind the government legislation is to make recycling more consistent and straightforward nationwide, helping businesses reduce contamination, comply with national policy, and simplify everyday waste handling.

With the additional requirements coming into effect for businesses with ten or fewer employees next March, this is a timely moment for all SMEs to familiarise themselves with what's required and consider whether their current set up will meet the new standards.

To support businesses in understanding the changes and to explore practical options in meeting them, Cheshire East Council's environmental services team is available to offer clear, local guidance.

» **To help you stay compliant with local, tailored, effective waste management services that best meet your business needs, SMEs can find further information about trade waste collections and other services by getting in touch via the council's business waste webpage or by calling 01270 686797.**

## Chamber backs calls to end bridge 'deadlock' on major South Cheshire route



**South Cheshire Chamber of Commerce is backing businesses calling for urgent action to end the traffic misery caused by a lorry ban on Baddington Bridge, Nantwich.**

A 'temporary' 7.5 tonne structural weight limit was implemented on the bridge on the A530 Whitchurch Road late last summer after inspections found it was no longer safe for vehicles above that weight. The A530 is a main trunk road to Whitchurch and beyond.

Months on, the ban is still in place, sending HGVs on a lengthy 30-mile diversion that adds over an hour to journeys along Cheshire countryside roads. Protestors say it is damaging to both businesses and the environment, adding a huge increase in CO2 emissions.

The Chamber, which represents the business interests of many major employers, is to raise the issue with Cheshire East Council and the bridge owners, Historic Railway Estate.

Chamber Chief Executive Paul Colman said: "This closure is not a minor inconvenience - it is a direct blow to businesses that keep South Cheshire moving. For HGV drivers, this bridge is a vital artery, and shutting it without a workable alternative hits the local business community hard, increasing costs and putting local jobs at risk.

"What was flagged as a 'temporary' restriction has dragged on for months and now into 2026 with still no strengthening works or prospect of them happening any time soon.

"We understand the frustration. The railway line closed decades ago and we now have a crazy situation where concern for a decaying structure is taking priority over local needs. Businesses cannot be expected to absorb disruption of this scale without an update or end in sight and we support them in saying enough is enough."

Baddington Bridge crosses the old Nantwich to Market Drayton railway line which opened in 1863. It was dismantled after closing in the 1960s. It remains open to vehicles under 7.5 tonnes but with traffic management.

Chamber Chair Robert Parton, owner of Church Minshull Aqueduct Marina, added:

**"Every extra mile forced onto an HGV route is another cost pushed onto local businesses. The diversion route cuts through South Cheshire countryside and as owner of a rural business, I'm also concerned about the environmental impact and nuisance to local residents.**

**"Baddington Bridge is on an important major transit route and has been a dangerous and decaying asset for many years.**

**"The indefinite closure due to its poor condition should have been predicted and the closure prevented. Not having a plan in place for its replacement is having a real economic and environmental impact for both local residents and businesses, and is inexcusable.**

**"The Chamber will do everything in its power to end the deadlock."**

Edward Lea, managing director at HJ Lea Oakes animal feed manufacturers in Aston, has joined South Cheshire Chamber of Commerce in making representations to the council and local MPs.

**"The ban has been in place since last September and still no sign of any strengthening works,"**

he said.

**"It's frustrating as the railway line is defunct and the bridge could easily be replaced by a road. Meanwhile our drivers have to take a 30-mile detour towards Tarporley to get onto the motorway network and cars are restricted to one-way red lights causing tailbacks. The lights themselves have been there three**

**years so we're concerned the weight restriction could drag on for months if not years impacting our business as well as others."**

The Chamber of Commerce, a leading member of the British Chambers of Commerce, has also pledged to push the issue at national level.

Cheshire East statement: Cllr Mark Goldsmith, chair of the council's highways and transport committee, said: "This is a complex civil engineering project and we are working hard to find a solution - one that will allow all vehicles to safely use the impacted section of Baddington Lane.

"As the council does not own the bridge, this is a sensitive matter to resolve - we cannot simply start works. There is also a cost implication that needs to be considered. However, we understand the difficulties being faced and recognise the frustrations experienced in the business community.

"The council has an options study in place to identify and review the possible solutions available and to establish the associated costs they would incur to implement. We expect this report to be finalised next month.

"We apologise for the inconvenience caused to anyone affected by the restrictions and particularly to Cheshire East businesses that have been impacted. However, we must prioritise public safety before we can reopen this section of highway fully to all road users."



# CHAMBER GOLF TOURNAMENT

TUESDAY 16TH JUNE 2026

10:00 – 19:30 · Crewe Golf Club

## WHAT'S INCLUDED

- 18 holes of golf
- Breakfast with a two-course dinner
- Prizes for longest drive, nearest the pin & more

## PRICING

£85 + VAT per player

£340 + VAT team of four



# CHAMBER PADEL TOURNAMENT

TUESDAY 14TH JULY 2026

09:30 – 13:00 · Cheshire Padel – Crewe Vagrants

## WHAT'S INCLUDED

- Americano-style format – rotating partners & opponents
- Competitive matches in a social atmosphere
- Expert delivery with Cheshire Padel
- Refreshments & cold buffet lunch

## PRICING

£40 + VAT Signature Members

Other tiers & non-member rates available

BOOKINGS CAN BE MADE AT:

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## Message from our Chair



As I write this article on a late, grey Spring day, I am sure I am not alone in looking forward to the brighter days ahead. The couple of better days we have already enjoyed have certainly helped with marina activity, and we are already seeing people gearing up for the season ahead, keeping our engineers in the boatyard and the team in the café busy.

As always, those of us running businesses are balancing day-to-day decisions against a complex backdrop. Internationally, the picture remains uncertain, particularly in

parts of the Middle East, while nationally we continue to adapt to new workplace legislation. Locally, our authorities in Cheshire East face well-documented challenges. That said, businesses across our region continue to show resilience and adaptability. I would also encourage members to take time, if they haven't already, to review their Business Rates bill carefully, Mine here took some understanding.

**Over the winter, I have been fortunate to represent our Chamber of Commerce at locations ranging from Crewe Station, Harts in Macclesfield to Baddington Bridge. The condition of our local and national transport network remains a recurring topic, but these visits also highlight just how much positive work is being driven by the business community across our region.**

The South and North Cheshire Chamber team continue to play a vital role in supporting this, by organising a wide range of events. I would encourage everyone to try to attend at least one event a month—it is always rewarding to hear different perspectives, make new connections, and share experiences. These occasions also give the Chamber team valuable opportunities to meet members face to face and better understand the issues that matter most.

**Our Chamber board continues to meet monthly, with a full agenda of projects and initiatives, and I am pleased and grateful to remain your Chairman.**

As we move into early summer, may the days grow brighter, the outlook more settled, and I hope to see many of you at an upcoming Chamber of Commerce event.

**Robert Parton**  
Chair

## Chamber strengthens leadership team with appointment of Chief Operating Officer

**Meet Julia Yeardley - the Chamber's new Chief Operating Officer (COO) responsible for day-to-day operations while driving strategy, growth and impact across South and North Cheshire.**

Julia will oversee operations, manage budgets and help strengthen the Chamber's role as a catalyst for business growth. Her appointment signals a focus on disciplined delivery, commercial development and fostering a more connected local business community.

Chief Executive Paul Colman welcomed the appointment saying: "We are delighted to have Julia onboard as a new member of the team. Her experience, energy and passion for collaboration will be a huge asset to the Chamber as we continue to support businesses across the region."

Julia brings with her more than 20 years of experience spanning small and large organisations. She began her career with SME, Clark & Partners before moving to the University of Sheffield's Advanced Manufacturing Research Centre (AMRC), where she built a strong track record in quality and environmental management.

In 2019, she stepped in to a new role overseeing the AMRC's Industrial Partnership Programme — a collaborative initiative designed to help businesses tackle shared manufacturing challenges more efficiently.

She led a team of key account managers and managed relationships with partner companies, ensuring the programme ran seamlessly — from governance and contracts through to high-impact events. A passionate advocate for collaboration, she worked closely with industry partners to align research with real-world needs, helping deliver practical solutions that benefited entire sectors.

"I really care about people and communities, in terms of their day to day experience, and that manifests in the influence and impact that I want to have, but also how I approach the 'way that we do things', whether that's, how a process affects someone's day, or making sure that breaks are long enough at an event," she says.

"I try to always approach things with integrity, energy and with wit and warmth. I think that we can do significant, serious things but have fun doing it."

As COO, Julia sees her role as the 'engine-keeper' overseeing the smooth running of the Chamber while supporting our mission to drive growth, attract investment and create prosperity.



It means a relocation from Sheffield to Crewe — something she is embracing both professionally and personally.

Away from work she trains for Strongwoman events – tyre flipping and lifting large atlas stones over a bar. She's also a Trustee for a Charity called Share, providing affordable mental health therapy services and placements to trainee therapists.

"After 17 years in a large organisation, I'm really excited to be joining a smaller, more nimble team where I can get stuck in and truly feel the impact of what I do.

"I saw for myself how the Chamber can connect people. I was lucky enough to attend the 'Future of Crewe' conference and came away genuinely excited about the opportunities ahead for the town.

"I'm also looking forward to the personal adventure of exploring somewhere new — the heritage of Crewe really appeals to me, and I can't wait to get out walking in the surrounding countryside and discovering the local pubs along the way!"

**Julia Yeardley**  
Chief Operating Officer (COO)



# Is your business making the most of AI

Depending on who you listen to, AI will either usher in a new utopian era or else condemn us all to a swift death.

It already seems to have overtaken our lives. You cannot surf the news, listen to a podcast or doomscroll through social media without hearing something about artificial intelligence.

Much of the positive narrative focuses on how AI can transform our lives and, for businesses, its potential to cut costs, streamline processes and save time.

But scratch beneath the surface and it soon becomes apparent that despite all the headlines many businesses are still in the foothills of their understanding of AI.

The BCC's Insights Unit recently conducted a survey of 1,500 businesses to find out what they knew about AI, how they are using it and what their plans were for the future.

The research found that 35% of UK businesses are now using AI. This is a significant leap from 25% in 2024. Yet, despite this progress, only 11% of firms feel they are using it to its full potential, highlighting a substantial efficiency gap and a major opportunity for growth.

## AI: From Potential to Performance

The survey also found that, for many businesses, AI is no longer a futuristic concept - it's a practical ally for everyday use in dealing with business challenges. But there are big sectoral variations in how it is being used.

Nearly half (46%) of B2B service firms in sectors such as finance, law, and marketing are embedding AI in their work, compared to just 26% of B2C firms and manufacturers. The research also reveals that most SMEs are using between five and ten different

business software applications, but many feel these tools are fragmented and not fully integrated, limiting their benefits.

In terms of how businesses are running AI, it is most used for content creation and knowledge work (60%), productivity and embedded tools (30%), and custom or sector-specific applications (10%). However, most firms report that manual, repetitive tasks and siloed data are slowing them down. Only a small proportion (11%) say they are automating or streamlining operations to a 'great extent', indicating that the full promise of AI remains out of reach for many.

## Unlocking the Next Level: The BCC AI Academy

Recognising the need to bridge this gap, the BCC has launched the AI Academy; a hands-on, role-specific training programme designed to embed AI into daily workflows and not just teach theory.

Delivered in partnership with PAIR and led by Dr. James Kuht MBE, the Academy offers practical upskilling for teams of all sizes, ensuring AI adoption is impactful and lasting.

It addresses one of the tensions most AI training programmes can't resolve - scaling usually means making the teaching generic and sacrifices relevance.

But the AI Academy, uses PAIR, to address these problems. Every user gets AI upskilling adapted to their role, their company, the tools they are using, and their actual work. It makes no assumptions about people's roles and doesn't use generic templates.

The BCC AI Academy is built on proven methods trusted by governments and global enterprises. It provides:

- **Role-relevant training:** Assignments and exercises tailored to your industry.

- **Hands-on learning:** Training in your workflow, not lectures.
- **Future-ready skills:** Ongoing updates to keep your team ahead.
- **Credible certification:** LinkedIn-ready credentials after each masterclass.

With three progressive stages—AI Fundamentals, AI Proficiency, and AI Mastery—the Academy takes learners from first steps to advanced skills. Teams upskilled in AI using this method report up to 40% faster project delivery, annual time savings of 122+ hours per employee, and significant cost reductions. SMEs embracing digital innovation and AI-powered processes are also reporting average revenue growth of 15%.

## Why Now?

The opportunity is clear: AI is transforming every industry, and in just a few years, it will be as essential as email. While many businesses already have access to AI tools like Microsoft Copilot or ChatGPT, staff often lack the know-how to apply them effectively. The BCC AI Academy shows businesses how to use AI better—turning rough ideas into polished content, automating repetitive tasks, and unlocking new levels of efficiency, growth, and innovation.

## Join the Businesses Leading the Way

By investing in digital skills and practical AI training, firms can boost productivity, build resilience, and ensure they are not left behind in the digital revolution.

» For more information and to enrol your team, visit the AI Academy page on the BCC website at: <https://www.britishchambers.org.uk/ai-academy/>

# South Cheshire Chamber Business Awards 2026 open for entries



## It's all systems go for the South Cheshire Business Awards 2026, with the entry process now officially open.

Run annually by South Cheshire Chamber of Commerce, the awards shine a spotlight on the achievements of businesses of all sizes, from ambitious start-ups to long-established firms that continue to drive economic growth.

This year the entry process launched in May - three months earlier than usual - giving more businesses and organisations the opportunity to take stock, reflect on their successes and share in the run up to the awards night at Crewe Hall & Spa on November 13.

Many big names are behind the awards as sponsors, including several which have shown their support year after year and return to back categories again in 2026.

These include Assurant (Employer of the Year), Bentley Motors (Contribution to the Community) supported by Cheshire Connect, Cheshire College South & West (Business of the Year), Hibberts Solicitors (Small Business of the Year), KPI Recruiting (Excellence in Customer Service) and Reaseheath College & University Centre (Apprentice of the Year).

Other categories and their sponsors are Ambassador of the Year, Nantwich Town Football Club and International Trader of the Year, DJH Accountants & Business Advisers.

Two key categories remain available for sponsorship - Start Up Business of the Year and Excellence in Collaboration.

Chamber Chief Executive Paul Colman said: "We are incredibly grateful to our generous sponsors whose continued support allows us to deliver an event of this scale and quality.

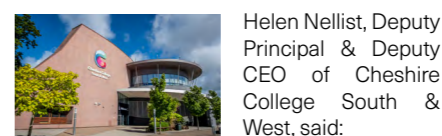
"Their backing not only helps celebrate business success but also creates meaningful opportunities for companies to raise their profile, connect with new audiences and demonstrate their commitment to the local economy.

"It is a testament to the strength of the awards that so many of our sponsors return year after year, continuing to champion and invest in the success of the South Cheshire business community."

The awards, now in their 29th year, are widely regarded as the finest in the region, setting

the benchmark for excellence, innovation and a 'can do' attitude that sets the local business community apart.

Always inspiring, the awards bring fascinating 'back stories' to the fore as well as tales of resilience, bold ideas and strong leadership.



Helen Nellist, Deputy Principal & Deputy CEO of Cheshire College South & West, said:

"We are proud to continue our long-standing support of the awards, which consistently celebrate the innovation, resilience and ambition that define our local business community.

"As a college, we recognise the vital role that strong partnerships between education and industry play in developing future talent and supporting regional growth. Our involvement in these awards reflects our ongoing commitment to nurturing skills, celebrating achievement, and inspiring the next generation of entrepreneurs and professionals.

"The awards also highlight the importance of developing a highly skilled workforce, showcasing the expertise and talent that drive business success across the region. By championing skills development

and recognising excellence, we help to inspire continuous learning and ensure South Cheshire is equipped with the talent needed for future growth."

## Categories and their sponsors are:

- **Ambassador of the Year:** Nantwich Town Football Club
- **Apprentice of the Year:** Reaseheath College & University Centre
- **Business of the Year:** Cheshire College South & West
- **Contribution to the Community:** sponsored by Bentley Motors and supported by Cheshire Connect
- **Employer of the Year:** Assurant
- **Excellence in Collaboration:** Open to category sponsorship
- **Excellence in Customer Service:** KPI Recruiting
- **International Trader of the Year:** DJH Accountants & Business Advisers
- **Small Business of the Year:** Hibberts Solicitors
- **Start-Up Business of the Year:** TownSq Crewe

Now is the time to get in the running. Entries close on September 4.

» For more information on entering the awards and sponsorship opportunities go to [sccci.co.uk/business-awards](https://sccci.co.uk/business-awards)

### START USING AI WITH CONFIDENCE IN THE WORK YOU ALREADY DO

We are supporting local businesses to build practical, real-world AI skills through the BCC AI Academy.

AI is becoming part of everyday work, but most people still feel unsure where to start.

There is plenty of noise, yet very little practical guidance. That is why we're offering our members access to the BCC AI Academy: a hands-on, role-based personalised way to learn how to use AI in your day-to-day.

The platform, powered by Pair, is used by government and many businesses across the UK to help their teams embed AI into their real tasks, tools and decisions. It is built around one simple idea: AI should make your job easier, not more complicated.

#### WHAT THIS MEANS FOR YOUR BUSINESS

Save hours each week. Learn how to use AI for writing, research, planning, reporting and admin. These are the tasks that quietly take up the most time; and the first ones AI can streamline.

Make better decisions. Use AI as a thinking partner to analyse information, develop options and prepare communication you can trust.

Improve quality and consistency. AI becomes a built-in editor and researcher that helps your team produce clearer, sharper work.

Build confidence across your organisation. When your team understands how AI fits into their specific roles, adoption becomes natural and sustainable.

### A CLEAR, CREDIBLE WAY TO BRING AI INTO YOUR BUSINESS

AI presents a major productivity opportunity, yet many organisations struggle to turn interest into action. The AI Academy gives businesses a simple route to start, with the structure, guidance and support to make AI part of everyday work, not an extra burden.

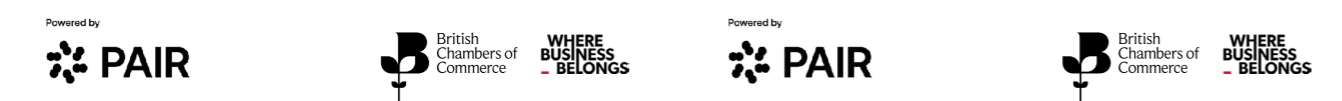
When people know how to use AI well, you start seeing:

- Faster delivery
- Better communication
- More confident decision-making
- Reduced time spent on repetitive tasks
- Small changes at individual level create meaningful gains across a team.

#### AS A MEMBER OF THE BCC AI ACADEMY, YOU'LL RECEIVE:

- 12 months of access to the PAIR platform (recurring subscription)
- Personalised, role-specific AI masterclasses
- Practical exercises tied to real workflows
- Self-paced, flexible learning
- LinkedIn certificate

**READY TO BEGIN?**  
Scan the QR code to get more details and enrol today.



# ENTRIES NOW OPEN!

**11**  
AWARD CATEGORIES

ENTRIES CLOSE  
4TH SEPTEMBER 2026

AWARDS CEREMONY  
FRIDAY 13TH NOVEMBER  
CREWE HALL HOTEL & SPA

**CELEBRATE YOUR ACHIEVEMENTS**  
Promote your business. Become award-winning.

**ENTER THE AWARDS**

# Shaping Skills, Strengthening Business:

## An LSIP Update

For many businesses across Cheshire & Warrington, finding and developing the right talent remains one of the biggest challenges to growth. The Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) is helping employers turn that challenge into an opportunity.

At its heart, the LSIP brings Cheshire & Warrington's businesses, educators and local leaders together to align skills with growth. By turning employer insight into action, the plan is helping to build a future-ready workforce, improve access to good jobs and ensure the region continues to thrive in a changing economy.

South & North Cheshire Chamber of Commerce leads this work as the designated Employer Representative Body for the area. Our role is to ensure that the voice of employers sits at the centre of how local skills and training provision evolves.

### Turning Employer Insight into Action

Businesses across the region have recently contributed their views through surveys, consultations and sector discussions. These insights are helping build a clear picture of workforce challenges, skills gaps and future demand.

This evidence is already informing discussions with education and training providers, shaping how courses, apprenticeships and training programmes respond to the real needs of employers.

The next LSIP Report, due in summer 2026, will bring this intelligence together and set out updated priorities to support productivity, workforce development and economic growth across Cheshire & Warrington.

However, the LSIP is more than a report, it is an ongoing partnership between business and education. Employer insight is essential to ensuring skills development reflects what organisations need now and in the future.

### Apprenticeship Levy Changes

Businesses should also be aware of changes to the apprenticeship levy coming into effect from 1 April.

While the reforms introduce greater flexibility in how levy funds can be used and transferred, they also shorten the timeframe for spending levy contributions. Funds will now need to be used within 12 months rather than the previous 24 months.

This means levy-paying employers will need to plan their levy use more actively. Funds that remain unspent after 12 months will expire and return to the Treasury.

One option is levy transfer, where businesses can share unused funds with other organisations, including SMEs and supply chain partners. This helps support apprenticeships locally while ensuring levy contributions are put to productive use.

The LSIP team can support levy-paying employers who want to explore transfer opportunities, helping connect organisations and ensure funding is used where it can have the greatest impact.



### Supporting Local Skills and Talent

Businesses play a vital role in shaping the region's skills landscape. Your voice helps ensure training and workforce development meet local needs, strengthening both individual organisations and the wider business community.

By working together we can grow talent, address skills gaps and secure a stronger future for Cheshire & Warrington.

### Get Involved

To find out more about the LSIP or discuss apprenticeship levy opportunities, contact the LSIP team:

[LSIP@sccci.co.uk](mailto:LSIP@sccci.co.uk)



## Where reach marketing began and what starting

Chloe Robbins – Reach Marketing

**Starting your own business is one of those decisions that feels both exciting and completely terrifying. Reach Marketing was born just before the first lockdown, when I made the brave leap of leaving a secure job I'd held for 12 years. When the lockdown hit, there was no furlough, no safety net, nothing to fall back on. I simply had to make it work.**

### Why I took the leap

**The decision came from a mix of ambition, frustration, and a genuine desire to do things differently. Growing up in an entrepreneurial family, I'd seen first-hand how many brilliant businesses struggled to grow, not because of a lack of skill or passion, but because they didn't know how to market themselves effectively. Marketing often felt overly complicated, inconsistent, or simply out of reach: budgets were tight, time was scarce, and knowledge was limited.**

I knew there had to be a better way. I wanted to create an approach that made marketing accessible, simple, and results-driven, something tailored for small businesses with big potential. So, I took the leap. In those early days, I didn't have all the answers, but I did have the drive to figure it out, the passion for what I was doing, and a clear vision of the support I wanted to offer: honest, strategic, and effective marketing that could truly make a difference.

### The reality behind starting a business

**What people don't always talk about is what comes next. Having a great idea is only the beginning. Running a business is about resilience, believing in yourself on the days when doubt creeps in and the thought of going back to a "safe" job feels tempting. And more than anything, it's about learning quickly and continuously.**

One of the biggest challenges I faced early on was wearing all the hats. Sales, marketing, delivery, admin... everything sat with me. There was no switch off, no support, and no one else to delegate to. Then there's the mindset side: the self-doubt, the comparison to others, the pressure to get everything right. The biggest lesson? Growth doesn't come from perfection. It comes from consistency, courage, and the willingness to keep moving forward, even when it feels uncomfortable.

### The pitfalls

There have been hard moments. Undervaluing my services at the start. Saying yes when I should have said no. Trying to do everything at once instead of focusing on what really moves the needle.

But those pitfalls? They've been invaluable. They shaped how I run Reach Marketing today, setting clearer boundaries, building stronger strategies, and developing a deep understanding of what clients truly need.

### The advantages that make it worth it

**On the flip side, the rewards are huge. Building something you believe in from the ground up, brings a sense of pride that's hard to describe. Being your own boss comes with flexibility and freedom, but the real reward is the impact we are making.**

Seeing a client gain clarity, watching their confidence grow, and helping them generate leads, sales, and momentum, that never gets old. Reach Marketing has always been about more than marketing. It's about helping people believe in what they're building, giving them the tools to realise their dreams, telling their story through strategic marketing and being a part of that journey.

### Advice for anyone thinking about it

**If you're thinking about starting a business, my advice is simple: you don't need to have every single thing figured out at the start. You just need to start. Be ready to learn, adapt, and back yourself, even when it feels uncomfortable, because it will. There is no perfect time; there will always be reasons to stay in the safe, secure lane.**

Building Reach Marketing has been by far the most challenging thing I've ever done, but also one of the most rewarding. And if there's one thing I've learned, it's that real growth in life and business doesn't come from playing it safe. It comes from taking a chance on yourself and stepping out of your comfort zone.

### From small beginnings to thriving today

From those early days working from home solo, Reach Marketing has grown into a thriving Cheshire Marketing Agency with an office in Sandbach, an amazing team of three, and a network of fantastic freelancers supporting businesses across Staffordshire, Cheshire, and beyond. What started as just an idea has become a growing community of local businesses thriving through smart, accessible marketing and we couldn't be prouder to be part of their journey.

**» If you're ready to grow your business, tell your story, or simply want some honest, results driven marketing support, Reach Marketing is here to help. [www.reachmarketingandsocial.com](http://www.reachmarketingandsocial.com)**



## Innovation and culture driving success at Assurant



**At Assurant, innovation and people continue to sit at the heart of the company's success.**

This year, colleagues across the UK came together for AI Innovation Week, launching the Innovate to Accelerate campaign. The initiative was designed to help employees explore how artificial intelligence can support their work, encouraging experimentation, creativity and practical learning.

Throughout the week, teams took part in demonstrations, learning sessions and collaborative discussions focused on how AI can help people work smarter, faster

and with greater impact. Sessions ranged from AI fundamentals and prompt-writing techniques to real examples of how teams are already using the technology to improve everyday tasks.

The programme culminated in the **Innovate to Accelerate AI Challenge**, inviting colleagues to submit ideas ranging from small workflow improvements to bold new ways of working. By encouraging curiosity and experimentation, the challenge helped employees think differently about how technology can unlock new efficiencies, enhance collaboration and bring fresh ideas to life.

By creating a safe space to explore emerging technology, the campaign has helped build confidence with AI while reinforcing a culture where innovation can come from anywhere in the organisation.

Alongside these innovation initiatives, Assurant is also celebrating another significant milestone. The company has once again been recognised as one of the **UK's Best Workplaces™ 2026 by Great Place to Work® UK**, marking the fourth consecutive year receiving this honour.

This recognition reflects valuable employee feedback and a shared commitment to creating a positive, inclusive and supportive workplace where colleagues feel valued, respected and empowered to succeed. It is also a testament to the dedication, collaboration and hard work demonstrated by employees across the organisation every day.

With a strong presence in South Cheshire, Assurant remains proud to contribute to the local business community while continuing to invest in both its people and the future of technology.

» **For more information visit: [assurant.co.uk](http://assurant.co.uk) or call: 0330 041 0041**

## Bentley Motors announces bold new direction for its Foundation



**Bentley Motors has launched the launch of The Bentley Foundation, a renewed philanthropic strategy that reflects the company's evolving understanding of sustainability as defined by its Beyond100+ strategy - one that places long-term societal value, human potential and environmental responsibility at its core. Furthermore, Bentley announces The Queen's Reading Room as the Foundation's first strategic partner, with more to follow.**

The renewed Foundation evolves from the Bentley Environmental Foundation, where in just two years the award-winning initiative supported 21 environmental projects across 15 countries, working in partnership with ten

global organisations to deliver more than 1,600 targeted activities and directly benefit over 636,000 people worldwide.

The renamed Bentley Foundation expands its remit to support initiatives across arts and culture, the environment and global education. These interconnected pillars recognise that a sustainable future depends not only on technological progress and environmental action, but also on creativity, knowledge, literacy and cultural connection.

As its first strategic partner, The Bentley Foundation is proud to support The Queen's Reading Room, the charity founded by Her Majesty Queen Camilla to promote books, reading and the life-enhancing benefits of literature. Through this partnership, the Foundation will help champion reading as a powerful tool for education, wellbeing and cultural enrichment, supporting access to literature and learning across communities.

The basis of the partnership will be The Queen's Reading Room's second pioneering neuroscience study, led by Professor Sam Wass at the University of East London. The laboratory study will examine the profound physiological and psychological effects of reading together as part of shared reading groups and book clubs, deepening understanding of how reading together reduces stress, strengthens social bonds, and improves mental health.

Wayne Bruce, Chief Communications and DEIB Officer, and responsible for The Bentley Foundation, said: "The evolution of The Bentley Foundation represents a deepening of our philanthropic ambition. By broadening our focus, we are recognising the vital role that arts, culture and education play alongside environmental action in shaping a sustainable future. Our partnership with The Queen's Reading Room is a powerful expression of that belief."

Since its launch in 2023, The Bentley Environmental Foundation established a strong record of meaningful, measurable impact, providing a robust foundation for this next chapter.

Tangible outcomes include the planting of 200,000 mangrove trees in Kenya, the creation of 26 new green spaces across the UK, and the restoration of local ecosystems around Bentley's headquarters in Crewe through a renewed partnership with The Rivers Trust. These achievements, documented in the Foundation's first Impact Report, reflect Bentley's long-term commitment under Beyond100+ to stewardship, regeneration and delivering positive change for future generations - principles that now underpin the broader ambition of The Bentley Foundation.

» **For more information visit: [bentleymotors.com](http://bentleymotors.com)**

## College launches new 'green' apprenticeships to support sustainable careers



**Cheshire College – South & West is helping businesses prepare for a low-carbon future with the launch of a suite of new 'green' apprenticeships.**

Apprenticeships combine practical on-the-job training with classroom-based learning,

allowing students to earn while they learn and gain recognised qualifications. Designed to equip students with essential sustainability skills, these programmes give employers the opportunity to upskill existing staff or bring in new talent to meet sustainability goals and drive innovation.

The new apprenticeships include:

- **Level 3 Low Carbon Heating Technician** – 36-month programme, training students in energy-efficient heating systems to reduce carbon emissions.

- **Level 2 Groundworker** – 18-month programme, focusing on environmentally responsible groundwork for construction projects.
- **Level 3 Engineering Construction Pipefitter** – 36-month programme, preparing students for sustainable construction and piping systems.
- **Level 2 Dual Fuel Smart Meter Installer** – 14-month programme, training apprentices to install and maintain smart energy meters safely.

Helen Nellist, Deputy Principal and Deputy CEO at Cheshire College, said: "These apprenticeships reflect the growing demand for sustainable skills across industry. By combining practical training with guidance from experienced industry professionals, we are equipping students and businesses to thrive in a greener economy while supporting the UK's net-zero ambitions."

Employers benefit from fully funded apprenticeships for anyone under 25, meaning there are no training costs for the business. Beyond funding, the programmes help companies build a skilled workforce, boost staff retention, and develop future leaders. Whether recruiting new talent or upskilling current employees, apprenticeships provide real-world experience that strengthens both teams and organisations.

Cheshire College works with employers directly involved in the HYNET project, including key partner Progressive Energy, the architect and lead partner of the UK's leading industrial decarbonisation cluster. By aligning its new green apprenticeships with major low-carbon initiatives such as HYNET, the College ensures students gain the skills needed for sustainable careers while supporting the region's journey to Net Zero. Progressive Energy was also recognised at the College's Apprenticeship and Skills Awards 2026 for its commitment to developing skills.

This commitment to future-focused skills is further strengthened by the College's new

Cheshire and Warrington Institute of Technology building at its Crewe Campus. The £14.2 million facility provides industry-standard training in high-demand sectors such as engineering, construction and computing, ensuring apprentices and students benefit from cutting-edge technical education aligned to the needs of a low-carbon economy.

» **For more information about the green apprenticeships visit [www.ccsww.ac.uk](http://www.ccsww.ac.uk) or get in touch by emailing [employers@ccsww.ac.uk](mailto:employers@ccsww.ac.uk)**

## Show officials hail long-serving sponsors Crewe family firm Mornflake



John Lea and sons Edward and James receive a certificate marking more than 50 years of Nantwich Show sponsorship



Old programmes advertise 'porridge tasting better the Mornflake way' and offer recipe books in the post for 20p!

**Nantwich Show officials have paid tribute to the event's oldest sponsor as tickets for this year's farming extravaganza get set to go on sale.**

Breakfast food company Mornflake in Crewe has been behind the show for more than 50 years and returns to the Reaseheath College showground on July 29 as a headline sponsor of the event's popular Artisan Market.

Also supported by the Great British Cheese Company, the market will showcase high-quality food and drink from more than 50 local producers within a 50 mile radius of Nantwich.

Visitors can expect everything from craft baking and preserves to unique gifts and locally sourced delicacies—further strengthening the show's reputation as a hub for regional talent and enterprise. Show manager Liz Parkin said: "Nantwich Show is incredibly proud of its long-standing relationship with Mornflake and the Lea family.

"To have their support for more than 50 years is a remarkable achievement and a testament to their commitment to the local agricultural

community. Their continued sponsorship, now including the Artisan Market, helps us maintain the show's traditions while introducing exciting new elements for visitors to enjoy."

Known as one of the finest one-day agricultural shows in the UK, it brings together spectacular livestock competitions, quality trade stands, rural crafts, food and drink, countryside displays and hands-on activities for all ages. Set in the beautiful grounds of Reaseheath College, the show celebrates the very best of agriculture and rural life.

Mornflake managing director James Lea said: "We're very proud of our long association with the Nantwich Show, which has been a cornerstone of the local farming calendar for generations.

"As a family-owned business with deep roots in the agricultural community, it's important for us to support events that celebrate British farming and rural life. We're especially delighted to sponsor the Artisan Market this year, which champions local producers and reflects the quality and heritage values we stand for."

Just like the Nantwich Show, Mornflake's roots are deeply grounded in agriculture. Its incredible story harks back to 1675 when William Lea began milling at Swettenham Mill – nine years after the Great Fire of London and it has remained in Cheshire ever since.

The business, still owned by the Lea family centuries later, proudly celebrates its local roots on the packaging of breakfast products shipped worldwide. The show, staged by Nantwich Agricultural Society, has been a highlight on the local social calendar since 1897 attracting thousands each year.

With the exception of foot and mouth disease in the 50s, severe weather in 2012 and 2019 and more recently the Covid pandemic, the event has rarely been cancelled. Formerly held at Dorfold Hall Park, the show moved to Reaseheath College in 2022 and is now firmly established at its new home.

Mornflake's association stretches back to the 1970s, long before digital records began, with crowds drawn to a massive Food Hall bearing its famous orange branding. Sister company, animal feed manufacturer HJ Lea Oakes based at Aston near Nantwich, is also a long-standing Patron.

Last year Nantwich Agricultural Society honoured the Lea family's support with the presentation of a Long Service award plaque.

» **For more on Mornflake products, heritage and recipes, go to [mornflake.com](http://mornflake.com)**

## Crewe Campus HQ: Designed for people, not just desks



**We believe the best work happens in spaces that inspire people. That's why we've recently updated our Radius Campus Headquarters in Crewe to make it more than just a place to work, it's a place where colleagues can thrive.**

Throughout the building, there are updated meeting rooms for improved collaboration, breakout spaces that spark creativity and social hubs where connections happen naturally.

Some brand-new additions include Freya's, a barista bar for that important coffee fix and Galli's, a vibrant bar, where we host colleague-attended events with external guest speakers. Several of our departments

have used the space for celebrating milestones, as well as for their 2025 end-of-year parties. Our Pride employee resource group also hosted the Cheshire Pride Awards with partners Body Positive and welcomed guest speakers, including the Mayor of Crewe, Sally Graham.

Our gym equipment has been upgraded too, and we now have a separate, female-focused workout space, where female colleagues can exercise and attend classes, like yoga and self-defence.

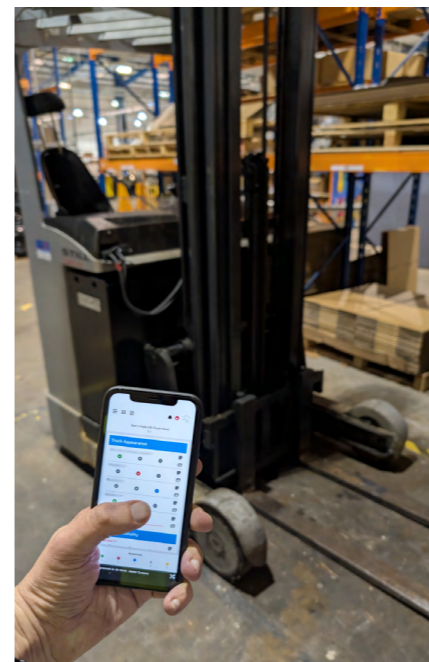
Alec Kirkbride, our Director of Real Estate and Facilities, commented: "Our goal is to create spaces that work for people. These updates aren't just about aesthetics, they're about collaboration, supporting wellbeing and making our offices places where colleagues

and visitors feel inspired. From new meeting rooms and breakout areas to Freya's barista bar and our female-focused gym space, every detail reflects our commitment to a better work experience."

As part of our sustainability strategy, we've installed Solar PV panels on the roof, helping to reduce our carbon footprint.

» **Investing in our spaces means investing in our people, so, if you're looking for a workplace that values wellbeing, collaboration and innovation, have a look at our Current Opportunities | Jobs | Radius: <https://www.radius.com/en-gb/careers/opportunities/>**

## SG World continues the Digital journey



support checks on Forklifts, Ladders, Racking, and more than 1,000 different types of vehicles and Manual Handling Equipment, making SG World a trusted partner across a wide range of sectors.

From 1st April, SG World is proud to announce the launch of its new Digital Inspections System, built on its 5D platform. This next generation solution combines the reliability of our proven paper based system with the speed, accuracy, and efficiency expected from modern digital technology. The system includes easy-to-use apps and retains the iconic 'yellow paddle' display – a feature that has always been central to the visibility and effectiveness of our inspection process.

Steve Holly, Head of Development at SG World's Head Office in Crewe, commented:

**"This latest module within the 5D family is a testament to the outstanding efforts of our Development Team. It has been shaped not only by their expertise, but also by the invaluable input of customers using our existing paper-based system and those preparing to migrate**

**to a digital platform. Their real world insights have helped ensure this solution meets genuine operational needs."**

Mark Haase, CEO of SG World, added:

**"We continue to listen to our customers, understand their challenges, and align our development roadmap with the solutions they truly need. Our Digital Inspections System is another example of how we deliver products designed to solve problems, streamline processes, and save valuable time in day-to-day operations."**

The launch marks an important milestone in SG World's ongoing commitment to innovation, customer partnership, and workplace safety—bringing together decades of expertise with the advantages of cutting edge digital technology.

» For more information visit: [sgworld.com](http://sgworld.com)

## Fairy trails, future careers and fun for all at Reaseheath Family Festival



Families explored a wide range of hands-on activities, from agri-tech and construction demonstrations to traditional rural crafts, with interactive exhibits and live entertainment across the site.

A new Fairy Trail added a playful element for younger visitors, while live music included a performance from singer and guitarist Daisy Ball, who recently appeared on stage with Yungblud.

Local talent featured strongly on the main stage, with performances from Fox Dance Group, Nantwich Voices Choir, Celtica, One Achord Ladies Choir and SDA Street Dancers. Roaming acts King Brasstards and Mr Blightly added to the atmosphere throughout the day.

Alongside entertainment, visitors enjoyed a farmers' market, street food stalls, children's craft activities, horse displays, archery with Greenbank Company of Archers and the Tot Wheels track.

The Food Centre showcased Cheshire cheesemaking traditions alongside preparations for a giant Custard Cream challenge, while across campus students demonstrated skills in construction, countryside and agri-tech.



The event also marked the first stop for the Harvest Torch, which will now travel across Cheshire.

Principal and CEO Marcus Clinton said: "Family Festival really showcases Reaseheath at its best and that best is quite amazing. It's a great opportunity to educate and plant seeds about all the careers and pathways we offer and I'm sure many a young mind will have Reaseheath in their thoughts now and be excited about what their future could hold."

» For more information on courses go to [www.reaseheath.ac.uk](http://www.reaseheath.ac.uk)





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For commercial property owners, facilities managers and estates teams, 2026 is bringing a sharper focus on compliance, documentation and early planning.

With the Building Safety Levy expected from October 2026, the Building Safety Regulator now operating as a standalone body, increased

HSE inspection activity, and ongoing consultation around asbestos duties, the direction is clear: stronger oversight and greater scrutiny on building safety and compliance records.

For businesses, this is not simply about avoiding problems. It is about protecting people, property, reputation, programme and budget.

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Unit 8 Crewe Hall Enterprise Park, Crewe, Cheshire CW1 6JU

**Enrich your social impact - while contributing to your professional and personal development**



At Cheshire Connect, we work closely with many not for profit and community groups to help identify skill requests which could help them to maintain and develop a robust and sustainable future. In the face of external economic pressures, cost of living crisis and commission funding cuts, the role of the charitable organisations is vital to help support those most vulnerable in our community.

There are many ways business owners, professionals and corporations can help with practical support, fund raising, philanthropy and skill sharing.

At Cheshire Connect we focus on facilitating skill donor matches. The skill requests we receive from the local charitable organisations are wide and varied. Many skill donors reap the benefit of flexing their skills in a different environment to their usual workplace and in the process identifying many transferrable skills they hadn't previously realised they possessed. Skill donors often find the experience of sharing skills gives them a better understanding of the local community issues and broadens not just their work experience but enriches their professional and personal development.

**Typical examples of current skill requests:**

Strategic planning; coaching; marketing; PR and social media; commercial and sustainability mentorship; effective people management (HR); financial planning/ financial forecasting; IT/data management/accounting; programme and project management; bid writing; procurement (asset/building expertise/planning applications); legal – contracts; technical illustration; health & safety; trustee roles.

» For further information, please contact the local Crewe, South and East Cheshire Business Connector, Dianne Parrish, via email: [dianneparrish@cheshireconnect.org](mailto:dianneparrish@cheshireconnect.org) or visit the website: [www.cheshireconnect.org](http://www.cheshireconnect.org)



**South Cheshire Chamber of Commerce and Industry Awards 2026**

It is time to celebrate and gain recognition for your hard work. The South Cheshire Chamber of Commerce 2026 Awards are now open for entries.

Cheshire Connect is proud of the local charities and skill donors, all working together to make a positive impact in the community year-round. We support and co-judge the 'Contribution to The Community Award' with the category sponsors Bentley Motors.



2026 is a proud landmark year for Legat Owen, as we celebrate four decades of delivering trusted, independent advice on commercial and residential property across the region.

To commemorate this milestone year, we're committed to giving back to the communities that have supported us.

We have set ourselves an ambitious goal for 2026: to raise £40k for four exceptional local charities that make a real and lasting difference in our region.



Nantwich Court, Hospital Street, Nantwich, Cheshire CW5 5RH  
Albion House, Albion Street, Chester, Cheshire CH1 1RQ  
[www.legatowen.co.uk](http://www.legatowen.co.uk)

## Her-Place takes to the road in new van to drive forward community support



Kate launches #GivetoGain at the recent International Women's Day event at Crewe Market Hall which was visited by local firefighters



Kira Baker and Steven Matthias from SP Energy which donated to the van purchase

**Women and girls charity Her-Place Charitable Trust is driving forward its community work – quite literally – in a new van.**

The charity provides a wide range of services across Cheshire and its new wheels will deliver supplies to events and support pop-up health sessions across the community.

SP Energy Networks, which has a base in Middlewich, provided a generous £8,000 donation towards the purchase. CPC Project Services, Wistaston Parish Council and Chester Women's Choir also chipped in.

Charity founder Kate Blakemore set the fundraising wheels turning with an 18-hour podcast chatting to supporters. She said: "As we stage events, we do need to carry a lot of equipment and the van makes a huge difference to our day-to-day activities."

A spokesman for SP Energy said: "It was a real privilege to support such an important local charity, and we continue to be incredibly proud to support Her Place and the vital work they do. The impact of their efforts is felt right across the community, providing essential support to women and their children when they need it most."

The van will transport essential materials to health awareness events and outreach sessions designed to support women and girls with advice, resources and practical help. It will also support with its recycled school uniform scheme and distribution of free period products. Proudly displaying the charity's bright pink logo, it raises awareness on its travels.

Her-Place Charitable Trust operates from Beech Drive, Wistaston. Kate added:

**"Times are tough for the charity sector but we are determined not to cut back on the services we provide. So income generation is a key focus this year and we have launched our #GivetoGain campaign for anyone who can support with fundraising."**

Her-Place's last annual report demonstrated its massive value to the community - a record 5000 individuals were supported, representing £3,657,032 of economic value.

» For more on how to get behind the charity go to [her-place.co.uk](http://her-place.co.uk)

## From make-up artist to funeral care: How one woman's skills brings comfort to families



**For Jayne Lownds, make-up has always meant more than appearances. It has always been about helping people feel like the most confident version of themselves.**

Six years working in the cosmetics industry, she loved seeing how make-up and application techniques could transform the way people felt. Today, those skills are used in different and deeply meaningful ways within her family's funeral business.



Kevin and Sue, Jayne's parents, took early retirement from long professions in funeral care and nursing respectively where they'd learned so much about caring, allowing them to establish an independent, family-run funeral home, Kevin Lownds Funeral Services. Here, families could receive time, care, flexibility and a bespoke service.

They opened their first funeral home in Newcastle in 2018. The business grew as more families placed their trust in them; a second funeral home opened in Madeley in 2024.

In 2019 a young woman who had always taken particular care with her make-up came into their care. The woman's family were nervous about visiting her in the chapel of rest. They'd heard stories about chapel of rest visits where the person did not quite look like themselves, and what they saw on visiting did not reflect how the person had presented themselves in life.

In view of Jayne's vast experience, her parents asked her to help prepare this young woman.

When the family visited, it was a moment the Lownds family has never forgotten. Seeing the comfort, it brought to the family at such a difficult moment left a lasting impression. Jayne joined the business the following year.

Jayne's sister Jacqui and sister-in-law Kerry have also become an important part of the caring family team. Two generations, helping families share peaceful, personal and meaningful goodbyes.

» For more information about Kevin Lownds Funeral Services visit: [Website: www.kevinlowndsfuneralservices.com](http://www.kevinlowndsfuneralservices.com)

## Crewe Amateur Musicals Society: Strengthening Crewe's cultural economy for over a century



CAMS' cast in Made in Dagenham, presented as theatrical storytelling rather than political campaigning.

**Crewe Amateur Musicals Society (CAMS) is cooking up plans for its next major production, The Great British Bake Off, after delighting audiences with Ghost The Musical at Crewe Lyceum Theatre over four nights in April.**

For businesses looking for meaningful ways to invest in the town's future, new Chamber members CAMS stands as a unique and impactful partner.

Established in 1923 and now operating as a fully Registered Charity (No. 1212565), CAMS has spent more than 100 years enriching the local economy, supporting skills development and creating accessible cultural experiences for residents of all ages.

Far from being "just" a theatre group, CAMS is a longstanding cultural asset that contributes to community wellbeing, fosters collaboration and supports the social fabric that businesses depend on. With multigenerational membership and a loyal audience base, CAMS continues to be one of Crewe's most resilient and trusted volunteer led organisations.

Its mission is simple: To make high quality musical theatre accessible, inclusive and affordable for the people of Crewe. Every aspect of the Society is run by volunteers, welcoming participants from all backgrounds, ranging from complete beginners to experienced performers, technicians and creatives.

A spokesman said: "Participation in CAMS is often transformational. Members regularly report increased confidence, reduced social isolation, improved mental wellbeing and a strong sense of belonging. These aren't just personal benefits – they are the foundations of a healthier, more resilient local workforce. For businesses, this makes CAMS a natural partner for Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), staff engagement and community investment."

Each year, CAMS stages large scale musical productions at Crewe's historic Lyceum Theatre. Shows such as *Kinky Boots*, *Priscilla Queen of the Desert*, *Calendar Girls*, *Jesus Christ Superstar* and *Made in Dagenham* have earned multiple industry recognitions, including two NODA District 8 Best Musical awards.

Now plans are already in the pipeline for *The Great British Bake-Off* in May 2027.

Producing theatre of this quality is a substantial financial undertaking. The cost of a single production now often exceeds £45,000, covering set design and construction, technical equipment, theatre hire, marketing, costumes, lighting, sound and licensing. These activities support dozens of local suppliers, freelancers and creative professionals each year, providing economic uplift far beyond the stage.

**"Partnership with CAMS is an opportunity for businesses to invest directly in the town's cultural and social infrastructure. It strengthens Crewe's identity, attracts audiences into the town centre and enriches the lives of the very people who make up the local workforce."**

**By supporting CAMS, Chamber members can:**

- Enhance their CSR profile through visible, positive community investment
- Demonstrate commitment to employee wellbeing and local culture
- Increase brand awareness across CAMS' engaged, region wide audience
- Access creative staff engagement activities including backstage experiences, exclusive rehearsals and team volunteering
- Encourage team fundraising initiatives that double as powerful staff building opportunities
- Build longterm partnerships with one of Crewe's most trusted community organisations

CAMS is committed to offering sponsors real value through brand visibility, social media promotion, programme features and opportunities for meaningful involvement.



Ghost



Kinky Boots



Made in Dagenham factory scene



Pre-show photo shoot at Whitby Morrison, Crewe. Photos taken by Mick Byrne

**By partnering with CAMS, Chamber members help sustain:**

- A respected local registered charity
- Lifelong learning, creative development and volunteering
- Community wellbeing and inclusive participation
- The continued presence of high quality live theatre in Crewe

CAMS is proud to be part of the South Cheshire Chamber community and welcomes conversations with organisations who share its commitment to strengthening the region's cultural and economic future.

» To explore sponsorship or partnership opportunities email: [creweamscheshire@gmail.com](mailto:creweamscheshire@gmail.com)



**“Sleep Easy is a powerful way to bring people together and raise awareness of youth homelessness. It shows what can happen when a community decides to stand alongside young people and say – you are not alone.”**

Funds raised from the event will help YMCA Cheshire continue providing safe spaces, practical support and opportunities for young people to rebuild their confidence and move towards independent futures.

Events like Sleep Easy demonstrate that sometimes the most meaningful change begins with a single night, and a community willing to make a difference.

» **Want to make a difference? Visit the YMCA Cheshire website ([ymcacheshire.org.uk](http://ymcacheshire.org.uk)) to learn more, support the cause, or take part in future events.**

**The grounds of Christ Church in Crewe looked a little different one cold night in March. Instead of people heading home for the night, members of the local community laid out cardboard and sleeping bags, choosing to spend the night outdoors as part of YMCA Cheshire's Sleep Easy.**

The annual event brings together businesses and supporters, including the Mayor of Crewe who are willing to give up the comfort of their beds for one night to raise awareness of youth homelessness and support the young people YMCA Cheshire works with every day.

Sleep Easy is not about recreating homelessness, but about encouraging reflection and conversation. For many participants, the experience of sleeping outside - even for one night - offers a powerful reminder of the security that a safe place to call home provides.

The event also shines a light on the vital services YMCA Cheshire delivers across the region, offering supported accommodation, guidance and wellbeing support for people who may otherwise face homelessness alone.

Sally Graham, the Mayor of Crewe, who also spent the night out, explained in an interview with The CAT Community Radio why the event continues to resonate with the community.

## Nantwich Show hails ‘extraordinary volunteers’



**At the heart of the Nantwich Show sits something many people don't always see, a dedicated local charity, the Nantwich Agricultural Society, working year-round to deliver one of Cheshire's most loved rural events.**

Managed by just three part-time members of staff, the Show is powered by an extraordinary team of volunteers, many of whom have given over 20 years of their time, energy and expertise. It is this blend of professionalism and community spirit that continues to shape the Show's success, ensuring it remains both relevant and rooted in its agricultural heritage.

The Society is supported by a strong network of local businesses, many of whom are also members of the South Cheshire Chamber. Patrons of the Show include HJ Lea Oakes and Reaseheath College, whose longstanding commitment reflects the Show's importance to the region. Headline sponsors Mornflake, alongside businesses such as Acorn Motors, Canalside Garden Centre, EweMove Whitchurch and Nantwich, Genus ABS, Indigo Promotions, Overwater Marina and Afford Bond, all play a vital role in bringing the event to life.

Behind the scenes, trusted suppliers ensure the smooth and safe delivery of the Show. Alpha Omega Securities and Rhino Safety provide essential infrastructure and compliance support, while Orbis Outdoor Adventures bring energy and excitement with their climbing wall and bumper balls.

Community remains at the core of everything the Society does. The Wishing Well Project return for a second year, supporting the Show by feeding volunteers and hosting the sponsors' reception, a partnership that reflects the Show's wider social impact.

The Society also benefits from professional guidance, with Oliver Lewis of Hibberts LLP acting as Honorary Solicitor, offering valued legal support.

As preparations continue for Wednesday 29 July, opportunities remain for businesses to get involved. Trade stands and sponsorship packages are still available, offering a unique platform to connect with thousands of visitors from across Cheshire and beyond.

» **To find out more, contact Liz Parkin, Show Manager, on 07886 633 370 or [info@nantwichshow.org](mailto:info@nantwichshow.org).**



Hope Bear along with some colleagues and supporters after taking on a cycling event in support of North West Cancer Research

**New Chamber members North West Cancer Research have announced details of a major summer fundraiser.**

As the only independent charity dedicated to tackling cancer across the North West and North Wales, its goal is simple: to put the region's cancer needs first. Since 2000, North West Cancer Research has funded over £55m in life-saving cancer research and currently has over 60 active research projects.

A spokesperson said: "We discover better, kinder treatments which pave the way for a cancer-free future and raise awareness in our communities around the importance of early detection and getting your symptoms checked because early detection saves lives.

**“Living in the North West, we are 25% more likely to get cancer than anywhere else in the UK, which is why we are dedicated to putting our region's cancer needs first, funding life-saving cancer research and education to tackle the cause, improve the care and find the cure for cancer.**

"None of this would be possible without the dedication of our supporters, who work

hand-in-hand with us to achieve a future that is free from cancer – together, we can make our vision a reality."

A big fundraiser is coming up in July. The iconic annual Liverpool Chester Liverpool Bike Ride will once again offer cycling fans from across the UK the opportunity to discover stunning landscapes across Liverpool, Wirral, and Chester through five different cycling route options.

The historic event is a thrilling, non-competitive bike ride experience that caters for all ages and abilities and covers a range of distances from five miles for families with children and beginners, to 100 miles for the serious cyclists amongst us. Starting with the unique opportunity to cross the famous Mersey, through Liverpool's (Birkenhead) Queensway tunnel traffic free, the annual event is an anticipated highlight in many cycling enthusiasts' calendar.

The charity has recently become members of the South Cheshire Chamber of Commerce in hope of raising awareness of its important research work, along with building connections with local businesses, groups, organisations and schools.

» **To get in touch, contact regional fundraiser Rachel Kelly at [rachelk@nwcr.org](mailto:rachelk@nwcr.org) or use any of the contact details on the website: <https://nwcr.org/>**



## Meet Ethan, our fundraising champion



**Ethan attends our Supported Adults Service at The Wishing Well and has completed an incredible challenge, swimming the equivalent distance of the English Channel to raise funds for activities that support people just like him.**

With the support of Seahorse Swimming Club and their dedicated team, Ethan completed an impressive 1,408 lengths at Crewe Lifestyle Centre. Week after week, he showed real commitment, turning up, pushing himself, and never giving up. His determination has inspired everyone around him.

Ethan's mum, Jayne, said:

**“Ethan has made both myself and his dad very proud with his determination week after week.”**

**In total, Ethan raised £380.** A fantastic achievement and a true reflection of his kind and generous nature. He is a valued part of our community, and we couldn't be prouder of what he has accomplished.

The Wishing Well is a health and wellbeing charity on a mission to improve the health and wellbeing of local people. Our vision is for children and families to START WELL, adults to LIVE WELL, and older people to AGE WELL.

» **We welcome support from local businesses and individuals who want to make a real difference. Whether through fundraising, sponsorship, or offering time and skills, your support helps us continue this vital work. If you'd like to get involved, please get in touch. [Jan.melia@wishingwellproject.net](mailto:Jan.melia@wishingwellproject.net)**

**Jan Melia, Chief Partnerships Officer**  
Registered Charity No 1180756





Emily, Nadia, Millie, Harriet and Aimee



Michael using the lift



Harriet enjoying a work task



Carson learning a new job supported by Lisa

**Supported Community Business (SCB) is a Crewe-based charity supporting adults with additional needs to live more independent, fulfilling lives.**

But what really sets SCB apart isn't just what happens here—it's how it feels to be part of it.

People don't come to SCB to pass time. They come to experience the world of work in a supportive setting—to contribute and be part of something that matters.

**A Story That Says It All**

When Michael first joined SCB, confidence was a real barrier.

New environments were difficult, communication didn't come easily, and like many people we support, he hadn't yet found a place that truly worked for him.

At SCB, things started small. A few hours in the workshop. Simple, structured tasks. Familiar faces.

Over time, those small steps became something much bigger.

Michael began taking pride in his work. He started communicating more—finding his own way to connect with others. He became part of the team, contributing to real customer jobs and building relationships along the way.

One moment that really captured that journey came after we moved into our new premises at Gateway.

With the support of Terry's Lifts, we installed a fully accessible lift—something that has completely changed how the building works. For Michael, it meant something simple but powerful: independence.

The first time he used the lift to reach the upstairs canteen, the whole room stopped. Service users and staff cheered as he came through the doors to join everyone for lunch.

It wasn't just about getting upstairs. It was about being included, being equal, and being part of everything.

That's what SCB is all about.

**Where Community Meets Business**

Behind the scenes, the workshop is busy.

Packing, labelling, assembly work—real jobs, completed to real standards, for local businesses.

And increasingly, those businesses are facing a challenge.

Rising employment costs, including increases to National Insurance contributions, are putting pressure on staffing—particularly during peak periods where extra capacity is needed but long-term recruitment doesn't always stack up.

For some, that means agency staff. For others, it means delaying work or stretching existing teams.

Working with SCB offers a different approach.

Businesses can outsource specific tasks to our workshop, where they are completed with care, consistency, and attention to detail—without the added complexity of recruitment, onboarding, or short-term contracts.

But increasingly, the conversation doesn't stop at cost or convenience.

Social value is becoming a central part of how organisations operate. Whether through public sector contracts, ESG reporting, or ambitions such as B Corp certification, businesses are being asked to show—not just say—how they contribute to their communities.

For many, that can feel abstract.

Working with SCB makes it tangible.

Every job completed supports adults with additional needs to build skills, confidence, and independence in a real working environment. It's local, visible, and easy to evidence.

But there's another side to it as well—one that directly benefits staff teams.

We recently welcomed a group of volunteers from RK Henshall & Co Ltd, another Chamber member, who spent the day with us helping to paint and move equipment between our old and new workshops.

What stood out wasn't just the practical support—it was the interaction.

Staff worked alongside the people we support, got stuck into the environment, and saw first-hand what SCB is about. Conversations were natural, barriers were broken down quickly, and by the end of the day there was a genuine sense of connection.

That kind of experience is difficult to replicate through traditional corporate initiatives. It gives staff something real to engage with, and something meaningful to take back with them.

For businesses, it strengthens culture as much as it supports community.

**Looking Ahead**

The move to our new building, supported by partners such as Terry's Lifts, has opened up new opportunities—not just in terms of space, but in what's possible for the people we support.

For Michael, it's meant independence and belonging.

For local businesses, it's an opportunity to work differently—supporting their own operations while making a genuine difference in the community.

And for SCB, it's about continuing to grow what we do best.

Creating opportunity. Building confidence. And making sure everyone has the chance to be part of something that matters.

Because when businesses and community come together, real growth happens—for everyone.

**Together we GROW.**

» Interested in working with us or exploring a partnership?  
Get in touch: [scbspecialneeds.co.uk](mailto:scbspecialneeds.co.uk)  
[info@scbspecialneeds.co.uk](mailto:info@scbspecialneeds.co.uk)



Alpha Omega Managing Director Ian Wright (left) and Ken Lawton outside the firm's headquarters on Crewe Business Park

**South Cheshire Chamber's 'Business of the Year' has secured a £2m contract to provide security for patients and staff at one of the country's largest hospital groups.**

Alpha Omega Securities Ltd, based on Crewe Business Park, will provide 24/7 year-round security for Mersey and West Lancashire Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust (MWLTH), covering key locations including Southport and Ormskirk.

As part of the contract, Alpha Omega is supporting the Trust's Fire Response and Major Incident plans, including specialist training for lockdowns, child abductions, and terrorist incidents.

**Alpha Omega CEO Ken Lawton said the focus had been on creating 'a culture of empathy,' and awareness, ensuring officers are seen as part of the wider clinical team rather than an external presence. "The role involves round-the-clock, 365-day coverage at both Southport and Ormskirk sites, maintaining a five-minute emergency response time including patrols of previously identified hotspots. For this our officers need to be more than guards. These are specialists trained in Restraint Reduction Network (RRN) accredited de-escalation and trauma-informed practice.**

**"This allows us to support clinical staff in high-pressure**

**situations—such as managing patients with underlying medical conditions or mental health risks with the highest level of dignity and care. We recognise that a hospital is a unique environment requiring more than just a security presence. The aim is to provide robust security delivered with empathy and a sensitive touch."**

Alpha Omega Securities Ltd was founded by Nantwich man Mr Lawton in 1997. From a one man band offering door security, it has grown into a national name for all things protection with a workforce of more than 200 men and women.

Core areas of work are guarding public buildings and places such as town halls, markets, office blocks and shopping centres as well as parks and beauty spots. Uniformed personnel also support street safety with day and night town and city centre patrols as well as crowd control at large events such as festivals and concerts.

The company is active nationwide but core areas of operation are South Cheshire, Chester, Stoke-on-Trent, Macclesfield and Nottinghamshire providing mobile and static patrols and alarm responses.

Working alongside local authorities, its personnel operate on a regular basis around Crewe Business Park, Hanley bus station and Nottingham city centre.

Alpha Omega also has a highly visible presence at crowd-pullers such as Nantwich Food Festival and Jazz Festival, the Royal Cheshire Show and Middlewich Folk and Boat Festival.

The MWLTH contract win builds on a strong period for the business. Alpha Omega recently added South Cheshire Chamber 'Business of the Year' to its many awards.

The company has successfully mobilised the service within just one month from the go-live, integrating its team across the Trust's operations.

Mr Lawton added: "We have fully adopted the Trust's core values, ensuring our teams are consistently kind and compassionate, respectful and considerate, and friendly and welcoming. We are delighted the Trust has entrusted with this critical role, shifting the perception of security staff from traditional 'doormen' in high-vis towards a more compassionate, caring role within healthcare.

"It's very much a role which requires listening and learning and being an integrated part of the clinical team ensuring they, and their patients, have the appropriate cover at all times. This has meant integrating ourselves as a partner and already this has shown true value with positive commendations from patients and staff feeling more secure."

» For more information on the company and career opportunities go to [alphaomegaulk.com](http://alphaomegaulk.com)



Managing director Ian Wright picking up the South Cheshire Chamber 'Business of the Year' award in November 2025

## Watts Mortgage & Wealth Management expands into new home next door



Watts Mortgage & Wealth Management colleagues Managing Director Andrew Watts with Sales and Operations Director Charlie Beeston, Stacey Daniels and Meghan Buxton outside the newly expanded offices in Nantwich.



Cheshire-based Watts Mortgage & Wealth Management has doubled the size of its home in Nantwich while growing its team of specialists.

The family firm, founded more than 38 years ago has taken over premises next door on Beam Heath Way business park and now occupies number 8 and 9 George House, Princes Court.

It has grown its team to 17 backed by strategy of investment in training and nurturing fresh talent through the Watts Academy which supports employees on their journey to becoming fully qualified mortgage advisers.

Managing Director Andrew Watts said:

**“We are absolutely delighted to unveil our newly refurbished offices in Nantwich. This investment reflects not only our commitment to creating a welcoming and professional environment for our clients, but also our dedication to providing the very best workplace for our team.”**

Over the years Watts Mortgage & Wealth Management has scooped many awards including the prestigious Moneyfacts Protection Adviser of the Year an unprecedented six times – including again in 2025 - after helping thousands of clients to buy their dream home and ensure their family is protected.

Now its team of mortgage specialists is set to expand again with two further employees gaining their Certificate in Mortgage Advice and Practice (CeMAP) qualification.

Accredited by The London Institute of Banking & Finance, CeMAP covers all aspects of financial regulation and mortgage law. Watts Mortgage & Wealth Management colleagues, Stacey Daniels, 35, and Meghan

Buxton, 28, both with a background in property, passed with flying colours after support within the Watts Academy.

Andrew Watts added:

**“I am proud to welcome two newly qualified mortgage advisers, Meghan Buxton and Stacey Daniels. Their achievement is a testament to the hard work, talent and ambition we actively nurture within our business. We firmly believe that investing in our people is key to delivering outstanding service.”**

“Supporting our team’s development ensures that we continue to grow sustainably while maintaining the high standards our clients expect from a multi award-winning firm.

“These milestones together highlight the strength and momentum of our business. As we continue to expand, our focus remains unchanged, providing clear, trusted advice and supporting our clients every step of the way.”

Watts Mortgage & Wealth Management helps people from all walks of life, including first-time buyers, the self-employed and buy-to-let investors, find the best deal. As an independent, it works nationally with access to more than 100 lenders and insurance companies.

Sales and Operations Director Charlie Beeston added: “From a sales and operations perspective, it is incredibly encouraging to see the continued investment in both our infrastructure and our people. The addition of newly qualified advisers like Meghan and Stacey demonstrates the strength of our internal development pathways and our commitment to maintaining the highest standards of advice and client care.

**“A key part of this is our Watts Academy, a structured and trusted training programme designed to support our client account managers in progressing to fully qualified mortgage advisers. This initiative reflects our long-term commitment to developing talent from within, ensuring our team is equipped with the knowledge, skills and confidence to deliver exceptional outcomes for our clients.”**

» For more information call Watts Mortgage & Wealth Management on 01270 620555 or go to [www.watts-ifa.com](http://www.watts-ifa.com)



## Champions at Last: Nantwich Town Women Crowned League Title Winners



Nantwich Town FC Women made history on Sunday 29th March 2026, clinching the North West Women's Regional League Division One South title with a hard-fought 2-1 victory over Manchester Laces at the Swansway Stadium - and doing so in front of a passionate home crowd of over 200.

The triumph is all the more remarkable for representing back-to-back promotions for the club, following their title success in the Cheshire Women's & Youth Football League Premier Division the previous season. The Dabbers ended the campaign on 44 points from 18 matches, with 14 wins, two draws and just two defeats, and an outstanding goal difference of +55.

On the day, Nantwich wasted no time making their intentions clear. Levi Lander struck in just the second minute to put the hosts

ahead, and captain Meg Ragdale doubled the advantage early in the second half to seemingly wrap up the contest. Manchester Laces pulled one back late on, but the Dabbers held firm to spark joyous scenes at the final whistle.

Manager Dan Mellor was quick to credit his squad's character throughout the season.

**“To win the league in our first year at this level is a fantastic accomplishment. They've worked for this every single week, and they fully deserve it.”**

Captain Ragdale echoed the sentiment, paying tribute to the supporters who turned out in such numbers:

**“The support from the fans doesn't go unnoticed - every week we get such a good turnout.”**

Attention now turns to the 2026/27 campaign, where the Dabbers will compete at Tier 5 in the North West Women's Regional League Premier Division, with eagerly anticipated fixtures against the likes of Bolton Wanderers, Bury and local rivals Crewe Alexandra. The future looks bright for women's football in Nantwich.

» [www.nantwichtownfc.co.uk](http://www.nantwichtownfc.co.uk)

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## Is AI working for your small business - or against it?



**Artificial intelligence is no longer the preserve of big corporations. From scheduling tools to invoice automation, AI is quietly transforming how small businesses operate - and the owners who are embracing it early are gaining a real competitive edge.**

But it can feel overwhelming. New tools appear every week, and it's hard to know where to start, what's genuinely useful, and what's just hype. The good news? You don't need to transform your business overnight.

The smartest approach is to start small. Think about the tasks that take up your time but don't need your personal expertise - drafting routine emails, tracking expenses, summarising reports, or scheduling social media posts. There are affordable AI tools that can handle all of these, often in minutes rather than hours.

Customer communication is another area where AI is proving its worth. Chatbots can handle basic enquiries around the clock, freeing you and your team to focus on the work that grows your business.

Of course, AI isn't a magic fix. It works best when it supports your judgement - not replaces it. The human touch, the relationships, the expertise you bring - those remain your greatest assets.

**“The question isn't whether AI will affect your business. It already is. The question is whether you're in the driving seat.”**

» Fortis Business Support  
Helping businesses grow smarter  
[zee@fortisbusinesssupport.co.uk](mailto:zee@fortisbusinesssupport.co.uk)



## Wilson Partners advises on high-profile tech company sale

**Wilson Partners Corporate Finance has advised the shareholders of WebTMS Limited on its sale to US-based Alt Legal.**

The sale brings together two highly complementary platforms in the intellectual property management software sector by Wilson Partners which earlier this year acquired accountancy practice Afford Bond in Nantwich, Wilmslow and Manchester.

The transaction combines Alt Legal's automation-first approach to IP docketing and portfolio management with WebTMS's established global platform and more than 25 years of experience supporting trademark professionals, law firms and multinational organisations.

Trusted by more than 1,300 organisations worldwide, Alt Legal is recognised for its intuitive and highly automated IP management platform, which connects to over 180 global IP offices to improve accuracy, reduce manual administration and streamline workflows for IP professionals.

Reading-based WebTMS has built a strong reputation in the market for its highly configurable trademark management software, hands-on client service and long-standing client relationships across the global intellectual property sector.

The combination creates a stronger and more comprehensive platform for trademark professionals globally, combining modern automation with proven portfolio management capability, while continuing to support the workflows and service standards customers rely on today.

Wilson Partners Corporate Finance provided sell-side M&A and tax advisory to the shareholders of WebTMS throughout the transaction process.



Dan James, Director and Head of Corporate Finance at Wilson Partners, said: "We were delighted to advise the shareholders of UK-based WebTMS on their exit to US-based Alt Legal. The deal was complex across several areas; however, through commitment and collaboration across all parties, it was executed swiftly and successfully. The transaction represents a fantastic outcome for everyone involved and brings together two highly complementary platforms within the IP management sector. We look forward to seeing what the combined businesses can achieve together in the future."

Brid Madeley, Director at WebTMS, added: "We had an excellent experience working with Wilson Partners during the sale of our



**wilson partners**  
CORPORATE FINANCE

business. From start to finish, their team was diligent, patient and meticulous in executing the deal. They guided us through each stage of the process with clarity and professionalism, ensuring that everything ran smoothly and efficiently. Wilson Partners' commitment and expertise gave us complete confidence

and, thanks to their support, we were able to successfully complete the sale. We would highly recommend their services to anyone looking for reliable and dedicated financial advisers."

Wilson Partners Corporate Finance is part of Wilson Partners, an integrated accounting, tax, audit and corporate finance firm supporting ambitious businesses, investors and private clients across the UK and internationally.

Founded in 2008, the firm provides director-led advice across merger and acquisition transaction services, valuation, fundraising, accounting, tax and strategic advisory, combining technical expertise with commercial insight to help clients make better financial decisions and achieve their long-term goals.

» For more information call 01270 623731 (Nantwich), 01625 416380 (Wilmslow) 0161 526 1022, (Manchester)

## The Thinking Space: High-Performance coaching for high-performing men

### The Thinking Space For high performing men who carry responsibility

- Six-month private coaching programme.
- Two 90-minute sessions per month.
- 18 hours of structured, confidential, non-judgemental thinking time.

£6,000

Enquiries handled directly and in confidence.



By Anna Bates, Founder, Room 11 Coaching

**There is a particular kind of pressure that comes with senior leadership, and it is rarely discussed openly.**

**At work, high-performing men are expected to lead decisively, carry responsibility, absorb uncertainty and remain composed. They are the steady presence in the room. The person others rely on. There is often little space to say, "I am not sure," or "I need to think."**

At home, things are not necessarily simpler. For many, home is rightly a place of sanctuary. Their partners may also carry demanding careers, or they may not fully share the same professional context.

Either way, it is not always the space where complex strategic and internal questions feel easy to unpack.

Over time, thinking becomes internalised. Decisions are made under pressure. Confidence can quietly narrow. Even capable, accomplished men can find themselves carrying a significant cognitive and emotional load alone.

We know from national data that male mental health requires attention. Suicide rates and stress-related illness disproportionately affect men. Historically, social norms have encouraged men to cope quietly and push through. That pattern has consequences.

What is often missing is not resilience. It is space.

The ability to step back. To reflect properly. To examine decisions without politics, performance or expectation.

That is where my work sits.

I work with high-performing men in a structured six-month coaching programme. It includes two 90-minute sessions per month, 18 hours of focused, confidential, non-judgemental thinking time. The fee is £6,000 for six months.

**This is not therapy and it is not mentoring. It is professional coaching in its truest sense. It is non-directive and future focused. I do not offer instruction or advice. I create the conditions in which clients strengthen their own thinking and make decisions that are right for them.**

The work is grounded in professional neutrality. I bring no personal agenda, no emotional attachment to outcomes, and no requirement for clients to present in a certain way. That absence of judgement allows clarity to surface quickly.

**Clients use the space to think through operational strategy, succession planning, leadership confidence, performance pressure, communication challenges and long-term direction. Some arrive with specific issues. Others come because they are already successful and want to sustain that success intelligently.**

High performance is rarely about doing more. It is about thinking better.

**As an EMCC-accredited Coach Practitioner, working to the EMCC Code of Ethics and participating in ongoing professional supervision, I hold this work to a high standard. It is confidential, structured and ethically grounded. Over the years I have worked with senior executives, founders and high-profile individuals operating under significant scrutiny. What unites them is responsibility.**

This is not mass coaching. It is selective, high-quality work for men who understand that sustained performance requires deliberate thinking.

High performance is not accidental. When you carry responsibility at the highest level, you owe it to yourself to seek the right environment to think well.

Enquiries are handled directly and confidentially.

» For this programme, I work with a deliberately small number of clients at any one time. Conversations are handled directly and in confidence. 07834 483585 anna@room11coaching.co.uk

## True Physio expands acupuncture across all nine clinics following internal training programme



**Physiotherapists across a large network of clinics are on point with delivering acupuncture after a comprehensive training programme led by South Cheshire clinician Ben Ratcliffe.**

Ben, Clinic Manager at the True Physio group, has upskilled 14 physiotherapy colleagues across the firm's network of ten clinics including Beam Heath Way, Nantwich and Crewe Business Park.

He said: "Having acupuncture available across all of our sites is a real step forward for our patients. It means we can offer a more complete, holistic approach to care, integrating acupuncture into wider treatment plans rather than offering it in isolation. That joined-up approach is what makes the real difference."

Acupuncture, a treatment rooted in ancient Chinese medicine, involves the gentle insertion of fine, sterile needles into specific points on the body.

Stimulating these points, helps to reduce inflammation and trigger the body's natural pain-relieving mechanisms.

A modern day form of Western medical acupuncture is used at True Physio to treat a wide range of conditions including chronic back, neck and joint pain, headaches and migraines, stress and anxiety, sports injuries and sleep disturbances.

Ben, a keen runner and Nantwich Tennis Club 'A' Team Captain, is a firm believer in the benefits having seen remarkable results, particularly in people suffering sports-related injuries.

"People sometimes think acupuncture is either painful or just a placebo, but that really isn't the case. Delivered properly, it's proven to release natural painkillers and is widely-used as an alternative to opioids. It has supported many True Physio patients in their recovery as part of a wider rehabilitation plan."

Now patients at all True Physio locations - Crewe, Nantwich, Congleton, Stoke, Stafford, Sale, Lancaster, Blackburn, Skipton and Darwen - can access acupuncture as part of their treatment.

Keith Johnstone, Clinical Director, said: "This rollout across our clinics has been led by Ben whose specialist acupuncture qualifications and experience made him the ideal person to upskill colleagues across the group.



"Acupuncture is increasingly sought after by patients who want effective, natural options alongside their physiotherapy. Ben's work in training our team means every patient across our network can now benefit from it, delivered to the same high standard they would expect from any True Physio treatment."

Rather than a standalone therapy, acupuncture is woven into the patient's individual treatment programme, complementing physiotherapy, sports therapy, and massage to support recovery and long-term wellbeing. The team has seen strong results, including supporting GB fencing athlete Lucy-Belle Williamson in her recovery from a shoulder injury.

Ben, who qualified from Keele University in 2015, is also one of few physiotherapists locally who can prescribe and administer injections.

» For appointments in Crewe and Nantwich call 01270 361363 or go to true.physio

## MULTI-GENERATIONAL WORKPLACES

By Melanie Saywell – Founder and Facilitator, Culture Care

### Most workplaces today include five generations working side by side.

Each bringing different experiences, expectations, and ways of working.

That can feel like a challenge.

Different views on communication.  
Different attitudes to work-life balance.  
Different expectations of leadership.

It's easy for this to become frustration:

"They don't get it."  
"They work differently."  
"They expect too much... or not enough."

**I rarely see issues caused by age.**

**I see issues caused by assumptions.**

But what if this isn't a problem?

What if it's the opportunity?

Because when it works well, a multi-generational workforce brings something powerful.

Experience and fresh thinking.  
Stability and innovation.  
Perspective and challenge.

The shift is this:

It's not about managing generations.  
It's about understanding people.

And that starts with conversations.

Simple, structured culture conversations help teams understand what matters to each other.

How people like to communicate.  
What support they need to do their best work.

Not assumptions. Not labels. Just honest dialogue.

**Four simple places to start:**

- **Well led** – Be clear about what matters most, and what good looks like
- **Involved** – Create space for different voices and perspectives
- **Valued** – Recognise people's contribution
- **Empowered** – Give people the flexibility and trust to work in ways that suit them

When people feel well led, involved, valued and empowered, they show up fully.  
And differences become strengths, not barriers.

So here's the question: Are you managing differences... or making the most of them?

» **Try asking this question in your next team meeting:**  
"What matters most to you at work right now?"

For more information, visit: [culture-care.mystrikingly.com](http://culture-care.mystrikingly.com)



## SIMPLE, PRACTICAL WAYS TO SUPPORT TEAM WELLBEING IN THE WORKPLACE

By Kate Blakemore

**When we talk about workplace wellbeing, it can sometimes feel like a big, expensive, or complicated agenda. In reality, some of the most effective ways to support your team's mental health and wellbeing are simple, low-cost, and easy to put into place.**

Creating a workplace culture that genuinely values wellbeing doesn't require a full HR department or a large budget. It requires intention, awareness, and a willingness to make small changes that show staff they are seen, heard, and supported.

Here are some practical ways any organisation can start today.

**Make use of national campaign resources**

Throughout the year, there are national awareness campaigns covering mental health, menopause, suicide prevention, carers, domestic abuse, children's mental health, and more. These campaigns are backed by reputable organisations who provide free, high-quality downloadable resources.

Posters, conversation guides, social media graphics, and toolkits are often available at no cost and can be displayed in staff areas, shared in newsletters, or discussed in team meetings.

A simple poster in the staff room during Mental Health Awareness Week or Menopause Awareness Month can open up conversations that otherwise wouldn't happen.

**Invite staff to champion causes they care about**

Within every team, there are people with lived experiences and personal passions. Some may feel comfortable sharing their story, others may simply want to champion a cause quietly.

You might have a team member passionate about supporting carers, someone who has navigated grief, someone advocating for better mental health understanding, or someone raising awareness around menopause or neurodiversity.

Giving staff the opportunity to lead on awareness days or share information (in a way



that feels safe for them) helps create a culture of openness, empathy, and understanding.

**Utilise free webinars to upskill staff**

Many national charities, wellbeing organisations, and training providers offer free webinars throughout the year.

Topics range from stress management and resilience to domestic abuse awareness, supporting neurodiverse colleagues, and managing difficult conversations.

Encouraging staff to attend and then share key learning points with colleagues is a simple way to upskill your whole team without cost.

**Create a small workplace resource library**

A wellbeing library doesn't need to be large. A shelf with a small collection of self-help books, information guides, and signposting leaflets can be incredibly powerful.

Include books on mental health, menopause, grief, parenting, anxiety, and resilience. Staff can borrow these privately and access support in their own time.

This quiet form of support can be particularly helpful for those who may not feel ready to ask for help openly.

**Add national support links to your website and staff intranet**

A simple but often overlooked step is adding links to national support organisations on your website or staff portal.

Links to organisations such as Mind, Samaritans, Women's Aid, Carers UK, and NHS mental health services mean staff know where to go if they need support outside of work.

Sometimes, just knowing where help is available can reduce feelings of isolation.

**Normalise wellbeing conversations in everyday work life**

Wellbeing should not only be discussed during awareness weeks. It can be part of everyday team culture.

Simple practices like:

- Asking "How are you really?" in check-ins
- Encouraging regular breaks
- Promoting annual leave and rest
- Avoiding a culture of overworking
- Allowing flexibility where possible

These actions show that wellbeing is valued in practice, not just in policy.

**Create safe spaces for conversation**

Whether it's a monthly wellbeing coffee morning, a lunchtime walk, or an informal drop-in space, creating opportunities for staff to talk in a relaxed setting builds connection and reduces isolation.

Often, the biggest wellbeing support is feeling part of a supportive community.

**Lead by example**

Leaders and managers set the tone. When leaders talk openly about their own wellbeing, take breaks, and model healthy boundaries, it gives permission for others to do the same.

Wellbeing becomes part of workplace culture rather than an added extra.

» **Contact me to find out more about how we/me, can help support your workplace wellbeing – Kate Blakemore**  
[kate@her-place.co.uk](mailto:kate@her-place.co.uk)

## Bringing local businesses back into our town centres through the new High Streets Strategy

At the beginning of this year, the Communities Secretary announced plans to develop a new High Streets Strategy to restore the community pride people feel in their high streets by supporting local, independent businesses, improving neglected shopfronts and opening up empty units. In the coming months, the Strategy will be published in full, providing greater detail on how this restoration will be achieved.

High Street Rental Auctions and Community Right-To-Buy powers have been extended, giving local groups greater time to raise funds to protect communal areas like pubs and libraries. New powers include the ability to seize boarded-up shops and block nuisance businesses.

**I've made it clear to the government that there is still a long way to go. Over recent months, I have spoken with a number of local hospitality businesses here in Crewe and Nantwich.**

Across the board, the issues are the same: rising costs, pressures around staffing, and the high burden of business rates are making it harder for venues to thrive, invest, and continue playing such an important role in our local economy and community.

That's why I signed a joint letter to the Chancellor by the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Hospitality and Tourism. The letter sets out the challenges facing pubs, restaurants, hotels, night-time venues and leisure businesses, and calls for meaningful action in the forthcoming Budget to support the sector.

**Key areas where change is urgently needed include:**

- Reform of business rates so that hospitality and leisure businesses benefit from a fairer, more sustainable system.
- Reviewing employer National Insurance changes, which have impacted recruitment and staffing.
- Commissioning a full study into VAT for hospitality and tourism, given the evidence that a lower rate could help unlock growth, protect jobs, and strengthen local high streets.

Supporting this sector is essential not only for the national economy but also for communities like ours here in Crewe and Nantwich. Research from the Centre for Social Justice shows that since 2016, Britain has lost nearly 1,800 pubs and bars, while there are an additional 245 shops that specialise in selling tobacco products, rising to nearly 2,200 in total.



The hospitality industry is a central part of high street regeneration. Pubs and bars are much more than places to sit and drink; they bring communities together, strengthen social connections and provide a third space for people from all walks of life.

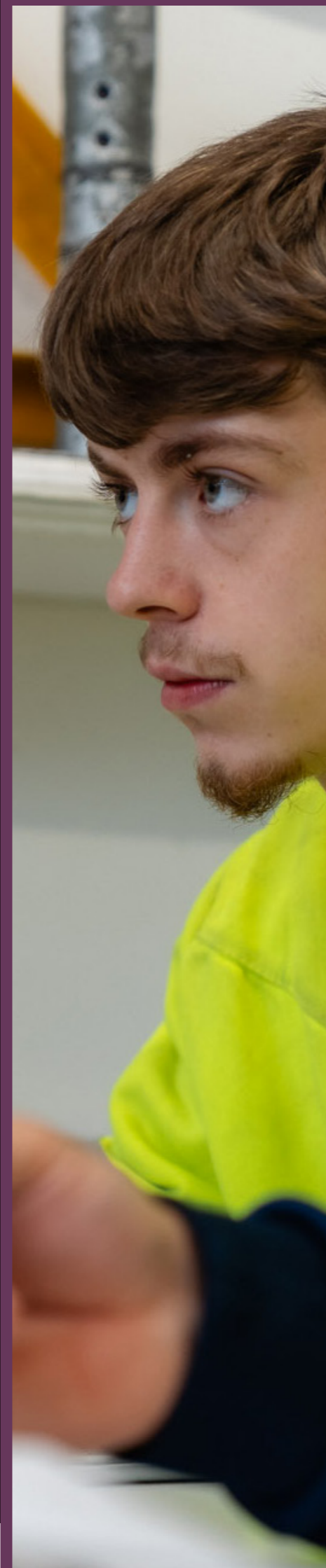
Despite the fact that town centre shops are an integral part of the social fabric of our communities, our institutions often lack the control to adequately plan these spaces in the interests of the people we represent.

**With the vast majority of commercial property being owned and let by private landlords, sadly there remains a free market logic to town planning. Local authorities are often simply unable to influence the usage of town centre shop units, with fundamental decision-making powers over rent, repairs and other drivers for investment being taken by speculative landlords, many of whom from private equity and based over-seas.**

Government intervention is essential to protect local establishments and keep organised crime off our high streets. We must go further to save our high streets and listen to the countless small business owners calling for a review of business rates, and VAT in the hospitality sector.

As well as protecting the assets themselves, we must recognise the efforts of the people running them. Small independent business owners take a huge risk to, of course, make a profit but also to give something back to their community and to more often than not keep the wealth they create within those same communities with good jobs for local people.

**Community groups in Crewe & Nantwich are determined to restore their town centre to the symbols of pride it once was. The upcoming High Streets Strategy from the government must give them the tools to do so.**



## BUILD THE SKILLS YOUR BUSINESS CAN'T GROW WITHOUT

Across South Cheshire, employers are facing the same challenges: tough recruitment, rising costs and growing demand for stronger technical and soft skills.

Total People helps organisations overcome these barriers with funded apprenticeships that turn skills gaps into sustainable growth.

### Skills that drive regional success

We support businesses across the region with apprenticeships that build:

- ✓ **Productive business support teams** – HR, Management, Customer Service and Business Administration
- ✓ **Engineering and manufacturing talent** – technicians local industries urgently need
- ✓ **Maintenance expertise** – keeping logistics and transport moving and working towards net-zero
- ✓ **Qualified scaffolders** – supporting construction and housing growth
- ✓ **Essential soft skills** – communication, customer service, problem solving and numeracy and literacy, all developed through apprenticeship learning.

### Recruit. Retain. Grow

Why compete for scarce talent when you can develop it? Apprenticeships help you upskill staff, attract fresh ideas, improve retention and reduce recruitment costs.

### Build a workforce ready for the future

If you're ready to grow your team and close your skills gap, we're ready to help.

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