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THE TEAM

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TBE's Most Inspiring Women 2026

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KEY STATISTICS

Readership: 15,000

Our audience:

56% business owner/ director level

44% partner, manager or senior executive

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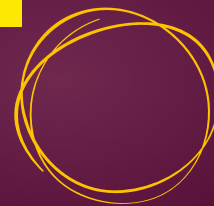
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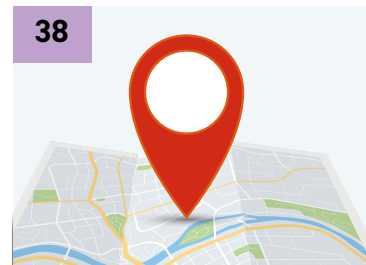
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EDITOR'S NOTE

Thank goodness spring is on the horizon. As I write this, I can't say it's quite sprung, but there are signs brighter days are on their way, from the lighter mornings to the daffodils beginning to emerge.

I don't know about you, but this year seems to have got off to a rather hectic start. It seemed everyone wanted a meeting in January and February, and the general feeling is that business is starting to move again. It's a bit do or die. The world situation may be uncertain and the economy might not be at its best, but people are tired of waiting and just want to crack on.

This issue is nothing but positive, from the news of £50m in investment for Chippenham town centre on page 4, to Swindon being recognised as one of the UK's most economically active areas.

We celebrate business birthdays, expansion and innovation on our business news pages, as well as this very publication being shortlisted for a national SME award. There's a true sense of optimism in the air.

In this issue we look at what the economic future of Swindon may look like (page 16) and we also celebrate Swindon & Wiltshire's Most Inspiring Women as voted by you (page 22).

This year we have a lot to look forward to, from our special business breakfast at Lydiard Park on 22nd April, to TBE South West Charity Conference & Expo on 11th June, to TBE Show on 17th September — not forgetting TBE Awards, which open for entry on 13th April. There's something for everyone to keep you connected and making new connections and opportunities.

Here's to a prosperous start to the new fiscal year and the months ahead. I hope to see you at a TBE event soon. Happy reading.

Anita Jaynes, Founder

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More news at: tbeathandsomerset.co.uk **and** tbeswindonandwilts.co.uk

£50m Chippenham town centre redevelopment gets the green light

Wiltshire Council has approved plans for the £50 million transformational regeneration of Emery Gate Shopping Centre in Chippenham - a major milestone in the long-term renewal of the historic town.



'Chippenham Riverside' will transform the current Emery Gate shopping centre into a high-quality mixed-use neighbourhood, reconnecting the High Street with Island Park and the River Avon. The scheme will re-open the site to the town, creating a vibrant, sustainable destination at the heart of Chippenham and delivering more than 200 new homes alongside new public spaces, diverse landscaping, pedestrian routes and amenities.

The vision, developed by HNW Architects for independent developers and regeneration specialists Acorn Property Group, reimagines the site as a dynamic new mixed-use neighbourhood. The proposals set out a holistic masterplan of distinctive, human-scale buildings arranged around new streets, routes and public spaces. The scheme will deliver flexible commercial and leisure space, much-needed new homes and

enhanced public realm, while prioritising low-carbon reuse and the regeneration of a key brownfield site at the heart of the town.

At a meeting of Wiltshire Council's strategic planning committee in February, councillors unanimously voted to approve the proposals, which were submitted more than a year ago.

Wiltshire Council's Economy and Regeneration Service described the project as, "A transformational opportunity for the regeneration of Chippenham, securing its long-term vitality and viability, supporting future economic growth and wider town centre regeneration, which is essential for its ongoing prosperity."

Planning officers also noted the scheme's contribution to place-making, describing the design as having "clear legibility, high-quality shopfronts and flexibility for the future."

The Council's Conservation Officer

welcomed the approach, stating, "This is a large central site and its redevelopment will have a lasting impact on the town. The proposed development offers significant opportunities for enhancement, with many positives set out within the design and development themes expressed."

Dane Cummings, Head of Commercial Property, Acorn Property Group, said, "We are delighted to secure planning permission for Chippenham Riverside. Emery Gate is a pivotal site, and this decision allows us to invest with confidence in a development that will support the town's economy, create sustainable new homes and bring long-term benefits for residents, businesses and visitors alike. Chippenham Riverside builds on our long history of transforming complex town centre sites into thriving, future-ready destinations. We look forward to continuing to work with Wiltshire Council and the local

community as the project moves forward."

Lee Davies, Director, HNW Architects, added, "Emery Gate is one of those sites that really matters. It sits between the High Street, the river and the park, yet for years it has turned its back on all three. This approval recognises the opportunity to do something fundamentally better - to repair the townscape, open up the riverside and create a piece of Chippenham that works throughout the day and into the evening."

"This has been a collaborative, designed process shaped by the town's history, landscape and community. Chippenham Riverside is well placed to act as a catalyst for wider regeneration, and we're proud to see our vision approved as we look ahead to delivering a sustainable, flexible and civic transformation for the town."



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Swindon in top three of UK's most economically effective urban areas

Driven by its exceptionally strong labour productivity and high work intensity, Swindon has been ranked at #2 nationwide for economic effectiveness, new analysis has revealed.

Carried out by CoworkingCafe, the study highlights Britain's top 15 cities and towns at the forefront of economic effectiveness, assessing how well local economies convert work into output. It combines five indicators: labour productivity (Gross Value Added per hour worked), average weekly hours, employment rate, job density and business density. Key takeaways for Swindon include:

- Second-highest labour productivity in Britain, averaging £62.1 Gross Value Added per hour – just behind Slough and well above London's £54 GVA/h benchmark
- One of the most work-intensive local economies, with an average 39.3-hour workweek, ranking 5th nationally
- Employment rate of 77%, pointing to a stable and engaged workforce.
- Job density of 0.81 jobs per working-age resident, reflecting

average job availability and a balanced labour market

- 454 businesses per 10,000 working-age residents, supporting a diverse local economy that underpins Swindon's strong overall performance.

The national picture While the top three overall are Slough (1st), Swindon (2nd) and Wokingham (3rd), an "efficiency belt" surrounds London, with Sevenoaks, Basingstoke, Winchester and Reading also performing strongly.

Regional cities such as Edinburgh, Stratford-upon-Avon, Warwick and Chester also rank highly, highlighting that economic effectiveness extends well beyond the capital.

London was excluded from the main ranking due to its size and economic scale. However, as a benchmark, its labour productivity (£54 GVA/h) trails several top-

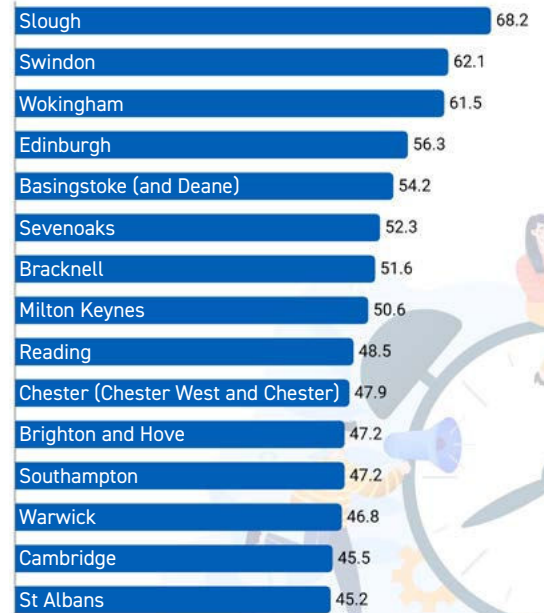
performing smaller cities, while its per-capita job and business density is frequently matched or exceeded elsewhere.

Commenting on Swindon's ranking, Balazs Szekely, Senior Creative Writer and author of the study, said, "Swindon's position as the UK's second most economically effective city underlines an important point: success doesn't depend on being the biggest or working the longest hours. It comes from building a balanced local economy where productivity, business activity and workforce participation reinforce one another, creating the foundations for sustainable, long-term growth."

To set up this ranking, CoworkingCafe compared all UK cities with complete data for the various metrics and assigned each a score based on the findings.

HOW PRODUCTIVE IS AN HOUR OF WORK?

Top 15 British Cities by Gross Value Added per hour worked



For more info:
coworkingcafe.com/blog/most-effective-cities-uk



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South West business activity expands at quickest rate in five months

Business activity in the South West grew at a solid and faster rate in January, according to the latest figures from the NatWest Growth Tracker.

The South West Business Activity Index – a seasonally adjusted index which measures changes in the region’s output of goods and services – rose from 52.2 in December to 53.5 at the start of 2026, posting its highest reading since last August.

The expansion in output was often linked to improved sales, greater efficiency and efforts to complete outstanding projects in a timely manner.

The latest survey pointed to a sustained, but softer rise in overall new work across the South West. Encouragingly, business confidence improved sharply and the rate of job shedding eased notably on the month.

Faye Long, Chair of the NatWest South West Regional Board, said, “Companies across the South West reported a number of positive developments at the start of 2026, according to latest PMI data.

“Firstly, companies saw a steeper and solid upturn in activity levels, which kept the region one of the top-performing areas of the UK. Secondly, firms were much more confident about growth over the next 12 months, which in turn drove a slower reduction in employment as more companies held their staff numbers steady amid an improving outlook. Lastly, there were tentative signs that inflationary pressures eased at the start of 2026, with both input costs and output charges rising at slower rates.

“Nevertheless, growth in new business softened in the latest survey, and suggests that client spending was relatively lacklustre. It will be important to monitor sales

and price trends going forward, to see if customer spending recovers amid a brighter outlook and if there are any signs of cost pressures flaring up again.”

Performance in relation to UK

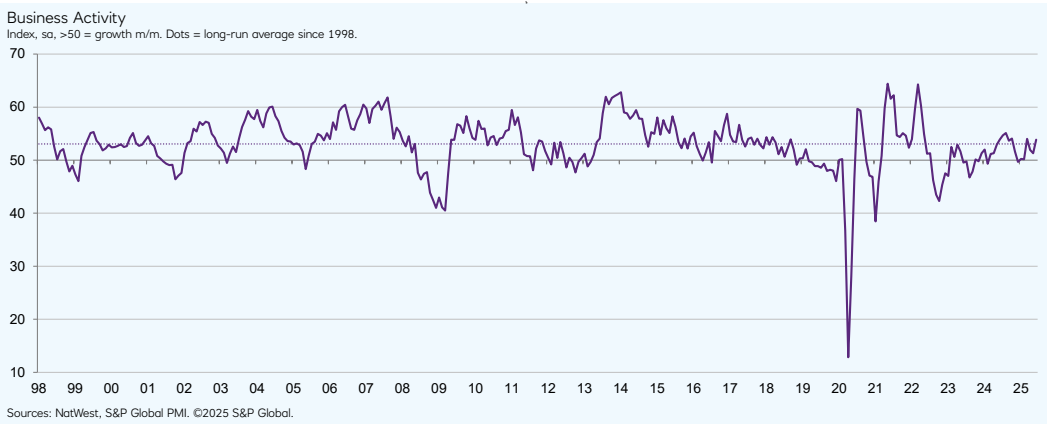
The stronger rise in business activity in the South West correlated with a quicker and similarly solid upturn in output across the UK as a whole. Notably, the South West recorded the fourth-steepest increase in output of all 12 UK regions and nations (after London, the West Midlands and the North East).

In contrast to the trend seen across the South West, new

order growth quickened to a solid pace at the UK level in January.

South West businesses expressed much greater confidence regarding future output levels in January. Furthermore, the degree of optimism rose above the series average and was among the best seen over the past year. Firms indicated that company expansion plans, new product innovation and increased sales targets all supported growth forecasts.

However, companies in the region were slightly less upbeat than the average UK firm.



The Enterprise Network unveils new website to support business community

The Enterprise Network (TEN) has launched its newly redesigned website, marking an exciting step forward in its mission to better support entrepreneurs and small businesses across Wiltshire.



Owned and managed by Wiltshire Council, TEN plays a pivotal role in helping start-ups and growing enterprises access the tools, guidance and facilities they need to thrive.

The fresh new digital look aims to improve the user experience, showcase TEN’s expanding services, and provide clearer pathways for businesses seeking support.

Since its creation in 2012, TEN has remained committed to strengthening Wiltshire’s economic landscape. Over the years, the initiative has helped more than 600 new businesses launch, provided expert advice to around 1,500 existing businesses, and supported 550 women-led enterprises, contributing to the creation of 400 new jobs across the region. These achievements illustrate TEN’s long-standing impact in championing business resilience and growth.

The new website, created in conjunction with Royal Wootton Bassett-based Sanders Web Works, highlights TEN’s wide-ranging offer, which includes flexible office space, co-working facilities, virtual offices and access to meeting or training rooms across its enterprise centres. Each location is designed to meet the diverse needs of modern businesses, from solo entrepreneurs seeking a professional environment to established teams requiring room to expand.

Beyond physical spaces, The Enterprise Network continues to provide access to expert guidance, funded business support, training opportunities and information on available grants. The organisation also plays a central role in building a supportive business community by hosting regular networking events and workshops, helping

local entrepreneurs learn, collaborate and grow together.

TEN’s new website reinforces its commitment to building a stronger, more resilient Wiltshire. With improved navigation, clearer service information and inspiring stories from tenants across its centres, the platform makes it easier than ever for businesses to connect with the support they need. Whether launching a new venture or scaling an existing one, Wiltshire’s entrepreneurs now have an even more accessible gateway to opportunities, partnerships and expert advice.

“The new website highlights TEN’s wide-ranging offer including flexible office space, co-working facilities, virtual offices and meeting or training rooms”

For more info: theenterprisenetwork.co.uk

KR HR & Training Consultancy celebrates 10-year milestone

Corsham-based KR HR & Training Consultancy marked its 10th business birthday with a celebratory event for clients and colleagues.

Founded by Kathryn Fairlie in February 2016, KR HR set out to change the perception of HR from managing problems to unlocking potential. Today, this four-person team combines decades of experience with a shared commitment to making working life better for businesses and employees alike.

Over the past decade, the team has worked with over 150 SMEs and charities across Wiltshire, Swindon and Bath, building a reputation for consistency and trust, reflected in client feedback praising its professionalism and approachable style. Providing a combination of strategic and hands-on HR consultancy, management development and HR systems, the KR HR team enables organisations to build capability and achieve goals by getting people practices right.

Highlights from KR HR's 10th year include recognition as a Breathe HR gold partner and success at the TBE Awards where the firm won the "Dream Team" accolade and was a finalist in the Positive Business category for its charity fundraising, community volunteering and advocacy work. Over the past year, KR HR has become an active member of the Employers' Initiative on Domestic Abuse and has further new collaborations on this important issue in the pipeline for the year ahead.

Kathryn Fairlie, Director, said, "It's a proud moment to celebrate our 10th anniversary and take a moment to pause and say thank you to the clients, suppliers and team members who have contributed to our success. I love that we celebrated with clients who have been with us for the whole 10 years, and others who have only partnered with us in recent months. Thinking back to where I started, the business has grown beyond my expectations and this is down to a team that works hard, is continually learning and goes the extra mile to support both our clients and each other."

Kathryn continued, "2026 has got off to an exceptionally busy start, with clients adapting to changing circumstances and preparing for many legislative changes on the horizon thanks to the Employment Rights Act 2025. We're ready for the challenges that lie ahead and look forward to expanding the team further during 2026 to meet a growing demand for down-to-earth, practical and values-centred HR support."



For more info:
krhrconsultancy.co.uk



SCIENCE+ INNOVATION PARK

Unique team away days or summer parties in the beautiful Marlborough Downs

ADVERTISING FEATURE

Located in the stunning Marlborough Downs, the Science and Innovation Park provides a unique setting to host your next team away day.

A 545-acre former RAF airfield and home to 80% of the Science Museum Group Collection, the Park is set amongst stunning natural woodlands and one of the UK'S largest solar farms.

Meeting rooms at the Science and Innovation Park are equipped with full AV systems and are available for daily or weekly hire, while the versatile outdoor areas can also be hired for a variety of events, including corporate volunteering.

Teams who visit the Park for their away days also experience an exclusive behind-the-scenes tour of the Hawking Building – our state-of-the-art working store where

we care for unique and historic objects from the Science Museum Group when they are not on display in a museum.

With good access to Swindon and local hotels within easy reach, our team can help plan your day, assisting with transport, food and other services on request.

If you're looking for a unique spot to host a team away day to plan for the new financial year or for a beautiful location for a team building event in the spring or summer months, get in touch with our dedicated team today.

"We worked with the Science Museum Group to put together an offsite team building event as part of a company-wide

coaching programme. The space allowed us to facilitate the session well and the team came up with a great activity linked to their sustainability goals, aligning well with our company values. We are looking forward to working with the Science Museum Group for future events and workshops."

Johnson Matthey Global leader in sustainable technologies

To find out more:

Phone: **07788 451912**

Email: hirethesip@sciencemuseum.ac.uk

Visit: hirethescienceinnovationpark.com

All Boxed expands across Wiltshire with acquisition of Black Hole Storage

All Boxed has expanded its footprint across Wiltshire with the acquisition of Black Hole Storage in Salisbury, adding a sixth site to its growing self storage network. With established sites already operating in Chippenham, Melksham and Calne, the addition of Salisbury reinforces the company's position as one of the county's leading storage providers.

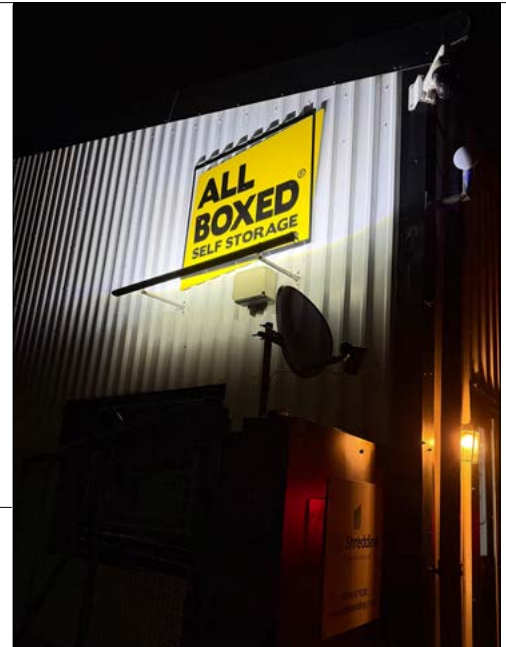
The Salisbury site brings a loyal and long standing customer base, with some clients having stored with the business for up to 18 years. Low churn gives All Boxed a strong platform for growth, and the company is already investing in improvements. Automation plans will bring the site in line with the remote management model successfully used in Chippenham and Calne, enabling extended hours while improving efficiency and convenience for clients. The ability to move customers between locations adds further flexibility and strengthens All Boxed's wider retention strategy.

To support new customer acquisition, All Boxed will launch a 50% discount for the first two months on all new storage customers, helping more residents and businesses access secure, flexible space at competitive rates.

The acquisition also extends the reach of sister companies Elm Workspace and Just Shredding, which now have a new operational base at the Salisbury site. Just Shredding provides a confidential shredding service for businesses and individuals, justshredding.co.uk, while Elm Workspace specialises in workspace design, planning, fit out and furniture, elmworkspace.com.

"Salisbury is a brilliant addition for us," said Managing Director Daren Spencer. "The site already has a loyal customer base and strong occupancy, and with the planned automation and expansion of the site, we'll unlock even more capacity. This acquisition cements our ambition to build a high quality, multi site storage brand that serves the whole of Wiltshire."

All Boxed offers storage units ranging from 10 sq ft to 150 sq ft, providing solutions for both personal and business customers.



"This acquisition cements our ambition to build a high quality, multi site storage brand that serves the whole of Wiltshire."

Daren Spencer
Managing Director, All Boxed

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- ✓ Business rate: 20ft (160 sq ft) containers @ £186+VAT (normally £200+VAT)
- ✓ 10% off internal rooms, units and our box shop;

Calne	01249 471777	Salisbury	01722 742747
Chippenham	01249 471777	Melksham	01225 530079

www.allboxed.co.uk



Wiltshire seed business helps farmers get paid to go green

A family-run seed trader in Salisbury, is helping UK farmers access the financial benefits of environmental schemes by offering tailored seed mixes and expert guidance.



Bright Seeds, owned and run by Chris Bright, is helping farmers meet the requirements of government-backed initiatives like the Sustainable Farming Incentive (SFI) and Countryside Stewardship, which provide funding for sustainable farming practices.

As environmental schemes become more important, many farmers struggle with meeting the complex requirements and criteria to unlock funding such as improving soil health and boosting biodiversity, areas Bright Seeds can help with.

Chris Bright, said, "We've always been involved with the Countryside Stewardship scheme, and we keep up to date with emerging environmental schemes so we can stay at the forefront of supply.

"We trial all our new stewardship and wildflower mixes on our land before they go to market to show customers what compliance with these schemes can look like, and to give them that tangible sense of how our seeds could work for them."

The company's commitment to sustainability extends to its own operations, Chris explained that their demonstration farm at Dean Lane benefits from mid-tier Countryside Stewardship and SFI schemes itself and uses renewable energy solutions like solar panels and ground-source heat pumps, alongside

water management systems designed to improve soil health and retention.

Bright Seeds is also supporting farmers focusing on areas identified by Lloyds Banking Group's Farming with Nature report. The report is the most comprehensive analysis of its kind, mapping 5.1 million hectares, almost a third of the UK's farmed land, to pinpoint key areas for improvement by region.

The South West, for example, is highlighted in the report as a key region for sediment retention and hedge planting – two areas where Bright Seeds' expertise in soil health and hedging plants can help farmers unlock environmental and financial benefits.

Chris is keen that farmers understand what support is available to them and that despite constant shifts in the schemes on offer, there are long-term solutions that can be put in place to safeguard the future of farming and the environment.

"Environmental schemes will keep changing. If one thing drops off, another will come up in its place.

"The key is to stay flexible and use what's on offer to futureproof your farm," he said.



 For more info:
brightseeds.co.uk

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Research and Development at the Science and Innovation Park

ADVERTISING FEATURE



Hosting one of the UK's largest solar farms and with a strong history in renewable energy and low carbon technology development, the Science and Innovation Park is in-demand from organisations undertaking research and development in a range of industries.

From large-scale engineering installations to automotive testing and research on our fully private track space, the Park is well-supported by the local planning authority (part of the Borough of Swindon), making the site the ideal place to base new research and development or to deliver renewable energy generation.

An around-the-clock on-site team ensures that commercially sensitive or prototype products can be tested in private, whilst your dedicated site liaison is able to advise on any safety measures and risk assessments required.

To find out more about developing your business in this unique location, get in touch with our team today.

"Their commitment to innovation and sustainability has created an environment where ambitious ideas don't just stay on the drawing board – they become a reality."

Rivan Industries



"We have monitoring stations across the UK and it's always a pleasure to return to the Science Museum Group. Efficient, courteous and always willing to help."

British Geological Society

To find out more:

Phone: 07788 451912

Email: hirethesip@sciencemuseum.ac.uk

Visit: hirethescienceinnovationpark.com

TBE shortlisted for Impact Award as one of UK's Best SMEs

The Business Exchange (TBE) South West is up for a national award at the Best SME Awards 2026.



Shortlisted in the Best Impact category, TBE has been recognised for demonstrating how an independent media business can achieve sector-leading impact through leadership, innovation and a strong sense of purpose.

Founded by Anita Jaynes in 2013, TBE has grown into the only dedicated B2B print and digital media platform serving Swindon & Wiltshire and Bath & Somerset. At a time when regional print is shrinking and B2B publishing remains male-dominated, TBE has defied industry decline and built a thriving multi-platform ecosystem with a magazine read by 30,000 people, two busy websites, a newsletter reaching more than 10,000 subscribers, an active social audience, a podcast and a full events programme supported by the TBE VIP Membership.

The inaugural Best SME Awards take place on Friday 24th April. These national

awards will recognise and reward the UK's innovative, enterprising, high-performing and client-focused businesses and their employees from across the UK.

The 2026 Best SME Award entry emphasises Anita's leadership as the driving force behind the growth of TBE. It reflects on the resilience she showed during the pandemic when she continued to support the business community daily at a time of intense pressure for media and events businesses.

It also highlights the development of TBE's events and expos, including the South West Charity Conference & Expo, which has grown into a nationally recognised occasion.

Finally, the entry focuses on the measurable impact TBE has had across the region. It sets out how the platform has

supported thousands of SMEs, start-ups and charities, delivered free editorial exposure, driven new clients and collaborations and connected more than 1,500 delegates annually through its events.

The Business Exchange Founder Anita Jaynes said, "The Business Exchange is absolutely buzzing to be named as one of the best SMEs in the country, particularly in the impact category.

"Everything we do is about impact – meaningful connections that translate into real opportunities; sharing successes and achievements to elevate the entire region's business network; encouraging ethical and responsible business practices to support our communities.

"We keep our business community connected in the right ways, and we are

so pleased to be recognised for this at a national level. The team will have our fingers firmly crossed on Awards night.

"Finally, I would like to thank all of our advertisers and VIPs, past and present, for their support. TBE is a community and we're proud to work with, and fly the flag for, you all."



For more info:
bestsmeawards.co.uk

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TBE South West Charity Conference & Expo

Thursday 11th June 2026 | Bath Racecourse

Be part of the region's most inspiring day of purpose and collaboration, connecting charities and businesses to drive positive change

Join us for the 8th TBE South West Charity Conference & Expo, in partnership with founding sponsor Milsted Langdon. This year's theme is **Rebuilding Trust, Resilience and Relevance: The Future of Charity in a Changing World.**

Expect 500+ attendees, 100+ breakfast delegates and 50+ exhibitor stands. As word has spread about our unique event, we're attracting visitors from across the country, showcasing the South West as a true leader in the Third Sector.

Anita Jaynes, Founder of The Business Exchange and the TBE South West Charity Conference & Expo, said, "What's powerful about this event is the conversations and connections that happen on the day that turn into amazing collaborations and impact. We've seen a cancer board develop in Bath which now brings together many charities working in this space to provide joined-up support for those dealing with cancer. We've also seen charities attract new volunteers and trustees, as well as form key relationships with local businesses to strengthen their organisation's skillset."

Confirmed exhibitors this year include Wiltshire & Bath Air Ambulance, Integrity Print, Bath Cats & Dogs Home, GivenGain, 3SG, N3 Display Graphics, Nine Feet Tall and Milsted Langdon.

Charity law firm Stephens Scown has also been confirmed as the networking lunch sponsor.

ABOUT THE DAY

NETWORKING BREAKFAST & PANEL DISCUSSION | 8:30-10AM

Join us for a sit-down breakfast designed to connect you with new and relevant people. Tables are arranged to maximise meaningful introductions and spark collaboration.

The morning begins with a panel discussion including Tim Lerwill, Head of Charities & Not for Profit at Milsted Langdon, plus guest speakers from across the charity and business community, reflecting the day's theme on the future of the charity sector.

Tickets: £45



EXPO | 10AM-1PM

The expo is free to attend, but registration is essential. Charities and businesses are invited to exhibit on the day.

Exhibitors receive:

- A 6ft x 2ft table
- A white tablecloth
- One chair
- Space for a pop-up banner, marketing literature and a tablet/iPad



EXHIBITOR PRICING:

Charity expo stand: £120

Business expo stand: £240

Charity stand + two breakfast tickets: £160

Business stand + two breakfast tickets: £308



CONFERENCE | 2-4PM

The fast-paced afternoon conference will feature five keynote speakers, each selected to educate, empower and inspire delegates. Attendance is free with registration.

We're pleased to confirm that James Shone, Founder of the charity I Can & I Am, will join us as a keynote speaker. His story, and the work he champions, aligns closely with this year's theme and the challenges and opportunities facing the sector today. Further speakers to be announced.

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MILSTED LANGDON

"As an exhibitor, I had the opportunity to engage with an enthusiastic audience who were passionate about making a difference."

Rachel Baker, Genesis Trust Bath

"I was delighted to speak at the TBE Charity Conference & Expo in 2025. The event brings together a host of interesting people, enabling important connections that lead to surprising results. Amongst the individuals I met were Alastair Greener, who invited me to write the foreword for his book: 'Generationally Speaking' and Lizzy Rees, of Bath Social Impact Network, who I am proud to say has become a client."

Deborah Hale MBE

"We were blown away by the incredible charities and community organisations we met at TBE South West Charity Conference & Expo. Thank you to TBE for hosting this amazing event."

Cool Ventures

"If you didn't manage to get along last year, we would highly recommend getting involved this year!"

Nine Feet Tall

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What makes PPS a perfect finance partner for your business?

By Sally Holland, a partner with PPS Chartered Accountants based in Old Town, Swindon offering a full suite of holistic services for businesses. The team is 16 strong, including four partners and looking to grow.



Let's face it, there are a lot of accountancy firms to choose from in Swindon and Wiltshire and moving from one accountant to another can feel like a real chore.

However, if you are 'spring cleaning' your business, we believe choosing an accountant should not feel like signing up to a mystery pricing model or a lifetime of jargon, receipts and hidden charges.

We've found too many business owners put up with slow replies, hidden fees and advice that feels designed for other accountants, not real people running real businesses.

It's easy for me to say we do things differently. I know that we do, some of our clients have been with us for more than 30 years and that's no accident.

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speaking to us. If you've got a tax question or a business idea or a quick sanity check before you make a decision, call us. If your question can be handled on the phone, you will not be charged for the call. It is advice, you are not 'on the clock'.

3. A Proper Tax Review - most businesses are leaving money on the table without realising it. We carry out an initial tax review to identify legitimate tax planning opportunities you may not be using. We've saved our clients thousands by simply paying attention and knowing the law.
4. Work Delivered On Time With No Chasing Required – if you provide your information on time, your accounts will be completed within 45 days. Calls and emails are returned within 24 hours, usually faster. In other words, you do not have to spend your life chasing us.
5. Plain English – we don't use jargon or confuse clients with smoke and mirrors. For us, no questions are silly and we explain things clearly and honestly so you can make decisions with confidence.

6. We Take Paperwork Off Your Plate – if you want us to. You guide us around what you do, and don't need. If bookkeeping, payroll and admin are eating your time and energy, we can handle it and sort it properly.

7. We Say Sorry – sometimes things go wrong however hard you try. If they make a mistake, we don't fudge the issue, or try to find someone to blame. We say 'sorry' and we put things right. We learn.

The truth is I believe – and our team believes, your accountant should make your life easier, not harder.

For us the right accountant does more than file returns – we give our clients the breathing space to build their business.

To find out more about PPS visit: ppsacc.co.uk or call: 01793 488544



Financial adviser highlights growing need for women to seek independent financial advice

by Jenny Ashfield *Financial Adviser with Southby & Co Financial Planning*

On a daily basis, I work with individuals, families and business owners helping them plan their financial futures and it's a role I love. It's not about having great wealth, it's about using what wealth you have wisely with an eye on future goals and dreams.

I also have a particular interest in supporting women to build confidence, independence and clarity around their finances at key stages of their lives. Research shows women are significantly less likely than men to have received financial advice, with around 69 per cent reporting they have never consulted a qualified adviser.

This was one of the reasons I now do this job, because I was one of those women. One day, unexpectedly, I had to take ownership of my own financial future and I didn't know where to start. Someone helped me and now I want to help other women to be more financially aware.

There is a good reason for this, women are now thought to hold around 60 per cent of UK wealth driven by demographic and inheritance shifts.

Many women come to financial advice later in life, often following a major change, and they can feel underconfident or overwhelmed when it comes to investing and long-term planning. My role is to provide clear, trusted advice that helps women understand their options and feel empowered to make decisions that are right for them.

The imbalance is also reflected within the profession itself. Women remain significantly underrepresented among UK financial advisers, accounting for only around 18 per cent of regulated advisers, a figure that has increased only marginally in recent years.

"...women are now thought to hold around 60 per cent of UK wealth driven by demographic and inheritance shifts"

Women value clarity, qualifications and trust and they want to feel listened to. As more women become major wealth holders, it's vital the advice profession continues to close the gap, both by encouraging women to seek advice earlier and by supporting greater diversity within the industry itself.



To find out more about Southby & Co visit: southbyfp.co.uk or call: 01793 953800

To get in touch with Jenny Ashfield email: jenny.ashfield@sjpp.co.uk



10 reasons why you should use a Finance Broker

by Steve Barrett and Daniel Smith, Co-Founders, SWBF

1. Expert financial advice

Securing finance can be overwhelming, with numerous options to choose from. Finance brokers offer expert advice on different structures and products, drawing on extensive industry knowledge to suggest solutions clients may not have considered. They help clients understand the most suitable products, share insights into market conditions, and remove the need for time consuming research, allowing clients to make informed decisions with confidence.

2. Saving time and money

Brokers have access to a wide range of lenders and products and can quickly research the market to find the best deals. They handle the legwork and often negotiate better terms and rates, streamlining the process and helping clients secure funds faster. This is especially valuable for those short on time or unfamiliar with the finance market.

3. Skills, experience and contacts

Finance brokers understand the industry, products, risks and benefits. They guide clients through available options and use their wide network of lenders and advisers to access products that may not be publicly available. Their contacts can also help secure better terms.

4. Access to a wide range of lenders

With over 200 lenders in the market, choosing the right one can be difficult. Brokers have relationships across the sector, including alternative finance providers such as crowdfunder, invoice finance and peer to peer lending. This increases the chance of securing the right finance and negotiating competitive terms.

5. Personal customer service

Brokers take time to understand each client's financial position and business needs. They provide tailored advice, support with applications, and a single point of contact throughout. This is particularly helpful for small businesses or startups without an internal finance team.

6. Working with the client

Brokers act in their client's best interests, considering risk tolerance, goals and industry trends. They offer guidance that supports long term business decisions.

7. Support

Their broad market view and understanding of lender policies help clients navigate complex decisions, especially when expanding or planning strategically.

8. Trusted partner

A good broker becomes a supportive partner, explaining options, managing negotiations and ensuring a smooth process. Their industry network can open doors to otherwise inaccessible finance solutions.

9. FCA regulation

Some brokers are FCA regulated, offering added security, professionalism and complaint procedures. They must meet strict standards and act in clients' best interests.

10. Members of an independent trade body

Membership of the NACFB gives brokers access to training, market updates and exclusive products. Clients benefit from up to date knowledge and a fair complaints process.

If you are looking for financial support for yourself or your business, get in touch with a member of our team today.

Find out more at:

swbf.co.uk

"We're very proud to have been supporting our clients on their business and funding journeys over the past 11 years and watch them grow."

"The team at SWBF has a huge amount of industry knowledge and experience, over 400 years between us all, so please don't hesitate to reach out if you have any questions about finding finance for your business or property projects, we'd be happy to help!"



Steve Barrett and Daniel Smith, Co-Founders, SWBF



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The April Countdown: Navigating the 2026 Tax Shift

By Calvin Healy *Director & Head of Tax at Richardson Swift*

As we enjoy the first glimpses of spring, the 5th April deadline is looming and while the annual tax year-end ritual often feels like a race against the clock, this year feels particularly poignant. We are standing at the precipice of some of the most significant shifts in the UK tax landscape for a generation.

The Big IHT Shake-up

The most significant date on my calendar right now is 6th April 2026. This marks the implementation of the new Inheritance Tax (IHT) regime for business owners. For years, Business Property Relief (BPR) was the bedrock of succession planning, often allowing 100% relief on trading businesses.

From April, we move to a capped system. With the first £2.5 million of qualifying assets exempt and a 50% relief thereafter, many local family businesses may find themselves facing an effective 20% tax rate that simply wasn't there before. If you haven't reviewed your Will or considered lifetime gifting in the last few months, now is the window to act before the old rules vanish.

A Note on Privacy: The Companies House 'U-Turn'

I know many of you have been concerned about the Economic Crime and Corporate Transparency Act. The initial proposal—to force even the smallest micro-entities to publish their full Profit & Loss accounts—sent shockwaves through the local business community. For many owner-managed businesses, your P&L isn't just data; it's a window into your personal income and commercial edge.

The update: Following significant pushback, there has been a pragmatic "re-calibration" (or U-turn, depending on who you ask) regarding the immediate public disclosure of these sensitive figures for micro-entities. While the move toward digital-only filing and mandatory ID verification for directors is still very much full-steam ahead for 2026, the immediate threat to your P&L privacy has been deferred. It is a welcome relief, but it serves as a reminder that the transparency net is tightening.

Your End-of-Year Essentials

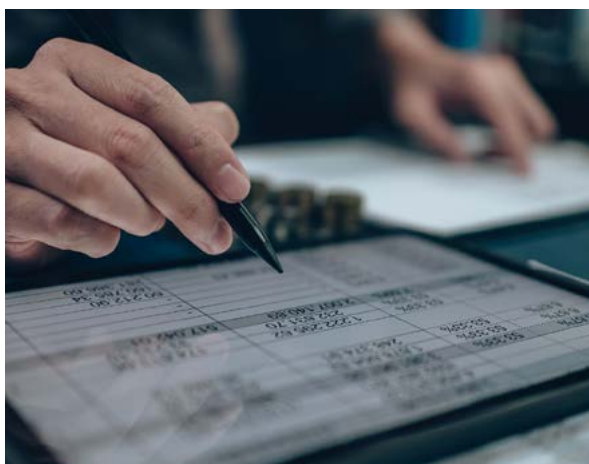
Beyond the big headlines, the "bread and butter" of tax planning remains as vital as ever.

- **Dividend Strategy:** Dividend tax rates are set to rise by 2% for basic and higher-rate taxpayers from 6 April. If your company has sufficient reserves, it may be prudent to accelerate dividend payments into the current tax year to lock in the lower rates.

- **The £60k Pension Push:** Pensions remain one of the most efficient ways to mitigate the 45% additional rate of tax. With the annual allowance at £60,000, don't forget to check if you have "carry forward" relief from the three previous years—it's a case of use it or lose it.
- **ISA & CGT Allowances:** It's easy to overlook, but ensuring you and your partner have maximised your £20,000 ISA allowance and utilised your Capital Gains Tax annual exempt amount is the simplest way to protect your long-term wealth from the "fiscal drag."

Looking Ahead

At Richardson Swift, we often say that the best tax planning isn't done in a hurry on 4th April. It's a conversation that happens over coffee, looking at the next five to ten years of your life and business. Whether you're navigating the new IHT caps or preparing for the mandatory digital reporting of Making Tax Digital (starting for many this April), the goal is the same: clarity, compliance, and peace of mind.



Calvin Healy - Director & Head of Tax at Richardson Swift

"Beyond the big headlines, the 'bread and butter' of tax planning remains as vital as ever."

If you want to find out more about outsourcing your finance function, contact us on **01225 325580** or email: **hello@richardsonswift.co.uk**



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What does the economic future of Swindon look like?

Feature writer Fiona Scott speaks to Cllr Jim Robbins, Head of Swindon Borough Council, about the economic outlook for the town which is looking east...

It has long been the case that Swindon has been a part of Wiltshire that gets overlooked, underestimated and somewhat ignored by the rest of the county. Indeed there are a number of business owners who actively avoid admitting their business is based in the town.



A rather beige reputation as the town of roundabouts, housing estates and general urban sprawl has allowed many to ignore Swindon and swiftly move on.

I first moved to Wiltshire in 1991 and then into Swindon itself in 1997 and the reputation Swindon has does not fit the reality. It has its problems, it has its 'ugly' bits yet it also has so much to celebrate and recognise, so much industrial heritage and so much beauty, and should be a proud monument to the industrial heritage of the county.

Swindon is the economic powerhouse of Wiltshire by some considerable margin. In fact it's one of the powerhouses of the South West and yet the South West region tends to dismiss the town as that 'ugly place along the M4'. Even my old boss in television used to say I lived in the best place in Swindon – near the exit.

This 'reputation vs reality' has also played out in the decision making arena and it's something which has always irked me. Now it seems Swindon decision makers are taking the lead on what the economic future of the town will look like and frankly, it's looking east, not west.

Having the opportunity to sit down and talk to Cllr Jim Robbins, leader of Swindon

Borough Council about this was too good a chance to miss. Instead of just commenting, it was time to ask – why?

The first thing to take into account is personal - Jim is not Swindon born and bred. Like me, other reasons brought him to Swindon and he too had to face the fact that his perception did not match the reality.

"I came to the town in 2006. I met my wife Jacqui when we were studying in Plymouth. We lived there for a while but she wanted to come back to her family and I admit I wasn't that keen at first. Yet when we got here and I got to know this wonderful town, I loved it and began to realise how varied and vibrant it is. It's my home and I'm proud to represent the town."

Devolution & Swindon

Jim is a member of the Labour Party and became leader of the council in 2023 and then, of course in 2024 a Labour Government was elected with a landslide majority. Politics aside it was then that it became clear that devolution would be a serious part of governance under the Labour Party's plans.

This means more so-called 'metro' mayors to cover those areas of the country not currently covered by such an elected

official. These mayors head up a 'combined authority' or a conglomeration of authorities, which will manage a multi-million pound budget for strategic decisions for the relevant area around transport, major housing developments, skills and economic development.

If this happens, this will be a huge change for Swindon and all local businesses need to be aware of its potential impact. In the next year, we will know more detail.

"We looked at data," Jim said, "and using a SWOT analysis it was clearly apparent that Swindon's economic activity lies along the M4 corridor, primarily into the Cotswolds, into South Wales and into London. Looking at this, the 'Wessex' area (that is Wiltshire, Somerset, Dorset, Bournemouth and Poole) was not the right partnership for us. Their needs would be largely rural and they would seek to project that 'rural voice' and there's nothing wrong with that.

"We are an area which faces the same challenges and the same economic opportunities as Oxford and Berkshire, including Reading and we have more existing economic ties with those areas than others. The data proves it. That's why we've looked to form the Thames Valley Mayoral Authority

and an official Expression of Interest has now been submitted."

There is a practical issue here too. Under devolution rules, Swindon Borough Council could only partner with neighbouring areas. If Wiltshire had turned its back on Swindon, the town couldn't partner with Somerset or Bath or Bristol because they are not geographical neighbours. For Jim this was more about taking a proactive approach around Swindon's economic future. This approach has been supported by the local branch of the Federation of Small Businesses.

"We are not building a wall to shut ourselves off from Wiltshire, Bristol, Bath at all. We are happy to collaborate however this economic partnership suggests that by 2040 an investment of around £186 million will come to this 'new' area and we want to be part of that."

"this economic partnership suggests that by 2040 an investment of around £186 million will come to this 'new' area and we want to be part of that"



What could be 'on the cards' for Swindon then?

Jim explained that there are other plans Swindon Borough Council wishes to take forward to deal with more immediate economic issues, some would come under the auspices of a combined authority later and some would not.

These include reinstating Swindon BID to support the town centre and to look at the town centre street by street to make positive changes. The first area being looked at is known as F&B or Fleet Street and Bridge Street.

This involves working with landlords and other interested parties to bring more variety, improve the streetscape with better paving, possible seating, removing unsightly hoardings and ultimately offering more affordable homes and improvements to that particular area – with around 30 planning applications currently active.

Then moving on, there is also a plan to embrace community wealth building – following an example set by Preston in Lancashire. This is known as the Preston Model.

Using that model, it means working together with key organisations (bigger employers, universities etc) to generate and keep wealth local. This often sits alongside a commitment to buy local where possible. This should be music to the ears of local SMEs who may have struggled previously to even be visible to any local authority or bigger company and even be able to bid for contracts.

"As a council, we have a plan to ensure 50 per cent of monies available will go to working with local smaller businesses. At the moment we're at 48 per cent and we have now moved that goal to 60 per cent. We wish to strengthen local ties."

Although it's not yet confirmed if the new Mayoral Strategic Authority (MSA) will become a reality, this could mean some major projects in or around Swindon which will affect the town. Those include possibly ensuring the A420 is a dual carriageway along more of its route and creating more rail links including a possible Western Rail Link into Heathrow directly.

There will also be a huge focus on skills and establishing



Swindon Culture Collective and Swindon Borough Council at the UK City of Culture 2029 bid launch.

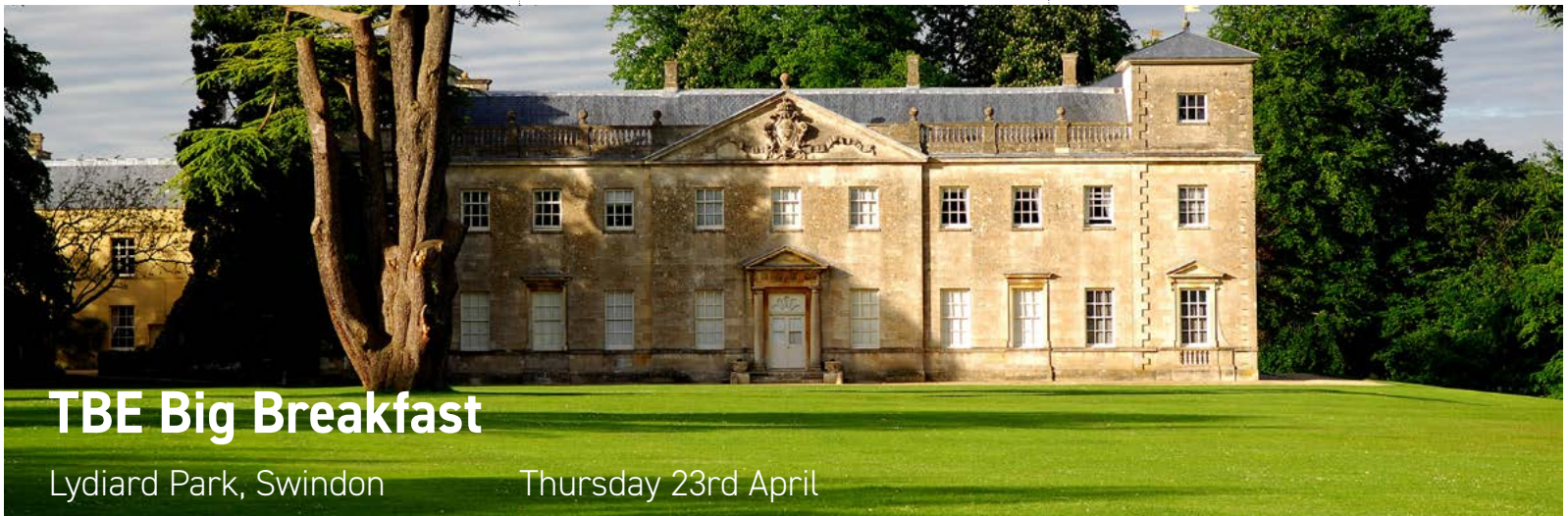
Swindon as a hub for students training in skills which are desperately needed and also celebrating and promoting educational establishments in the town. This would, it's hoped, bring students here and then keep them here. This would include strengthening an existing partnership with Oxford Brookes University and the Wilkes Academy of performing arts.

"There will also be a huge focus on skills and establishing Swindon as a hub for students training in skills which are desperately needed"

It appears that change is afoot for Swindon and its future and that change could be just months away.

If this Expression of Interest for the MSA is accepted by the Government, it will take roughly two years to get to a position where there will be an election for a 'metro' mayor to cover this new 'patch'.

Alongside this plan, Swindon Borough Council and Swindon Culture Collective announced in late January that they would be submitting an expression of interest in nominating Swindon to be considered as the UK's next City of Culture. Swindon Culture Collective CIC was officially formed in 2025 after the Arts Council awarded the town £600,000 to invest in the town's arts and culture scene. This has been backed by other parties to take the total investment to £1.3 million in the coming months. The movement to bring together all aspects of arts and culture in the town began years before that through a group of committed volunteers, both individuals, businesses and organisations.



TBE Big Breakfast

Lydiard Park, Swindon

Thursday 23rd April

The Business Exchange is hosting a special Big Breakfast at Lydiard Park, Swindon on Thursday 22nd April exploring Swindon's Economic Future.

Speakers include local entrepreneurs James Phipps and Arthur Dallimer.

To book tickets visit:

tbeswindonandwilts.co.uk/events

Swindon has always had the ability to re-invent itself, from the railways to the Designer Outlet to now leading in drone development, and has consistently, for many decades, given opportunities for jobs and career growth – which is why so many people come from outside Swindon to live or work here.

As a serial investor in Swindon and regional businesses, what Swindon lacks in not having a university it gains by having a lower cost base than others in the region, and it has fantastic transport links and constant growth in housing supply which attracts a lot of the graduates back anyway. It just makes great business sense to do business in Swindon.



Pledge Today. Grow Tomorrow: Support the next generation through apprenticeships

Wiltshire College & University Centre has launched its most ambitious apprenticeship campaign to date and is calling on local employers to open their doors to apprentices in 2026.



The 150 in 100 campaign launched on 10th February during National Apprenticeship Week. The aim is to secure 150 apprenticeship pledges from new and existing employer partners over a 100-day period, whilst raising awareness of the College's apprenticeship provision and supporting employers to grow their workforce and nurture future talent.

Wiltshire College & University Centre is a leading provider of apprenticeships, partnering with over 1000 employers to train over 2000 apprentices across 60 different apprenticeships. It offers diverse pathways in sectors including agriculture, business, construction, IT, healthcare and engineering.

Dave West, Executive Director of Growth and Engagement at Wiltshire College & University Centre, said, "Apprenticeships are central to how we support businesses to grow and nurture talent, while creating real career opportunities for people across Wiltshire. The 150 in 100 campaign is about starting conversations with employers and showing how apprenticeships can help them develop the skills they need now and in the future."

A spokesperson for DSTL, one of the College's

apprenticeship employer partners, said, "The collaborative approach to apprenticeships between DSTL and Wiltshire College & University Centre has been central to supporting our apprentices. It has been a pleasure to explore new ways of working together over the past year, alongside the exceptional ongoing support we receive, and we look forward to continuing this partnership."

Innovation drives the College's approach. The Wiltshire Business School is its centre for developing future business leaders, the Green Skills Technology Centre provides a hub for renewable energy studies, and the Health Care Zone features a complete working ambulance and hospital ward. These facilities enhance the learning experience for apprentices in key growth sectors within the region.

An apprenticeship provides the opportunity to work alongside industry professionals, gaining hands on experience and earning money while simultaneously gaining nationally recognised qualifications. Apprenticeships apply to almost any job role and can be studied from Level 2 all the way to degree level.

Wiltshire College & University Centre provides full support

to employers throughout the placement process – helping them find the right student for their organisation and keeping admin to a minimum.

Offering an apprenticeship is more than a short-term contribution – it is an investment in an employer's future workforce and a powerful way to tackle skills gaps in their sector. It also helps keep young talent rooted in the region, strengthening Wiltshire's economy for the long term.

To get involved or for more information on the campaign visit: wiltshire.ac.uk/employers/150in100/



WARNING! SORT IT NOW OR PAY FOR IT LATER!

By Ashlea Fisher, Founder and MD of iRecruit4

If your business uses agency, temporary or contract workers, April is not just another month, it could be a cliff edge to disaster.

Two major employment law changes are landing at the same time, and together they quietly shift cost, risk and liability straight onto you. Most relevant businesses who come to us for the first time have no idea how exposed they are – we will ensure they are soon wise to this danger.

1. Statutory Sick Pay is changing

From April, Statutory Sick Pay becomes payable from day one of sickness. The Lower Earnings Limit is removed, bringing more temporary and agency workers into scope. This means that more absences will trigger SSP and agency charge rates are likely to rise as a result. If your workforce model relies on flexibility, this flexibility will be more expensive.

2. Joint & Several Liability has moved the risk to you

HMRC can now pursue unpaid tax or National Insurance anywhere in your labour supply chain. That includes you. This is relevant even if you did not select the payroll provider, the umbrella company was 'recommended' or the provider disappears.

If HMRC cannot recover the debt from the payroll company, they will come to the agency and if they cannot recover it there, they will come to you.

The hard truth is:

Who is actually paying your workers and is that payroll model compliant? Some workers are being paid through non-compliant models without you knowing because you've never asked. Now that's far too risky as ignorance is not a defence. This 'loophole' is common even in our community and we pride ourselves on being compliant and we are transparent about that.

Red flags to watch for include:

- Promises of unusually high take home pay
- Pay split into loans, advances or multiple elements
- Payslips that are unclear or over engineered
- Payroll providers changing regularly
- No transparency on who the actual employer is
- Suspiciously low agency charge rates

If any scheme is ruled to be non-compliant, the liability might land on your desk. Smart employers should not be waiting for HMRC to make first contact. They are asking the right questions and requesting proof such as HMRC confirmations; payroll audit reports and formal due diligence records. They are also tightening contracts and choosing partners based on compliance, not the cheapest day rate.

ADVERTISING FEATURE



The bottom line

These legal changes send a clear message – if you benefit from flexible labour, you are accountable for how that labour is paid. Understanding your supply chain is no longer optional and ignoring that could cost your business thousands.

Do get in touch if any of this is worrying you:

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GEL Studios becomes employee-owned company

Swindon creative agency GEL Studios has announced a significant milestone in its five-year growth journey by becoming employee-owned through a new Enterprise Management Incentive (EMI) scheme with Vestd.

Under this structure, 30% of the business has been allocated to current and future team members, formally recognising their contribution and strengthening the agency's commitment to shared success.

This move reflects the creative agency's long-term goals of remaining competitive in attracting and retaining top creative talent, building a stronger, more engaged workforce and fostering a culture where people feel invested in the success of the business. By becoming employee-owned, GEL Studios will reward those who help grow the agency over the next five years.

Employee-owned companies are known to drive productivity, improve

employee retention and increase the long-term value and sustainability of businesses. By combining employee ownership with responsible growth, the agency aims to build a sustainable future for both its people and its clients.

The move supports GEL Studios' five-year strategy which will strengthen its local presence and enhance client services, initiated with the appointment of new directors Carly Smith and James Phipps in 2025.

Operating from its dedicated studio in South Marston, Swindon, the B-Corp Certified agency is a trusted long-term partner to its clients. Its in-house team combines strategy with creative execution, elevating brands, delivering

high-quality graphic design, building cutting-edge websites, and delivering marketing strategies that achieve measurable results.

Graeme Leighfield, Founder of GEL Studios, said, "I have always been clear that GEL Studios is, and will remain, a collective team effort. Exploring an employee ownership scheme felt like a natural next step in formally recognising the people who contribute to our success.

"This is a key moment for the business, and I am extremely proud to be able to share ownership with those who have supported our journey as well as those who will help shape its future."



"This is a key moment for the business, and I am extremely proud"

Victoria Parker celebrates her first year as Chief Operating Officer at WestSpring IT

Technology company WestSpring IT is celebrating the first anniversary of Victoria Parker joining the business, reflecting on a year that has combined operational change, team development and continued investment in systems to support rapid growth.

Victoria joined WestSpring as Chief Operating Officer following a 20-year career in specialist technology recruitment, where she rose to operations director level. Headhunted to support WestSpring through a period of expansion, she moved into a new industry with a clear operational focus on building on the company's already strong foundations.

"My priorities when I joined were people, systems and process, and I'm proud of the positive steps we've taken this year," said Victoria.

"It has been a steep learning curve moving into a new industry, but a hugely rewarding one. The team have been incredibly open, welcoming and receptive to change, and it's been brilliant to see people develop, step up into leadership roles and thrive."

Over the past year, WestSpring has seen significant internal progression, with team members stepping into senior management roles for the first time and embracing new responsibilities. The business has also made strategic new hires and has invested heavily in technology, including the rollout of a new core system for managing client

tickets and projects, upgrades to existing platforms and the introduction of new CRM and client strategy software.

Victoria has also introduced formal client satisfaction reporting, recording a client happiness score of 96 per cent. The investment in technology and structure has been designed to support analysts and improve efficiency while maintaining a strong client-first approach.

"All of my team have been extremely welcoming, but also very open to change which has been brilliant to see. Without fail everyone has answered my questions, listened and responded to new ideas or different ways of working," she added.

Emma Carter, WestSpring CEO said, "This has been a year of change for us all and having Victoria alongside me on this journey has been rewarding. We have understood each other's ideas and plans and worked together with our team to move forward even more positively."

Looking ahead, Victoria will continue to work with the team on further operational improvements, technology investment and ISO accreditation.



ADVERTISING FEATURE

For more information about WestSpring IT visit:
westspring-it.co.uk



Ace 2026 with standout photography

Professional photography is one of the simplest and most effective ways for businesses to build trust, show personality and make a strong first impression. To explore why real imagery matters more than ever, we spoke to Wiltshire-based corporate and commercial photographer Barbara Leatham, who works with organisations across the South West.



Barbara also offers business photography training through The Business Lens for those who want to build confidence and develop their own visual skills.

Why do real images matter more than stock photos?

Stock images have a place, but they're rarely on brand and are available to other businesses, including competitors. Your own images can be branded and feature your people and environment, helping clients feel like they already know you. I often hear people say they feel they "know" someone because they've seen them regularly in TBE, and this is exactly the kind of connection real images create. Most importantly, your images won't be suitable for anyone else to use. Your people, culture and environment build trust because they're authentic.

What do real photos say about a business?

Genuine, honest and trustworthy. Images should communicate this and more. They're essential for any business wanting to grow and connect with the right clients. Being relatable and showing who you are supports strong relationships. Your photos should have a narrative that aligns with your core values.

How do images help show personality?

Images can encapsulate a whole narrative in a single glance. They break the bias of preconceptions and show the humanity behind a business. I've worked with many accounting firms, and while the stereotype may be dry or dull, the reality is fun, engaging and passionate companies, all different and catering to different sectors. Their images needed to communicate this to attract their ideal audience. A business can't afford to send the wrong message.

Can real images help win more business?

Yes. Good imagery boosts engagement, web enquiries and social interaction, and

makes your brand more memorable. When potential clients see real people doing real work, it builds confidence and trust, helping them picture working with you and speeding up buying decisions.

Do professional images make a business look more credible?

If a website looks lacklustre, it makes me wonder if they'll treat my business the same. First impressions are easy to ruin by not investing in good presentation. Selfies and holiday photos don't cut it. I genuinely cry when I see an "about us" page where one image is professional and the next is taken in poor lighting with something random in the background. You don't get to make that first impression again.

What makes real images a differentiator?

As Freddie Mercury and Queen said, "There can be only one." You are your business. Even when you employ people, you look at how they fit your core values. No one does what you do in the way that you do it. Your images should share parts of your story and help people get to know you.

What types of images should every business have?

Think Who, What, Where, When, Why and How:

- Who you are, your team and your customers.
- What you do and the customer journey.
- Where you're located or work.
- When you operate.
- Why you do what you do.
- How you work — case studies and behind-the-scenes images show the humanity in a business.

Is this only important for big businesses?

Every business should invest in professional images. You get one chance at a first impression, and images stay with people long after words. If you can't do it yourself, bring someone in who can. People buy from people, and images showcase your best — don't dilute that with poor quality photography.

To find out more about Barbara's photography services email: barbara@barbaraleatham.co.uk and visit her websites.

**Corporate & commercial photography: barbaraleatham.co.uk
Business photography training: the-business-lens.co.uk**





Will AI eat my business?

By Richard Jaggs *Founder & Director, Resolution Design*

With almost any question these days, simply ask ChatGPT, Google Gemini or another large language model AI system, and you'll receive an impressive, comprehensive answer. But you do need to be careful what you ask.



Take Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy, a race of super-intelligent beings built a computer to answer the question "What is the meaning of life, the universe, and everything?" After 7.5 million years, it came back with the answer 42 and the suggestion to ask a better question. So be warned.

For fun, I thought I'd ask Google something equally vague... "Will AI eat my business?" Google AI's headline response was: "AI is unlikely to 'eat' your business overnight, but it will significantly transform, devalue, or replace business models that rely on slow, manual, or purely transactional processes."

Hmm, makes perfect sense. We've been keeping a close eye on AI for a while and recently conducted an audit to assess the extent of our AI usage at Resolution. We discovered that AI was enabling us to do the work of 1.5 to 2 people. In a team of 7, that means that AI is

giving us 25% more productivity. That was more than we expected, with every single person in the team using AI... ChatGPT, Copilot, Gemini, and a range of embedded AI tools across various software applications.

So we're an AI-enabled business; your business probably is too. We now have an AI policy to ensure proper governance of our AI use, including 'human' oversight (that's weird to say, right?) and consideration of intellectual property issues (remember the AI agents that use the internet are giant plagiarism engines). A big task? Not really, we asked ChatGPT and 10 minutes later, we had a policy that was a great fit. AI for an AI policy, perfect.

AI is transforming the business landscape, and those who adapt and use technology solutions where appropriate will gain a great advantage over those who don't. Put another way, AI may not take your job, but someone who

knows how to leverage AI more effectively than you might. Hmm, yes.

At Resolution, we fully recognise the importance of technological change. Our mission is to help businesses gain an advantage by combining great creative and clever technology to produce websites that do more, web applications that transform business efficiency and smart digital marketing. As an AI-enabled business, we will use it where appropriate to deliver impressive productivity and results for our clients, whilst ensuring strong governance and control.

Btw, no AI was used in the creation of this article!

To find out more about Resolution Design visit: resolutiondesign.co.uk

"AI may not take your job, but someone who knows how to leverage AI more effectively than you might"

PEOPLE BUY FROM PEOPLE: Why authenticity matters more than performance in video

Video is now one of the most powerful communication tools available to businesses. It builds familiarity quickly and, when used well, establishes trust faster than almost anything else. Yet many business videos can still feel uncomfortable to watch. Overly polished, overly scripted and strangely distant.



The issue is rarely a lack of knowledge or confidence. Most professionals know their subject inside out. What they struggle with is not what to say, but how video makes them feel when the camera is pointed at them.

The moment filming starts, posture stiffens, and language becomes guarded. Scripts replace natural speech. People perform rather than communicate. The result is accurate but emotionally flat. A careful version of the person, rather than the person themselves.

Trust does not work like this in real life. We connect through tone of voice, pauses, expression and the subtle imperfections that signal honesty. We trust people who feel real. This is why the phrase "people buy from people" remains so relevant, no matter what the industry is. Clients want to know who they are dealing with and whether that relationship will feel credible and comfortable.

At Visual PR Productions, the focus is on removing performance pressure and replacing it with conversation. The company creates authentic, conversational video content that allows people to speak naturally, guided by structure rather than scripts. This can take the form of one-off videos such as promotional films, testimonials, PR

announcements and profile pieces, or ongoing monthly content designed for consistency and long-term visibility. Monthly packages can also include automated repurposing and distribution, helping businesses maximise reach without increasing effort.

This approach was shaped by the experience of Visual PR's founder, Chris Dawes. Through years of interviewing people as a sports commentator, media presenter and event MC, he observed that the most engaging moments came from relaxed conversation, not rehearsed answers. People shared more insight, more passion and more personality when they were simply talking, not performing. The idea was simple. Bring that same conversational approach into business video and let people's knowledge and experience come to life naturally.

An authentic video still requires structure. Clear talking bullet points, gentle prompts, and thoughtful editing shape the story. But the pressure to be perfect is removed. People speak more clearly, confidence appears naturally, and filming becomes something to enjoy rather than endure. For the viewer, the result is content that feels human, believable and trustworthy.

People do not buy from cameras or scripts. They buy from people. Video works best when it remembers that.

For more information, visit: visual-pr.co.uk

To arrange a discovery call or studio tour, call: 01793 209806 or email: enquiries@visual-pr.co.uk

To watch Visual PR's productions, go to: youtube.com/@visualpruk/playlists



SWINDON AND WILTSHIRE'S MOST INSPIRING WOMEN - AS VOTED BY YOU

By Anita Jaynes Founder, The Business Exchange

We're delighted to announce Swindon & Wiltshire's Most Inspiring Women 2026 – as voted by you. We're thrilled to once again recognise the women in our community who are doing good things, driving change, leading by example and supporting those in need.

Every weekday throughout March, all the women listed below will be profiled and championed on tbeswindonandwilts.co.uk and via LinkedIn.

To mark five years of TBE's Most Inspiring Women, we're also hosting a special event on Thursday 12th March at Victoria Art Gallery in Bath. All women recognised over the last five years, including this year's lists across Swindon & Wiltshire and Bath & Somerset will be presented with commemorative pins.

Here are the thoughts of just a few of the women on being recognised this year:

How does it feel to be recognised as one of Swindon & Wiltshire's Most Inspiring Women?

"I am overwhelmed by this recognition. I am quite happily doing what I love. I meet great people through my work and there is not a day that I do not feel inspired by somebody or something. To know that I have inspired just one person through my work and beliefs is a wonderful thought."

Jane Boulton, Springboard Chippenham

"Being named among inspiring women across the region reinforces that the work we're doing matters, and it encourages me to keep pushing for fairness, inclusion, and youth-led change – especially for the girls in our communities."

Marsha Mars, Mighty Girls

"To think that someone would be inspired by me is an overwhelming feeling of impostor syndrome. I'm just here really and truly winging life one business at a time. As long as people leave their class or appointment feeling positive, to me I have then done a good job."

Paige Cook, Sweet P and Patti's Pilates

"This recognition isn't just about personal achievement; it reflects the trust clients have placed in me and my team, the relationships we've built, and the real value we deliver to local businesses. I hope it also shows other women that with resilience, authenticity and belief, it's possible to build something meaningful and successful."

Ashlea Fisher, iRecruit4



Sue Webber,
Wiltshire Community
Foundation



For more info:
www.wscf.org.uk



Samtosha Chi,
Zen Den



For more info:
www.zenden-uk.com



Tamsin Willis-Stovold,
Natural Steps Coaching



For more info:
www.naturalstepscoaching.co.uk



Rachael Matwiejczyk Booth,
Total Guide to Ltd



For more info:
www.totalswindon.com



Rachel Spratling,
Chalkhill Blue



For more info:
www.chalkhillblue.org



Raye Leonard,
Vintage Victory Rollers



For more info:
www.vintagevictoryrollers.co.uk



Marsha Mars,
Mighty Girls



For more info:
www.mightygirls.co.uk



Paige Cook,
Sweet P and Patti's Pilates



For more info:
www.sweetpbeautysalon.com



Ife Adeagbo,
Legacy Brands Partner



For more info:
www.linkedin.com/in/ifeadeagbo/



Becky Richens, Mental Health Nurse Consultant

For more info:
www.linkedin.com/in/becky-richens/



Lisa Jackson, The Kelly Foundation

For more info:
www.4kelly.org



Jane Boulton, Springboard Chippenham

For more info:
www.springboardchippenham.co.uk



Kellie Chandler, Wiltshire & Bath Air Ambulance

For more info:
www.wiltshirebathairambulance.org.uk



Georgina Riches, Riches Interiors

For more info:
www.richesinteriors.com



Sophia Thompson, Bassett Breasties Group

For more info:
www.facebook.com/BassettBreasties/



Ashlea Fisher, iRecruit4

For more info:
www.irecruit4.co.uk



Rachel Bray, Let's Create Art Club

For more info:
www.letscreateartclub.co.uk



Jo Smyth, Wordworker

For more info:
www.wordworker.co.uk



Laura Chamberlain & Suz McDonald, Wellbeing and Wonder Tutoring

For more info:
www.wellbeingandwondertutoring.co.uk



Lydia Moore & Dr Charity Chenga

For more info:
www.thewellbeinghub.org

This feature is sponsored by Goughs Solicitors

We're absolutely thrilled to be supporting TBE's Most Inspiring Women 2026. At Goughs, we believe in championing ambition, celebrating achievement and creating opportunities for women to connect, lead and thrive.

*Swindon & Wiltshire's Most Inspiring Women
in partnership with...*



TBE AWARDS

Celebrating business excellence

Thrings returns as headline sponsor for TBE Awards 2026

THRINGS

SOLICITORS

TBE Awards 2026 open for entries on Monday 13th April



The Business Exchange is delighted to announce that Thrings is returning as headline sponsor for TBE Awards 2026, marking its third year supporting the celebration of innovation, entrepreneurship and leadership across Swindon & Wiltshire and Bath & Somerset.

Ramona Derbyshire, Head of Business Growth at Thrings, said, "Our region is home to a bold, ambitious and innovative business community and we are thrilled to be able to continue shining a spotlight on their success as headline sponsor for TBE Awards.

"To have the chance to stand alongside so many inspiring organisations and founders who are driving growth, shaping the future of the local economy and putting the South West on the map is an exciting prospect and we are very much looking forward to the 2026 Awards and celebrating another year of outstanding achievement."

With 14 categories, there are opportunities for businesses and not-for-profits of all sizes to showcase their achievements, share their stories and be recognised as part of the South West's thriving business scene.

Past winners include Joint Operations, NSBRC, Salocin Group, Alabaré, Bath Racecourse, Digital Wonderlab, Web Usability, Gel Studios, KR HR & Training Consultancy, Theatre Royal Bath, Southby & Co Financial Planning, The Pursuit Agency, Clearly PR, Interaction and Nine Feet Tall.

TBE AWARDS CATEGORIES

- Best User Experience
- Using Tech to Transform Business
- Charity/Not-For-Profit of the Year
- Going for Growth Award
- Rising Star Award
- Positive Business Award
- Best Start-up 2026
- Best Creative Campaign
- Sustainable Business of the Year
- Going the Extra Mile Award
- Leader of the Year
- Innovation Award
- The Dream Team Award
- Flying the Flag for the South West

KEY DATES FOR 2026

Awards open for entry: Monday 13th April

Entries close: Friday 25th September

Judging begins: 30th September

Finalists announced: 8th October

Awards night: 5th November

Anita Jaynes, Founder of The Business Exchange and TBE Awards, said, "I can't wait to build on the success of the last two years of the TBE Awards. Last year we received over 130 entries representing businesses of all sizes, from start-ups to SMEs and large corporations, and the competition truly reflected the breadth of our region, with entries from across Bath & Somerset and Swindon & Wiltshire.

"The idea behind these awards was simple: to connect the areas we cover, shine a light on the incredible work happening locally, and help more businesses and not-for-profits collaborate and grow.

"Awards Night itself is a true celebration of every finalist. We share the stories behind our finalists' work. It's a genuine showcase of the amazing work happening on our doorstep, and I want everyone who attends to leave inspired, ready to pass those stories on, and continue flying the flag for our region."

This year's awards ceremony will take place at Komedia in Bath. The evening will begin with a VIP Drinks Reception hosted by N3 Display Graphics, followed by an awards programme packed with entertainment and celebration.

If you want to align your organisation with the best businesses in the region, get in touch to find out more about sponsorship packages.

Email: press@tbesw.co.uk Call: 01793 847966

TBE Awards - Celebrating our vibrant business community across Bath & Somerset and Swindon & Wiltshire

Enter online at: tbeawards.co.uk

Inside Leadership Dialogues 2026 with Professor Steve Wyatt

Leadership Dialogues returns to Bath on Wednesday 1st July 2026, bringing together over 300 leaders, educators and community members for a full day of purpose driven insight and practical learning. Built on the principle of 'Leadership as a Force for Good', the event explores how intentional leadership can drive meaningful change within organisations, communities and wider society.

Hosted by Professor Steve Wyatt, the 2026 programme features speakers from the worlds of business, social innovation, design, consultancy and adventure. Attendees can expect keynote talks, personal stories and collaborative breakout sessions designed to help leaders navigate uncertainty, spark innovation and build more resilient, future focused organisations.

Ahead of this year's event, we spoke with Steve about how Leadership Dialogues began, what's new for 2026 and what delegates can expect on the day.



How did the idea for Leadership Dialogues first come about?

The idea goes back to my time living in Singapore. I was struck by the disconnect between the negativity often portrayed in the media and the reality I saw — people tackling real issues and making meaningful progress. Their stories rarely cut through.

When I moved to the UK just before COVID, that gap felt even wider. Despite the challenges, I kept meeting people doing purposeful work, often quietly. Leadership Dialogues was created to highlight those stories, build a community around them and champion the belief that leadership — wherever you sit — can be a force for good. The event is about inspiring people, helping them inspire others and creating a supportive community.

Who is the event aimed at?

We're deliberately inclusive. Leadership isn't defined by job titles. You can lead a business, a classroom, a charity, a community — or simply yourself. What matters is intent.

Because of that, we attract a mix: corporate leaders, educators, public sector professionals, social innovators, entrepreneurs, creatives, students and people doing extraordinary things locally. If you want to make a positive difference, you're welcome.

Who are you hoping to attract to the 2026 event?

I expect a similar pattern to previous years: around half from the Bath-Bristol region, a quarter from the Thames Valley corridor and the rest travelling from across the UK and overseas. We're planning for 400-500 people.

What I'd really like this year is for more people to stay on after the programme finishes — to connect rather than rush away. Those informal conversations are often where the sparks happen.

What are you personally most looking forward to this year?

This year feels special. By November 2025, we had a full line up of speakers and facilitators — a humbling sign that the event is resonating.

I'm particularly looking forward to my fireside chat with Charles Mindenhall, co founder of Blenheim Chalcot and the driving force behind Youth Zone and Baby Zone. Everything he does is rooted in purpose.

We also have two women joining us who each aim to positively impact one million people through their work. Their stories will be incredibly powerful.

But honestly, the magic comes from the participants — the energy in the breakout groups, the conversations in the auditorium and the buzz afterwards on social media. That's what I value most.

What do you most want delegates to take away from the day — personally and organisationally?

Firstly, I want them to be inspired. Every speaker shares personal testimony — no corporate slides, no pitches. We only put people on stage who speak authentically about the impact they're making.

Secondly, connection. We create opportunities for delegates to meet, talk and reflect — in breakouts, in the auditorium or over coffee. Those conversations are where ideas take root.

And finally, I want people to return to their organisations and communities energised to inspire others. Leadership is contagious. Bring that spark into your environment and cultures shift.

Over the last two years, have any notable collaborations or initiatives emerged as a result of Leadership Dialogues?

Yes — far more than I expected. Around 80% of our first year speakers have returned, and many now collaborate with one another. Delegates also reach out to speakers

afterwards to get involved in their initiatives.

For example, lots of people have connected with the Bridge Institute after hearing from Mackenzie, who leads it. I'm often asked to link delegates with speakers, which is great to see.

What's encouraging is that much of this happens organically. I only see a fraction of the collaborations taking shape — and that's exactly how it should be.

How has Leadership Dialogues grown and evolved since its inception?

The biggest evolution has been the strengthening of the community. What began as a one day event is becoming a year round network. Returning speakers, repeat delegates and a shared sense of purpose have created real momentum.

The format has expanded too, with more breakout groups, more interactivity and a wider range of voices.

How do you hope Leadership Dialogues will continue to develop in the years ahead?

There are three main areas.

First, scale. The Forum holds over 1,000 people, and we're only halfway there. I'd love

to see more people return each year and bring others with them.

Second, deeper engagement across the year. We're exploring ways to strengthen the community between events — packaging content, creating discussion spaces and supporting collaboration.

And third, carefully considered expansion. There's potential for Leadership Dialogues in other locations, but our speakers aren't paid professionals — they're leaders sharing genuine stories. Any new location would need to protect that authenticity.

Ultimately, my aim is simple: to bring powerful stories to Bath, grow a supportive community and create ripples of positive impact that reach far beyond the day itself.

Tickets, group bookings and sponsorship opportunities are available at

leadershipdialogues.co.uk.

TBE readers receive 10% off admission with code: TBE NETWORK10.



Tips for effective digital marketing in the age of AI

By Rob Curtis Founder of the award-winning The Pursuit Agency

The rapid development of various AI tools is an obsession in business which is creating both excitement – and fear. This is understandable. This is transformational technology which is, and will, bring about change across all sectors.

Yet, as we point out to our clients, AI is a tool to be used, the direction of any company is a human decision.

Often when a business embraces digital technology, a scattergun approach is taken and a little of 'this' and a little of 'that' is done and nothing sticks – or it fails to deliver any real outcomes. This is usually for two reasons:

- A lack of direction.
- Unrealistic expectations.

As with all marketing practices, investment is required, some things will work and some things will not, some tactics will work for a time and then new tactics will need to be used. It's a journey which doesn't end.

We work with organisations which understand this and we all flex and adapt to the economics of business where the only true constant is 'change'.

Content marketing

With content marketing aka 'story telling' in particular, the key thing is to focus on your goals and ensure your team understand those goals. These will often be quite broad such as:

- Increasing revenue by 20 per cent in the next 12 months.
- Increasing market share.
- Raising brand awareness – necessary yet a little harder to measure.
- Improving customer retention.

Having these goals helps to drive activity in the right direction, as each goal will require different content with different stories and different messaging or different tactics. Using AI when you have defined your goals can be hugely powerful yet if you have no direction, AI might not be any help at all.

E-commerce:

We often work with e-commerce businesses where online investment is required and not questioned. It's an absolute must for business consolidation let alone growth.

For example, if your company sells winter boots and a customer has bought those boots, AI will not only show them more boots, it will predict related purchases that the customer doesn't yet know they want. A customer buying winter boots, might also consider a scarf or a pair of gloves, or a new winter

coat and we will ensure, using AI, that the customer will see your other winter products. This can lead to further purchases.

This creates an entire customer journey in real time at the point a customer is intending to make a single purchase. For a customer that can feel convenient and some will make that extra purchase, others may not – and that's okay.

Again this technology can do the same via an email newsletter – offering something which relates to not only a direct purchase but the fact that other products might be of interest. AI will infer your customer is not just thinking 'boots' but also thinking 'winter', 'cold', 'cosy', 'warm' or 'comfort'.

This world can be difficult to navigate and it's easy to go down a rabbit hole or get lost in detail. That's where we come in with a strategy, a plan, we can implement the plan, measure and evolve with our clients over time. If any of this resonates, please get in touch.

Visit: thepursuitagency.com Call: 01793 292085

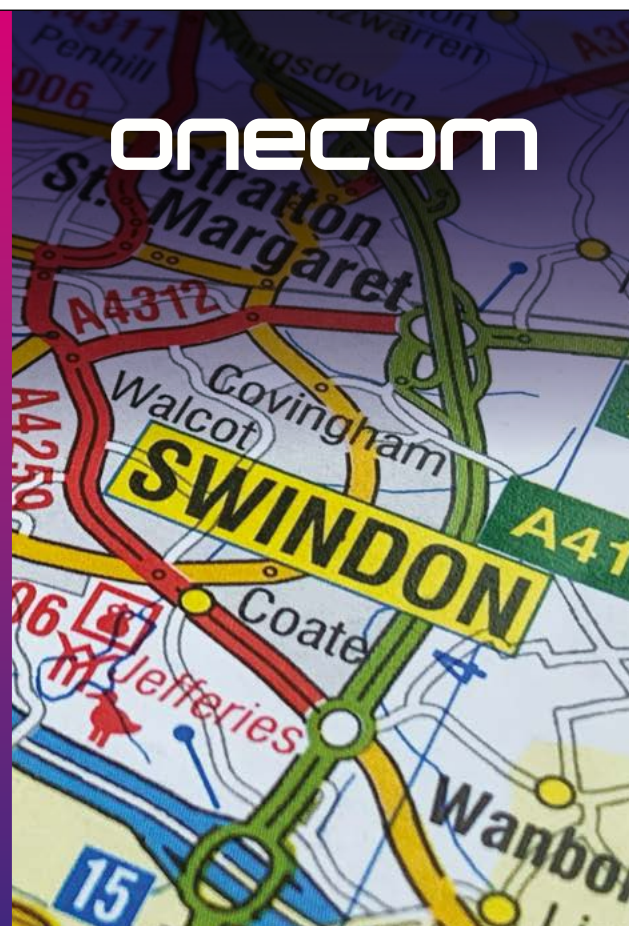


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We're Onecom, the **UK's largest independent business telecoms and IT provider**, with a dedicated local presence right here in the South West.

From proactive IT support and security to cloud migrations and unified communications, our fully managed IT services keep your business secure and productive. Our Swindon-based team are here to help.

Call us on **01793 438 888** or visit **onecom.co.uk** to book your free IT consultation



Spring clean your credit control and boost your cash flow

By **Nicki Kinton** *Confident Cashflow*

As we head into spring, and for many, towards financial year-end, now is the perfect time to give your credit control processes, client data, aged debt and Ts & Cs a bit of a spring clean.

Your business isn't the same as it was twelve months ago. New clients, new services, new opportunities. Your credit control needs to reflect that. Plus, if you're approaching financial year-end, now's the time to deal with aged debt before you close the books.

Start with your overdue invoices. Look at what's been outstanding for months. Some are worth one final push, some need escalating to formal debt recovery, and some you're never getting paid so write them off. Make the decision and act on it.

Check your Terms & Conditions. Do they still match how you work? If you've changed your payment terms, added new services, or started working differently, your Ts & Cs need updating. Outdated terms won't protect you when you need them.

Look at your invoicing process. Do invoices sit in draft for days before getting sent? Are you waiting for PO numbers, timesheets, or details of additional works before you can complete them? Find where the hold-ups are and fix them.

Review your customer data. Contact details change, people

move roles, payment processes get updated. Make sure you've got current information for who processes invoices and where they should be sent. Emailing invoices to someone who left six months ago may explain why you're not getting paid.

Are you making the most of the tools you already have?

Your accounting software probably has features you're not using. Look at what else is out there too - payment software like GoCardless or Stripe to help you get paid quicker, or forecasting tools to help you spot cash gaps before they happen.

Sometimes you need that outside perspective to spot what's not working. This is where our Focus Sessions and Ts & Cs reviews come in. We work with clients to review their credit control processes, update their Terms & Conditions, and help them decide what needs fixing. For businesses that want the chasing handled consistently, our outsourced credit control service keeps cash flowing and frees up time in the business.

Get your credit control systems working properly now and getting paid becomes easier for the rest of the year.



Nicki Kinton is the founder of Confident Cashflow, providing credit control and credit management support to small businesses across the UK.

To find out more about Confident Cashflow and its services, email: nicki@confidentcashflow.com or call: 07900 834802

Visit: confidentcashflow.com



Adapting when the unexpected happens: Why contingency planning really matters

By **Paul Holmes** *Managing Director, PCH Business Consultants*

Over the past few months, I've seen an unusual number of unexpected situations affect businesses I work with, friends and people in my wider network.



Accidents, serious personal crises, and business scenarios so unlikely, that no amount of traditional risk management would have identified them in advance.

In my work, I often help growing businesses introduce risk management frameworks, risk registers and continuity plans. Usually, this happens at the point where a business is becoming more structured and less reliant on a single individual.

The initial reaction is often sceptical: "You can't predict everything, so what's the point?"

And they're right, you can't predict everything. But that's not what this exercise is for.

The purpose of risk planning is to make sure the obvious and high-impact risks are at least considered.

What happens if a major customer goes out of business?

If cash flow tightens unexpectedly?

If a key supplier fails?

Or, perhaps most overlooked of all, what if a key person simply doesn't turn up on Monday morning? They resign, have an accident, win the lottery, or even worse. Nobody thinks it will happen to them... until it does.

The same question applies to business owners themselves. If you were suddenly unable to work, even temporarily, what would happen to the business?

You may not be able to predict the event yet you can absolutely plan for the impact. That's where contingency planning earns its keep.

Ironically, I've learned this lesson personally. Over Christmas, a sudden and

devastating accident involving the mother of my boys turned our worlds upside down.

Overnight, I became a full-time dad while still trying to run multiple businesses and support clients. Six weeks on, I'm not out of the woods yet.

I had planned contingencies for the basics: a diverse client base, trusted associates to cover skills gaps, teams and processes that could absorb pressure.

What I hadn't planned for was the impact on me. Losing around 50% of my available working time forced rapid change and pushed my capacity to its limits.

Slowly, a new plan is emerging. It's been exhausting, but support has been there and the ability to adapt income and focus over the next six to 12 months, will allow me to be present where it matters most.

No matter the size of your business,

things will go wrong at some point. When they do, will you have done enough to survive?

Make time now to plan for what could happen. It may make all the difference when the unexpected arrives.

If you'd like support walking through a practical risk and contingency planning process, feel free to get in touch.

And to everyone I know personally or professionally — dealing with something difficult right now: you have my genuine sympathy.

To get in touch email: paul@pch-consultants.co.uk

or call: 07715 008 521

Visit: pch-consultants.co.uk

Exclusive tour and complimentary Afternoon Tea for two

Choosing the right venue for your corporate retreat, leadership offsite, or board meeting is about more than room size. It's about how a space makes people feel, whether it encourages clear thinking, meaningful conversations and productive collaboration.

To help you decide whether The Old Bell Hotel is the right setting for your next business event, we invite you to enjoy an exclusive preview visit. This relaxed experience includes a private guided tour of England's oldest hotel, set in the heart of historic Malmesbury, followed by a delicious complimentary afternoon tea for two.

During your visit, a member of our events team will walk you through the hotel, giving you a first-hand experience of how meetings, retreats, and residential stays naturally flow within the space. You'll explore the newly renovated Garden Room, a bright and flexible event space that can accommodate up to 100 guests. Designed with versatility in mind, it works equally well for theatre-style conferences, boardroom meetings, strategy sessions, workshops or private dining.

For residential events, the hotel offers 34 individually designed bedrooms alongside six spacious Townhouse Suites, comfortably accommodating up to 80 overnight guests. This makes The Old Bell Hotel particularly well suited to multi-day leadership offsites, residential strategy meetings and exclusive-use corporate stays. Throughout your event, our dedicated on-site team is on hand to support every stage of planning and delivery, ensuring your event runs smoothly from arrival through to departure.

A highlight of the preview visit is exclusive access to the gardens at our neighbouring cousin property Abbey House Manor, a beautiful outdoor setting that invites reflection, relaxed conversation and fresh perspectives.

After your tour, you'll be invited to indulge with afternoon tea for two. Enjoy

a selection of sweet and savoury treats while you reflect on the visit, explore ideas, and imagine how your event could take shape here, all while experiencing our friendly service and delicious dining firsthand.

Preview visits are available Tuesday to Thursday and are subject to availability.

To arrange your exclusive tour and complimentary afternoon tea, please contact our events team by calling 01666 822344.



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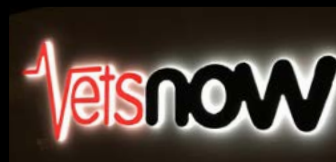
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CONNECTING YOU FOR SUCCESS

Thursday 17th Sept, 8:30am-4pm, University of Bath School of Management

We're excited to be returning to the University of Bath School of Management for TBE Show 2026.

This year's theme is **Powering Progress: Strategies, Partnerships and Purpose for Long-Term Success.**

Join the South West's business leaders, innovators and changemakers for a day of connection, insight and growth on Thursday 17th September.

TBE Show 2026 will explore what it takes to build a business with staying power, one that's agile, visible and ready for the future.

Whether you're looking to grow your network, sharpen your thinking, build your brand profile or boost sales, this event is designed for ambitious B2B professionals, entrepreneurs and professional services firms.



We're delighted to announce that the UK's Small Business Commissioner, Emma Jones, is joining us as guest speaker. The Office of the Small Business Commissioner (OSBC) is an independent public body established by the Government to tackle overdue payments and poor payment practices in the private sector. It

supports small businesses to get paid quickly and on time, works with larger organisations to improve payment behaviours, and helps raise payment standards across the UK.

Emma was appointed Small Business Commissioner in June 2025. She began her career at Arthur Andersen after studying Law and Japanese, working across multiple UK offices and establishing the firm's Inward Investment practice. In 2000 she launched her first business, Techlocate, which she sold to Tenon plc just 15 months later at the age of 27.

Inspired by this experience, she founded Enterprise Nation in 2005 to support the growing number of start-ups and small

businesses. The company went on to become a major SME membership community, reaching more than 800,000 businesses a year. Emma also co-founded StartUp Britain in 2011 and has been an influential voice in shaping enterprise policy. She later served as SME Representative for Crown Commercial Service from 2016, championing small business access to public-sector opportunities. Her contribution to enterprise has been recognised with an MBE in 2012 and a CBE in 2021.

At TBE Show Emma will discuss how she's working to support the UK's 5.5 million small businesses.

Emma said, "I'm delighted to be speaking at the TBE Show on the work we are doing to make life easier for small firms by getting money moving faster around the economy, whilst also making effort across wider Government to ensure SMEs gain access to relevant contracts and support."

Anita Jaynes, Founder of The Business Exchange, added, "Having Emma Jones join TBE Show this year will be immensely valuable for our attendees. Not only does she have a wealth of knowledge and experience to impart from her own experience of business, she also fully understands the challenges smaller businesses in the private sector face."

"We're looking forward to welcoming her and we'd encourage anyone keen to harness her in-depth knowledge to make sure they book their tickets as soon as possible."

ABOUT THE DAY

Networking Breakfast & Panel Discussion 8:30-10am

TBE Show will begin with a networking breakfast and panel discussion at 8:30am.

Meet Emma Jones, UK Small Business Commissioner 11am

The Expo 10am-1pm

Businesses and organisations are invited to exhibit on the day. As an exhibitor you receive:

- A table – 6ft x 2ft
- A white tablecloth
- 1 chair

There is space for a pop-up banner, marketing literature on the tables and an iPad/tablet.

Seminars

There will be a number of seminars throughout the morning including sessions with business transformation experts Nine Feet Tall and Redkite Solicitors.

Redkite will be looking at 'Growth in Action' - how to achieve it, sustain it and learn from the journey with property and commercial strategy partner, Gemma Millard.



Networking Lunch 1-1:45pm

There will be a lively networking lunch for all exhibitors and delegates before the afternoon sessions begin.

Conference 2-4pm

A fast-paced two-hour marathon of insight and information to help you and your organisation power progress. Speakers to be announced.

Delegate tickets are £25 and are available to purchase now.

To find out more about being part of the day email: press@tbesw.co.uk



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Planning a build or renovation? Start here.

The National Self Build & Renovation Show - helping you create your perfect home

Friday 15th - Saturday 16th May

Produced by the National Self Build & Renovation Centre (NSBRC), the UK's award-winning Self Build and Home Improvements Visitor Centre, the May Show offers two full days of masterclasses, case studies, seminars and an unrivalled line-up of experts on hand to share their advice. It is an ideal event for anyone seeking a plot to build a brand-new house, renovating a tired property or considering an extension to an existing home.

The Show features a timetable packed with informative and impartial talks designed to inspire visitors' homebuilding plans. Alongside more than 200 exhibitors within the NSBRC's unique Trade Village, the Professional Services Hub provides independent, free expert advice from a wide range of specialists. Visitors will find Architects and Designers, along with experts in Planning, Project Management, Site Safety, Landscaping and more.

The Build It Theatre hosts essential self build topics covering everything needed before starting a project, including finding land, budgeting, planning, VAT reclaim and the latest building regulations. The Sustainability Theatre focuses on how to mitigate rising energy and other household costs. Experts will explore technologies such as insulation, air source heat pumps, solar panels and triple-glazed windows.

Since opening in 2007, the Visitor Centre has welcomed more than a quarter of a million people seeking support

in creating Better Sustainable Homes. Sustainability is central to how the NSBRC operates. The organisation recognises the environmental impact of running a business and is committed to continually reducing it. This commitment was recognised when the NSBRC was awarded Sustainable Business of the Year at the 2025 TBE Awards, an achievement the team is incredibly proud of and one that reflects the values at the core of their work.

Top tips for making the most of your visit:

- 1. Arrive early.** With a full programme of talks, demonstrations, case studies and tours, visitors will want plenty of time to explore. Doors open at 9am, with the first talks at 10am.
- 2. Bring plans, drawings and sketches.** These help experts and exhibitors offer tailored advice.
- 3. Ask questions.** Experienced representatives will be available to share guidance based on their knowledge.



Show highlights include:

- Guided educational tours of life-size exhibits
- Live panel debates
- Free Self Build Course taster sessions
- One-to-one Expert Advice (*Booked on the day at the Booking Desk. Arrive early to avoid disappointment.*)

Free advance tickets are available at nsbrc.co.uk. The NSBRC is located at Junction 16 of the M4, with plentiful free parking.



apetito completes deconstruction phase of new regenerative food manufacturing facility

Local employer apetito has successfully completed deconstruction at the site of its proposed new food manufacturing facility, Kitchen West, on Canal Road Industrial Estate in Trowbridge.



This marks a significant milestone for a project that will set new standards for sustainability and innovation in UK food manufacturing.

apetito's ambition during deconstruction was to maximise the value of materials generated from deconstruction, with the project having a strong focus on sustainability and circularity. During the works to clear the old buildings and get the land ready for construction, approximately 20,000 tonnes of concrete from old foundations was crushed on-site, ready for use on site to create a flat, stable building platform. A further 1,500 tonnes of asphalt has been carefully segregated, crushed and stockpiled for use under the new roads and car park.

This has eliminated approximately 1,500 truck movements to and from site during deconstruction and reduces the need to bring new materials onto site during the construction phase, which, subject to planning, is expected to begin in the second quarter of 2026.

In line with apetito's commitment to circularity, three of the warehouses from the site were dismantled rather than demolished, with cladding, roller shutter doors, purlins and beams among the elements salvaged. One of these is being rebuilt by a waste recycling centre, whilst another has been relocated for use by a company which refurbishes wind turbines, the third building is awaiting sale via a steel-frame specialist. A fourth, smaller storage unit was dismantled and relocated by the owner, a building materials supplier.

A total of an estimated 110 tonnes of steel, equating to over 10% of the metals removed from site, has been reused as opposed to recycled. This is double the UK industry average and represents a carbon saving of approximately 120 tonnes of carbon dioxide over recycling.

In total, it is estimated that 0.5% of deconstruction materials, by mass, have been salvaged and sent for reuse; 94.5% of materials have been kept on site and reprocessed for use in the construction, 4% of materials have been sent

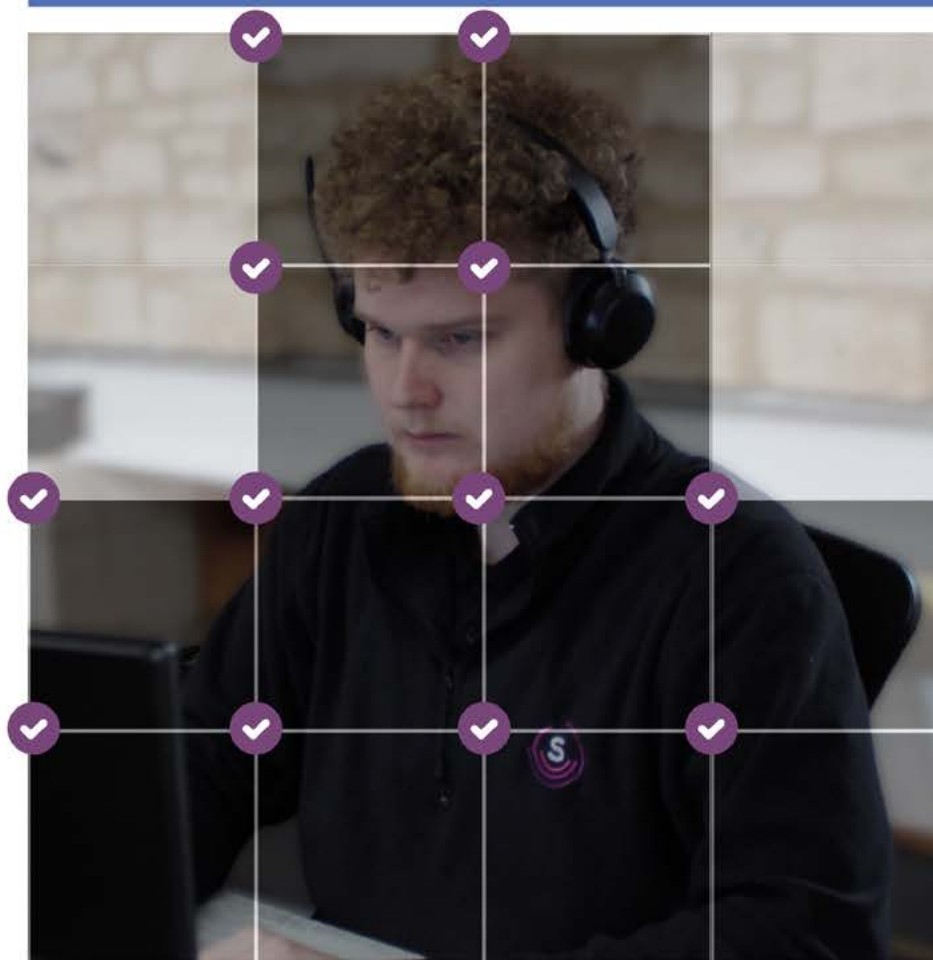
to recycling facilities off-site while the residual 1% has been sent to energy recovery.

Lee Sheppard, Director of Corporate Affairs, Policy & Sustainability at apetito said, "Kitchen West is a major investment in apetito's future but also in sustainable manufacturing. From the outset, our ambition has been to create one of the UK's most environmentally responsible factories, in line with our goal to reach Net Zero by 2040.

"By prioritising the re-use and recycling of materials throughout the deconstruction phase, we have significantly reduced the project's environmental impact and demonstrated our commitment to the circular economy.

"For us, Kitchen West is more than a food manufacturing facility – it's a statement of how we can lead the way by employing sustainable practices to create a world-class, regenerative production kitchen for Trowbridge."

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Is it me?

Over the years, John Davies' *Is it me?* has become a favourite of TBE for its wit and camaraderie. This time John's in mandatory reflection mode...

For many of us in the legal profession, springtime comes with a haunting spectre – the submissions to the legal directories.

Designed as a ranking system for firms, teams and individual practitioners, the two most prominent directories are meant to provide a platform by which prospective clients can compare and contrast those they are seeking to advise them – and they do, with different practice areas, regions, and niche and emerging areas of the law all represented.

For some, it's an ego-stroking exercise, for some it's a great promotional/marketing tool, but as any of my esteemed peers from other firms will tell you it always feels like a lot of work.

They happen at the same time each year and I've been doing these things for the past two decades (ranked for 18 years don't ya know) but I always end up leaving it until the eleventh hour because there is always something more pressing – a deal that needs closing, a client awaiting vital advice or a colleague that requires help with something.

Every year I say I'll be more prepared

and every year I find myself scratching the head to recall the past 12 months (yes dear reader, the true reason for my follicle scarcity is out there) – but therein lies a wonderful opportunity for personal and professional reflection.

“Do these ritualistic processes exist in abundance within other professions, or are we lawyers just stricken by our own vanity?”

Looking at the year that has passed, considering what went well, what didn't, where the challenges were and where you and your colleagues were able to innovate and collaborate is an outstanding experience. It helps you recognise growth, gives you a chance to reconnect with those individuals you have acted for over the year and find out how things have gone since.

As each submission comes in from the team, rather than from individuals, it's also a wonderful chance to appreciate the work

my colleagues do. I'll be aware of most of it, but every now and then I see something that a junior colleague has done that I think “I couldn't do that when I was their age”, about how this profession continues to move with the times and that this firm is in good hands with the next generation – sadly, more than I can say about my beloved Welsh rugby at present...

We won't see the rankings until much later this year as the researchers scurry off to get references from our willing clients (thank you!) and prove there is substance to the guff we have submitted but I'm happy to wait.

Do these ritualistic processes exist in abundance within other professions, or are we lawyers just perpetually stricken by our own vanity? I have no idea, but I think, for the best part, there is something to learn each and every time we groan as we open the form...

**John Davies,
Senior Corporate Partner, Thrings**

**e: jdavies@thrings.com
t: 01793 412634**



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SUCCESSFUL BUSINESS NETWORKING GROUP WELCOMES NEW CHAIR



Wiltshire businesswoman, Louise Muir-Sage from Something Kind of Woo, has been appointed as Chair of Swindon's long-standing business networking and referral group BusinessWise.

The independent, not for profit business group is one of the most established in the county and the group operates a 'single seat' model – only one person representing each business discipline can join.

Louise, who has been a member for two years, holds the 'Crystal and Reiki' seat as she owns a shop in Royal Wootton Bassett and is also a Reiki master, offering Reiki as a service as well as training others in the practice.

"I've been with BusinessWise for a few years," said Louise.

"What I didn't realise, until I became a member, is the true community and support that exists within the group. I'm embracing my tenure leading this group and am looking forward to sharing my ideas with fellow members.

"Support groups have shaped my life in one way or another, and I have always tried to give back when I've felt ready. Taking this role is my way of giving back to a group that has supported me personally and professionally."

The group has also recently welcomed some new members including:



Jo Lakin, JL People Resolutions

Jo is an independent HR consultant with more than 25 years' experience. From day-to-day people management to handling highly sensitive employee matters, Jo's focus is on providing clear, practical guidance to protect businesses and their people.

"I joined the group a few months ago and found everyone to be very welcoming and supportive. I've built trusted working relationships and have given and received several referrals. I highly recommend coming along for a visit, you are promised a friendly welcome!"

Email: jo@jlpeopleresolutions.co.uk



Mark Fletcher, Aspray

Mark helps people make successful building insurance claims. Mark only works on behalf of the home or business owner, to look after their interests in the event of a crisis which could be an escape of water, fire or accident which causes damage at work or in the home. He manages the claim and will bring in vetted contractors in to carry out the reinstatement works to pre-loss condition.

"I have rejoined BusinessWise after a few years away and we have a good group of people across all areas of business. When I was a member previously I received £550k of referrals and was able to give others around the same. Getting up at 6.00am every other Friday is never a problem as the vibe in the room is so positive and supportive."

Email: mark.fletcher@aspray.com



Jenny Ashfield, Southby & Co

Jenny Ashfield is a financial adviser with Southby & Co Financial Planning. She works with individuals and business owners by providing investment, retirement and protection planning in Swindon and Wiltshire. She helps individuals align their finances with what's important to them. She works with individuals, families and local businesses seeking clear and jargon-free advice, to create personalised, tailored plans to enable goals to be achieved.

"Networking isn't about collecting contacts. It's about building context, trust, and long-term relationships, which is what BusinessWise is all about. The most impactful connections come from curiosity, caring and showing up consistently. Your network isn't measured by how many people know your name - but by how many people trust it," she said.

Email: jenny.ashfield@sipp.co.uk

BusinessWise membership is limited to just 35 members, and with only a handful of places still available, we'd be delighted to hear from businesses looking to grow their network. Visitors can attend once free of charge. For more information visit the website or email the secretary as below.



Join the Businesswise team at our upcoming:

Open Networking Evening!

On 11th June, we're hosting an evening of open business networking in Swindon (venue to be confirmed), and everyone is welcome. The event will feature a keynote speaker, a light buffet, and a pay bar – a fantastic opportunity to connect, collaborate, and be inspired.



Our guest speaker this year is James Gwinnett, author of *Ready. Set. Life.*, who will share his powerful journey from addiction to success, along with his experience competing on the TV challenge show *SAS: Who Dares Wins*.

We'll also be holding a fundraising raffle in support of Swindon Night Shelter and RENEW, our charitable member.

We look forward to welcoming you for an inspiring and engaging evening!

Early bird tickets are just £20 per person, contact the secretary for more details...

Anyone interested in attending a meeting can email: secretary@businesswise.org.uk | businesswise.org.uk



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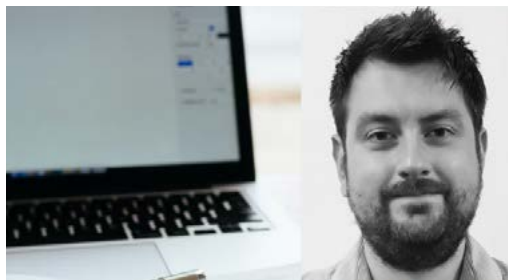
Evil Empire is the answer to all of your problems... well, in a marketing sense at least. Our experienced and totally-not-evil team supports businesses across the UK with a ton of shizzle, including strategy, content creation, copywriting, PR, website design, graphic design, HubSpot and social media.

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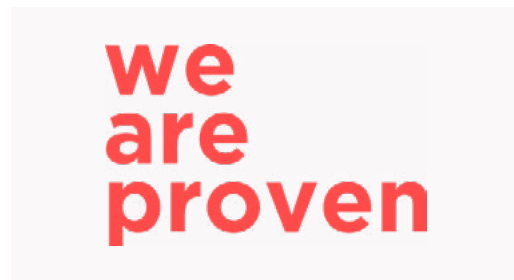
Fiona Scott is a journalist with more than 35 years' experience and has run her own media consultancy for 18 years. Three years ago, her stepdaughter Lauren Roberts joined the business. Fiona and her team help business owners, experts and non-profits raise their profiles through media, social media, blogging, animation and video.

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Rugby community steps up for MND with 24-hour skittles challenge

A major community fundraiser is coming to Colerne village this summer, as former Bath Rugby player and coach Chris Lilley teams up with local volunteers to host a 24-hour Skittles Marathon in aid of the Motor Neurone Disease (MND) Association.

The event will run from Friday 26th – Saturday 27th June 2026 at Colerne Rugby Club, bringing together families, local businesses and the rugby community for an around-the-clock challenge to raise funds and awareness for MND.

The idea was inspired by the recent diagnosis of former England and Bath Rugby star Lewis Moody, whose story has had a profound impact across the rugby family.

"The cause resonates particularly strongly in Colerne, where we've sadly lost several members of our village to MND over the years, including a founding member of Colerne Rugby Club," said organiser Chris Lilley. "We want to come together, do something positive, and support everyone affected by this devastating disease."

Paula Reed, Captain of the Colerne Foxy Ladies Skittles team, added, "Playing skittles for 24 hours is harder than it sounds, but with an amazing team, plenty of support, and knowing that you are helping to raise money for a great cause, makes it a really fun challenge."

A core team of eight players will take on the full 24-hour skittles challenge, with hourly guest teams joining the lane — including Bath Rugby players, staff, and ex-players.

The marathon will finish with a special match against a team of former England Rugby players, and the club will also be hosting a full Family Fun Day on the Saturday. The day will feature stalls, activities, food, entertainment, and a major raffle and auction.

The organisers are now actively looking for:

- Event sponsors
- Business stand holders for the Saturday Family Fun Day
- Raffle and auction donations — such as vouchers, products, experiences or services

All supporting businesses will be promoted across event materials, online updates and on the day itself, offering positive visibility within the community and the wider rugby



network. Stories will also be shared regularly via TBE's websites and social feeds.

How to get involved

Local businesses that can provide a prize, sponsor the event, or host a stand are encouraged to get in touch. Collections for donated items can be arranged.

Funds raised will support the MND Association's work in research, care and advocacy for everyone affected by MND.

To find out more about MND, visit: mndassociation.org
If you can support, please email Anita@tbesw.co.uk

Pictured above from left to right: Sarah-Jayne Gaisford, Nicola Collins, Daisy Pike, Paula Reed, Ella Reed, Carman Irving-French. Middle front Steve and Christine Hulbert.

Wiltshire and Bath Air Ambulance Charity now accredited to deliver life-saving course

At the end of last year, Wiltshire and Bath Air Ambulance Charity successfully organised and delivered its first Resuscitation Council UK, Advanced Life Support (ALS) course, an achievement that took over 12 months of planning and organisation.

ALS is the Resuscitation Council UK's longest running course and has been used to train healthcare professionals for over 25 years. The council uses evidence-based guidelines to create a programme that targets key topics relating to all elements of resuscitation and equips candidates with the technical and non-technical leadership skills needed when in high-stress, high-stakes environments. The training provides professionals with the confidence to lead in an emergency through:

- Recognising and managing the deteriorating patient using a structured ABCDE approach
 - Delivery of standardised CPR in adults
 - Management of a cardiac arrest by working with a multidisciplinary team in an emergency situation
 - Becoming an effective and confident team member and leader by utilising non-technical skills
- The ALS course helps benchmark candidates who all work

as medics or healthcare professionals in the hospital and pre-hospital setting. For many, the ALS course is mandated as part of their job specification, but candidates can also apply as optional continued professional development.

In December, six candidates were successful in passing the rigorous two-day course, which formatively tests their clinical skills and knowledge through challenging simulations, and culminates with a theoretical test paper and a final simulation assessment.

Adam Khan, a critical care paramedic who hosted the training, explained, "The course wouldn't have been such a success without our dedicated faculty, all consisting of doctors and specialist paramedics from the Charity who gave their time to facilitate the smooth running of the course which was externally quality assured by a regional representative from the Resuscitation Council UK. I am happy to announce that we have been formally signed off



as a training and test centre, and moving forward will be running courses regularly throughout the year.

"The ALS course will help to bring in valuable revenue to the Charity and help to maintain our current simulation suite and training equipment, as well as continuing to fund the vital work undertaken by the whole team."

For healthcare professionals interested in joining a training course with Wiltshire and Bath Air Ambulance Charity, please contact: hello@wbairambulance.org.uk to learn more about the ALS course.

For businesses, community groups and schools, learn more about the Aware+ programme, delivering first aid training within the community.

Visit: wiltshirebathairambulance.org.uk/education



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