

BUSINESS focus

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Official Magazine of Bedfordshire Chamber of Commerce

Winter 2021/22

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BUSINESS focus

Official Magazine of Bedfordshire
Chamber of Commerce

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Welcome

Firstly, the Chamber would like to thank you for your continued support in 2021 and hope that membership has made a real difference to you in what has been an incredibly difficult period for everyone.

It's quite clear from the members I've spoken to over the last few months that many aspects of commercial life have probably changed forever. Whether that be short to medium-term (hopefully!) challenges in terms of labour shortages and raw material inflation or longer-term ones in terms of shorter supply chains, investment in automation or more flexible working patterns. I'm proud to say that your Chamber will continue to work alongside members to help – wherever we can – to navigate such changes and ensure that the Government does everything it can to ensure a smooth transition to the 'new normal'.

That said, there are still some constants in business – making new contacts, building relationships, winning new business and your Chamber membership can provide the platform to help you achieve your goals over the next 12 months. We also have some good news in that we have now recommenced 'in person' events to help you to reconnect with fellow members so watch this space for a full schedule in 2022.

Supporting local businesses to trade globally is also a fundamental part of our mission and I'm delighted to announce that we have been successful in securing funding to provide a range of support for Bedfordshire based companies. Whether you are looking to export for the first time or already trading internationally but looking to access new markets or overcome some barriers to trading we can help your business to succeed. Get in touch with our Global Trade Services team to see how we can help.

The Chamber has recently welcome two new members to the team. Samya, our new Business Admin & Marketing Assistant, whom you may have met her at our recent 'in-person' event, and Anthony who has become the Chambers Policy & Research Assistant, with his first assignment researching the hot topic of Net Zero and sustainability.

I recognise challenges remain and being part of an influential business network ensures in each step on the road to recovery your voice is being heard, not just at a local or regional level, but at the very heart of the government's policy and recovery plans.

Wherever your organisation is in its current journey, we're right here behind you to help wherever we can in supporting you to restart, rebuild and renew in 2022.

#togetherstronger

Justin Richardson

Chief Executive

Bedfordshire Chamber of Commerce



focuscontent

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Chamber News



Richard Cooper
Chairman of Bedfordshire
Chamber of Commerce

“...we are seeing true grit from businesses across the UK, and certainly here in our own county.”

The **Chairman's** View

It is fair to say that many businesses have struggled over the last two years. In some cases, businesses have had to completely diversify or alter their business model to survive. The commercial landscape has changed significantly for many and has undoubtedly become a more digital environment than ever before.

With all that said, we are seeing light at the end of a very long tunnel!

Many companies took time during the pandemic to revisit their strategy and business operations and have come out the other side stronger, more focused and with a real commitment to succeed.

In the last three months we have heard that growth is rebounding and forecasters are now citing that the economy will return to pre-Covid levels by early next year. We couldn't wish for a better Christmas present.

We know it won't be smooth running from here on in – we are all aware of the shortcomings, namely a shortage of fuel, HGV drivers and labour generally. There is also the ongoing global supply chain issue, which is affecting companies of all shapes and sizes and across all sectors.

Despite this, we are seeing true grit from businesses across the UK, and certainly here in our own county. Meeting with local companies recently, we are hearing stories of growth and the struggle to recruit quickly enough to supply demand. Looking to the new year and 2022, it will no doubt bring challenges, but the tenacity, agility and sheer spirit of Bedfordshire businesses is inspirational.



A straightforward solution in a world which is anything but

If the last couple of years has taught us anything, it's that businesses need to expect the unexpected. A period of massive political and economic change has meant trading has been extremely difficult, in particular for small- and medium-sized firms, who will have seen their cash flow significantly hit.

Some certainty in uncertain times

Recent times have been anything but straightforward for businesses and many are looking for ways to take control of their finances. The good news is that getting a smart meter for your business is a small change that could make a big difference.

A smart meter allows businesses to wave goodbye to estimated billing by securely and automatically sending meter readings to your energy supplier. That means that you receive accurate bills, rather than estimated bills, allowing you the certainty of paying for exactly what you are using.

Plus you can also wave goodbye to time spent submitting regular meter readings, allowing you to focus on bigger things.

Doing your bit for the environment

As Glasgow hosts COP26 this year it's a good reminder of everyone's responsibility to become more conscious of their environmental impact. Regardless of whether your business has three employees, or three thousand, we all should be aware of how much energy we're using, and a smart meter is a step in the right direction. From the moment your smart meter is installed, you're helping create a smart energy system which could ultimately help reduce all our carbon emissions.

A smart meter is a positive step in taking control of business outgoings and if your firm has 10 employees or less your business could be eligible.

Contact your energy supplier or broker, it could be one of the best calls you make this week.

Chamber News



Learn the tips and tricks of trading successfully

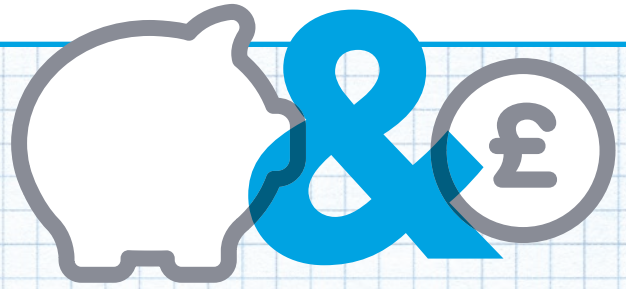
Are you a Bedfordshire business looking to export your goods or services?
Are you already exporting but have a few queries you need help with?
If so, we have the latest advice on hand to help you trade successfully!

Whether you are a start-up, or a well-established business based in Bedfordshire and would like to learn more about exporting your goods or services and trading internationally, we have the practical support to help your business. We have received an Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG) to launch a Business Support Program, together with the local authorities in Bedfordshire, the aim of this program is to help navigate Bedfordshire companies around the world of international trade.

We can offer one-to-one advice and workshops if you are:

- Considering exporting for the first time
- Have any problems or queries regarding trading and exporting
- Already an experienced exporter looking to expand customer base and explore new markets

Find out how we can help you by calling **01582 522448**
or emailing export@chamber-business.com



Quarterly Economic Survey Report

Bedfordshire Chamber of Commerce Quarterly Economic Survey (QES) forms part of the British Chamber of Commerce's national survey and is the principal business survey in the UK. Its results are closely watched by both the Bank of England's Monetary Policy Committee and the Treasury. The data reveals a timely and accurate snapshot for the economic climate for businesses in Bedfordshire and beyond.

Our latest results have been published and the outcome for Q3 2021 saw improvements across the board from the previous quarter.

- Local businesses showed that some key indicators, such as domestic sales, business confidence and investment intentions, displayed significant rises, as more companies reported improved business conditions.
- Export sales and forward orders displayed improvements, but still lagged considerably behind domestic business.
- However, it also showed rises in the number of manufacturers expecting to raise prices, with raw material inflation and labour shortages being cited as a major cause for concern.

The Bottom Line

Suren Thiru, Head of Economics at the British Chambers of Commerce (BCC), said:

"Our latest data indicates a disappointingly modest uptick in economic activity in the third quarter as the boost from the end of restrictions was increasingly stymied by supply and staff shortages and rising cost pressures."

"The key services sector recorded the strongest improvements as consumer-focused firms, including hotels and hospitality, received the biggest boost from the easing of social distancing restrictions. Manufacturers saw more limited gains as increasingly severe supply chain disruption stifled their ability to fulfil orders and meet customer demand."

"The results point to an underwhelming three months for business investment as the damage done to firms' cash flow by the pandemic and growing concerns over a more burdensome tax regime squeezed investment intentions."

"Acute supply shortages and rising raw material costs drove an historic surge in inflationary pressures in the third quarter. However, with little evidence in our figures that higher inflation is stoking a broad-based escalation in pay settlements, the MPC should have enough leeway to keep interest rates steady over the medium term."

"Though the UK economy remains on track for moderate growth in the third quarter, with staff and supply shortages increasingly having a suffocating effect on economic activity and price pressures intensifying, a spell of stagflation maybe inevitable."



Suren Thiru
Head of Economics at the British
Chambers of Commerce

Member News



Rail project boost for business in Bedford

As a new member of the Chamber, Stuart Edwards, Engagement Manager at East West Railway Company, outlines the opportunities the new East West Rail project can generate for businesses in Bedford.

I'm not alone in saying that it's been a tricky year for business, but as we all make critical steps towards recovery from the worst of the Covid pandemic, it's never been more important that we remain excited about the long-term plans for a prosperous Bedfordshire. Constrained by an insufficient talent pool, a lack of infrastructure capacity and limited connections for trade – as articulated so well in the BCC's 2019 Manifesto – there remains untapped potential in Bedford to create sustainable wealth, employment, and opportunity for the whole county.

The arrival of East West Rail with direct links to communities from Oxford to Cambridge, brings with it the promise of easier access to potential employees, customers, and suppliers. Travel time and cost is reduced and by creating sustainable, reliable transport and easier onward links to Stanstead, Gatwick and Birmingham airports, new opportunity for international trade and collaboration is created.

EWR will help connect young people to more schools, colleges, and universities across the region, which will in turn open up a range of different courses and apprenticeships, diversifying the range of skills available to business in Bedford and beyond.

We have set out plans to rebuild Bedford and Bedford St Johns stations, to help reimagine and reinvent these important gateways to the town, supporting further investment in infrastructure and public spaces to lift and enhance the local environment.

As the newest member of the Bedfordshire Chamber of Commerce the team at East West Railway Company is delighted to be supporting a bright future for this wonderful region. If you like to know more, do drop me an email at stuart.edwards@eastwestrail.co.uk or sign up to the EWR newsletter to stay on board.

eastwestrail.co.uk

Do you have trouble recruiting staff for first aid training?

Finding employees to take on the responsibility of becoming a first aider can be challenging. We have produced a poster, which is attached, which outlines the many reasons the prospect of being first aid trained is so attractive.

First aid training transforms a colleague into a potential lifesaver, an everyday hero. Not only are first aiders both legal and moral requisites for a modern workplace; they are also protectors of their friends and family. Wider, the presence of first aiders across the UK has a profound effect on the alleviating pressure on the NHS, an institution which has reached crisis point. By offering people assured and reasoned first aid assistance, people trained with Bostock can prevent unneeded ambulance call outs or spot the symptoms early of issues which could become far more dramatic without medical assistance.

Moreover, our first aid courses are enjoyable, rewarding, and informative – just take a look at our reviews! We do our best to keep the courses entertaining and engaging whilst making sure that the students learn lots and retain their knowledge. Your first aiders will want to keep coming back!

If you are struggling to recruit it's useful to get feedback from your workforce so that you can take steps to rectify the situation. Once you have identified the barriers you can produce a program that can address the problems. Some organisations financially incentivise first aiders and some provide other motivations such as car parking spaces or social events.

It is important to make sure that your first aiders feel valued and supported. On-site first aid courses or first aider meetings give an opportunity for employees to feel valued and supported by their company by giving them the opportunity to provide feedback on company processes like procedures and training.

First Aid is, when taught correctly, a valuable skill for life: both professional and personal, our annual updates create confident, safer and more capable first aiders. The HSE strongly recommends annual updates, and we will remind you that your first aiders need to retrain each year. We find that first aiders who regularly update are much more confident and willing to continue to be the nominated first aider in the workplace.

We have a poster (above) that you could send to your employees or put up on the wall in your workplace, it explains some of the benefits of learning first aid.

To get your copy call 01234 356980 or visit bostockhealthcare.com





THSP is now Employee Owned!

Bedford-based business, THSP Risk Management (The Health and Safety People Limited) are pleased to announce that they are now an Employee-Owned company. The owners have set up a Trust for the employees and given over a majority shareholding in the business.

“Our staff will continue to work with our customers as we always have done, providing a pro-active and supportive service to ensure they continue to benefit from our work”, says Kirsty Maynard, Head of Customer Services at THSP.

Kirsty was one of two members of staff who were elected as Trustees of the new Employee Ownership Trust and is driving the business forward. She has also recently stepped up to assist Managing Director, Adrienne Massey in managing the Sales Team and has developed a strong strategy for increasing sales over the next five years.

Adrienne says, “our colleagues now have an exciting opportunity to build the business for their future, giving them job security and a stronger voice in the direction that THSP will take. I am remaining as their Managing Director and will continue to support everyone through this transition, with the assistance of Chris Ivey who heads up all our health and safety services, and Andrew Wilson who runs our employment law and HR team.

An Employee Ownership Trust has several benefits to both the employees and the original owners through an HMRC scheme that allows tax benefits to both. The employees can receive bonuses of up to £3,600 tax free each year, and the sellers can take the payment for their shares or a portion of those shares, tax free within one year from the date of sale. A win/win situation for both parties.

Our THSP Trustees

THSP's Employee Ownership Trust is registered as Our THSP Limited. The Board of Trustees comprises John Thoday who founded the business and who has now retired from the company.

Other members of staff include Jennie Dingle, THSP's Operations Director representing the Board, Kirsty Maynard, Head of Customer Services representing the administrative team, and Kevin Harvey,

Senior Consultant representing the external consultant workforce. An Independent Trustee has also been appointed. The Rev. Kevin Fear who was previously Health and Safety Strategy Lead at the

CITB was invited to join the Trustees. He brings a great wealth of experience to THSP particularly in the construction sector. It is the role of this Trustee Board to ensure that the business is governed well, and that the employees benefit as the business grows.

With this fresh start, THSP is rebranding and developing a smart new website. Adrienne says: “I am very pleased for the staff of THSP that they have this opportunity to take the company on from John and me. We know that they have the drive and capability to continue to be one of the best health and safety and employment law companies in the UK. I feel the new logo design and website will better symbolise who they are – a business that puts our customers at the heart of everything we do.”

Our History

The Health and Safety People began in 1992 in Langford providing health and safety services to the construction and demolition industries. We moved to Biggleswade then Sandy in 2001. Then to smart new offices in the Bedford Business Centre in Mile Road, Bedford in 2018, with the company set for an exciting future. COVID brought a double-edged sword, but THSP has come out stronger for the experience and we are now growing both our staff and our exciting range of software to enhance our services.

THSP has employed many local people over the past 29 years and grown to be a nationwide organisation delivering safety, health and environmental services to hundreds of companies locally, nationally and worldwide. The largest sector of the business is still the construction industry offering retained services, on-site inspections and training to all levels of employees. Other key sectors for us are manufacturing/engineering, retail, telecoms and satellite, and education.

This is backed by supportive and highly responsive employment lawyers who are on hand with bespoke employment law solutions to a growing range of staff issues.

www.thsp.co.uk

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“In my experience, up to 30% of companies are not insured correctly and their insurances are just renewed year upon year on an inaccurate basis with the same broker.” LEWIS DUGGLEBY, Cert CII, BA Hons

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Member News

London Luton Airport procurement team wins prestigious CIPS Award

London Luton Airport's (LLA) procurement team has been awarded the Procurement Team of the year (Small Organisations) at the CIPS Awards 2021.

The Chartered Institute of Procurement and Supply (CIPS) Excellence in Procurement Awards are an opportunity to showcase and celebrate the best work and teams in the procurement profession.

The team won the award in recognition of the rapid changes they made in response to the coronavirus pandemic and its impact on the airport. The team developed a robust and rapid plan to support the airport centred around innovation and collaboration, reducing spend where possible and directly contributing to the survival of the airport.

The event, held at the iconic Marriott Grosvenor House London located in the heart of Mayfair, saw the team from LLA beat other procurement teams from across the UK to win the coveted prize.

Terry Gittins, Head of Procurement at LLA, said: "This has been a particularly tough year for aviation. However, the team have continued to work hard and deliver best-in-class procurement, while also supporting our local supply chain as much as possible. This is a testament to that work and I couldn't be prouder."

Despite the pandemic, the percentage of LLA's total supply chain spend within a 20-



London Luton Airport's award winning procurement team

mile radius of the airport increased from 30% to 35% in 2020. The procurement team continue to hold regular events to help and encourage local suppliers bid for contracts.

London Luton Airport (LLA) remains one of the UK's busiest airports despite COVID-19, carrying 5.4 million passengers in 2020.

The airport is operated and developed by a consortium of which the majority shareholder is AENA, the world's largest airport operator, and AMP Capital, a specialist global investment manager. Airlines include easyJet, Wizz Air, Ryanair, Tui, Sun Express and El Al.

LLA was the first UK airport to receive the Airport Health Accreditation from Airports Council International (ACI) for health and hygiene measures introduced during the pandemic.

Passengers travelling by rail will benefit from upgraded rail links to Luton Airport Parkway station as part of a partnership agreement with East Midlands Railway. A half-hourly express rail service between London and Luton Airport Parkway will launch in May 2021. In addition, work is well underway on a £225 million light rail system linking the airport with Luton Airport Parkway station and is anticipated to be completed by 2021. The project is being delivered by the airport owners, LLAL – a company owned by Luton Council. LLA is also applying to raise its passenger cap by 1 million, to 19 million. It will not require any physical changes or new construction at the airport, and will prepare the airport to support the recovery of the local and national economy once demand for travel returns.

london-luton.co.uk

Peli BioThermal Launches Updated Website

Peli BioThermal, the global name in temperature controlled packaging solutions, has launched its newly designed website. Located at www.pelibiothermal.com, the new site offers a wide variety of resources to support the worldwide business of its life sciences customers. The new website's framework aligns with how Peli BioThermal will evolve its portfolio of offerings, including supporting customers from drug discovery through distribution of commercial products. Top-level navigation helps customers quickly identify solutions that meet their needs:

Products: Outlines product families for single-use and reusable bulk and parcel shippers and also includes an enhanced product configurator tool that offers the best solution based on user-selected temperature range, payload volume and duration requirements.

Markets: Offers product solutions based on market segments, as well as insights into the importance of temperature control for each market.

Rentals: Highlights key features of the Crêdo™ on Demand and Crêdo™ on Reserve rental programs.

Services: Provides insights into off-the-shelf and custom solutions in engineering and design, asset management, thermal testing and consultation, all offered globally with consistent excellence.

Resources: Shares information about Peli BioThermal products and services in action, in-depth education on cold chain-related topics and answers to frequently asked questions.

About Us: Captures company history and the latest news and events.

www.pelibiothermal.com



Member News

Merger of accountancy practices is a welcome boost to businesses in Luton and the surrounding area

Streets Chartered Accountants are delighted to announce the founding of the new Luton firm, Streets S J Males.

This follows the merger of the well-established and widely respected Luton practice of S J Males & Co, headed up by Craig and Sarah Males, with Streets, a Top 40 UK mid-tier and multi-regional practice with 15 offices, 36 partners and over 200 staff.

When asked about the merger with Streets, Craig Males said: "Prior to the merger we worked informally with Streets accessing advice and support we were not able to provide to our clients. This included specialist tax advice and assistance with more complex accountancy and audit work.

"This approach allowed us to get to know each other better and supported the move for both firms to work more closely. We have recognised the need to be able to offer our clients a greater breadth of service to support them with the challenges they face and we also wanted to increase the firm's capacity to develop the business.

"It is with this background that we are delighted to have merged with Streets who not only share our values of providing excellent client centric service but that can also provide both our existing and new clients much more in terms of specialist advice and services. In particular, it is great to be able to now draw on the dedicated tax expertise of Corporate Tax Partner, Luke Prout and Private Client Tax Partner, Jennie Brown.

"The merger will provide broader benefits in terms of resources and support to develop our team and to ensure we are able to respond to the challenges we face as a business like those of our clients."

Commenting on the background and strategy to the creation of Streets S J Males and the development of a Luton office, Streets Chairman and Managing Partner, Paul Tutin, said: "We have been keen to strengthen our presence in Bedfordshire for some time, looking in particular at Luton and the surrounding area. From our established offices in Stevenage and Wyboston Lakes, we have looked after clients in the area for many years.

"The creation of Streets S J Males will serve to enhance the provision and access to professional advisory services available to businesses and individuals in Luton and its surrounding business region. Whilst many large firms have moved to more regional models, Streets remains committed to and focused on looking after clients that live, work and operate businesses in the local area."

Going forward the new office will be headed up by Streets audit and accountancy partner Alan Endersby. Alan has established links to the town and surrounding area and as such is well placed to spearhead the firm's growth and development in Luton and surrounding



Partners and Staff of merged firm's
S J Males with Streets - Luton

locations including St Albans, Hitchin, Dunstable, Harpenden and Hemel Hempstead.

Talking about his new role, Alan said: "I am really looking forward to working with Craig, Sarah and their team and to be joined by fellow Streets partners and staff to provide clients of the office with access to services and support from the wider firm. Luton is close to my heart and a town I know well. With excellent road links, the airport and continued economic regeneration, we are excited about the opportunities for enterprise in the region, seeking to support established and new businesses. This is along with our work in looking after the tax and financial affairs of individuals.

"We have a diverse client base which includes many owner-managed and family businesses, along with corporate entities and not for profit organisations including schools and academy trusts. We are therefore well placed to look after a growing portfolio of such clients in the area, but also to offer more specialist advice and support for those engaged in technology, education, the creative industries, logistics, e-commerce and engineering or manufacturing.

"Through SBC Global Alliance, our own global association of leading professional firms, we are pleased to be able to service an increasing need for international tax advice and assurance services to those trading internationally and to UK subsidiaries with overseas parents."

The merged practice of Streets S J Males will continue to operate from the former S J Males & Co office located at the Basepoint Business Centre at the Butterfield Technology Park. The office is already well known by existing clients of Craig and Sarah Males and no doubt will be welcomed by Streets' clients locally, who can now access it as well as those offices they are currently serviced by.

www.sjmales.co.uk



Double win for Wyboston Lakes Resort team in the Meetings Industry Association's prestigious miaList 2021

Wyboston Lakes Resort's team have been recognised in the Meetings Industry Association's (mia) highly sought-after miaList 2021, which recognises inspiring and exceptional individuals in the business meetings and events industry.

Simon McMahon, General Manager for Venues, and Linden Beattie, Hotel General Manager, both members of the resort's senior management team, were recognised as the Best Events and Operations Team. The pair were key to getting the business ready for reopening after lockdown, launching the resort's comprehensive Covid Policy, running a Government Pilot event, and engaging and training staff to bring them back from furlough.

The judges commented on the pair's "commitment and loyalty" and how they "went far above and beyond for their clients which simply won them more and more key worker business during the pandemic. They should be very proud of themselves and no wonder their team delivers - they are an inspiration."

Rachel Bradshaw, the Resort's Front of House Manager, was also recognised in the list. The judges said that Bradshaw was an "unbelievable asset to the business particularly during the pandemic. She has shown resilience, adaptability, kindness, ceaseless energy and enthusiasm for her role and for her venue. Her maturity, integrity, and capability in making decisions shone through for the judges; she has without a doubt showcased her future potential within the sector."

Simon Coleman, Deputy Property Maintenance Manager, was shortlisted for his outstanding contributions to the business during an unprecedented time.

Simon McMahon said: "It is very exciting to be recognised in this year's miaList, particularly following an extremely challenging time for all staff at Wyboston Lakes Resort. Our venues were open during the pandemic and keeping them running smoothly and safely was paramount, so we feel very proud to be recognised."

Linden Beattie added: "We are very grateful for this recognition and for the kind words from the judges."

The rigorous judging process for the mia list included a written application, followed by interviews with a judging panel.

www.wybostonlakes.co.uk

Working together, achieving more.



Ben Miles, MD with gold IIP Plaque

Helapet Limited: Investors in People

Helapet Limited, local manufacturer and distributor of high quality medical and cleanroom consumables based in Houghton Regis, Bedfordshire, are delighted to be recently awarded the coveted Investors in People 'We invest in people, gold accreditation'.

Gold accreditation means that not only have Helapet Ltd put excellent policies in place, but more importantly, it means everyone throughout the organisation takes ownership for making them come to life. This award is a hard-won achievement - only 17% of Investors in People accredited organisations achieve Gold and Helapet have been able to reach this level only 3 years after achieving the Silver accreditation from Investors in People.

Helapet prides itself on its excellent customer service, its dedicated staff and most recently its recent role in supporting the NHS in tackling the Covid 19 pandemic. Investors in People have noted that this pride is palpable within every individual. Helapet staff have a great respect for the company's leaders and the open and transparent way in which the company is run, which is vital to a happy and productive team. Much of the company's success is down to well thought out recruitment strategies and are always keen to source from the local talent pool.

According to The Investors in People team, everyone at Helapet shares the vision and values of the organisation, something the management team strive to keep in everyone's minds. Everyone is absolutely committed to the company mission and capable of taking the company forward to meet its goals. Helapet's people work well together and take personal responsibility for their contributions. This has been invaluable in the company achieving the levels of success it has in recent years including remaining fully operational during the last year of disruption due to the Covid 19 pandemic.

Commenting on the award, Ben Miles, Managing Director of Helapet, said: "I am delighted that Helapet have been awarded Investors in People Gold, a continuous improvement following our Silver award in 2018. This achievement positively reflects our values, culture and the approach we have when working with our colleagues and customers. Our mission, vision and values are at the heart of everything we do. All staff should be congratulated and hopefully take great satisfaction in the improvements we have made together."

Both Helapet and Investors in People believe that the success of an organisation begins and ends with people. For this reason Helapet chooses to give back to the community it has been a part of for over 30 years with local charitable donations. Helapet is a proud local employer with over 60% of Helapet's workforce residing in the Bedfordshire area.

helapet.co.uk

Member News



Building consultants expand and lay new foundations

A team of building consultants is laying new foundations for expansion by increasing its operations in Bedfordshire.

Kirkby Diamond's building consultancy department is dividing its operations between Shenley Wood, Milton Keynes, and Chobham Street, Luton, as it seeks to expand its services to customers further south along the M1 motorway.

Kirkby Diamond is a commercial property consultancy with offices in Milton Keynes, Bedford, Borehamwood and Luton.

Mark Pepper, executive partner and head of building consultancy, said: "These are exciting times at Kirkby Diamond and we are continuing to increase our presence right across the region.

"Expanding the building consultancy team to Luton is part of a strategic move to provide more balance to our offices, whilst providing increased cover to our customers in the ever-growing southern region. Whilst we have always provided building surveying services in and around Luton, having a physical presence in this ever growing town is important to us and our clients."

He added: "With the addition of another building surveyor in the near future, we will have greater capacity and depth within the department and across all our offices. The move to Luton is something of a homecoming for me as I trained here with Kirkby Diamond 10 years ago."

Kirkby Diamond is a full service firm of chartered surveyors and property consultants. The company, with offices in Milton Keynes, Luton, Borehamwood and Bedford, works with local and national clients to offer a total solution to their surveying and commercial agency needs.

www.kirkbydiamond.co.uk

Chamber Members Work Together For Essential Business

The key to the success of award-winning business Essential Workwear is attributed to a combination of quality products, a bespoke and reliable service, and a willingness to continually evolve the company to meet the customers' needs.

Family-run Essential Workwear, based in Dunstable, is the newest division of Essential Embroidery Design and was founded three years ago.

Specialising in the supply and distribution of branded uniform clothing, personal protective equipment (PPE) and safety products, the company offers custom printed and embroidered logo workwear. Employing close to 60 people, from their 20,000 sq ft factory and office they brand close to 11,000 pieces of clothing and workwear every day.

Dorian Tranter, the company's national workwear and PPE manager, says. "We supply anything branded or safety-related. From jackets, trousers and polo shirts, to fleeces and gloves. We offer the option of hi-visibility apparel to PPE and non-clothing items such as hard hats, bump caps, eyewear, safety footwear, height safety products and life-saving arc flashing protective clothing."

Connecting through the Bedfordshire Chamber of Commerce

As construction was about to get underway on the Rookery South Energy Recovery Facility near Stewartby in Bedfordshire, the project's Principal Contractor, Hitachi Zosen Inova (HZI), attended a 'Meet the Buyer' event in early 2019.

This Chamber event was a pivotal point in Essential Workwear's history. Dorian explains: "We met Hitachi Zosen Inova - a Swiss company specialising in the design and construction of turnkey Energy from Waste (EfW) facilities, and team members from Covanta, a world leader in providing sustainable waste solutions and operating EfW plants.

"Darren Byrne, Project Facilities Manager at Hitachi Zosen Inova, called us after we were the Overall Winner in the SME Luton and Business Bedfordshire Awards in 2019 and we appeared on the front cover of the chamber's Business Focus magazine which really raised our profile. Darren said the article is what brought Essential Workwear to his attention."

Darren discussed HZI's uniform and PPE requirements and invited Dorian to the Rookery South Energy Recovery Facility near Stewartby, where hundreds of construction workers were preparing to build the new EfW plant.

Meeting client needs of the long-term

Now, Essential Workwear supplies three construction sites where Hitachi Zosen Inova are contractors - Rookery South, the Newhurst Energy Recovery Facility in Leicestershire and another EfW plant in Slough. Dorian Tranter added: "Both Essential Workwear and



Hitachi Zosen Inova are members of Bedfordshire Chamber of Commerce, and it is this connection that ultimately brought us together.

Dorian continues: "Working with Hitachi Zosen Inova has been fantastic, with clear communication in terms of what is required, sufficient notice given to deliver on those requirements, and always a warm welcome when making an on-site visit."

Holding Essential Workwear in equally high regard, Darren says: "From the very beginning, working with Essential Workwear has been a hugely beneficial experience. Knowing we can trust them to meet our requirements and deliver on their promises, allows us to concentrate on the main focus of our business. Essential Workwear offers a slick operation, made so simple with the online ordering portal. It's a friendly, family-run business with excellent customer service at its heart."

Essential Workwear, which has no minimum account spend, is regulated by the British Safety Industry Federation (BSIF).

The company is also rated Sedex SMETA Pillar 4 – an auditing methodology that looks at working conditions, including labour standards, health and safety, environment and business ethics. "Pillar 4 is widely considered an excellent standard to have," explains Dorian.

Sustainability is extremely important to both Essential Workwear and Hitachi Zosen Inova. With its core business in recovering energy from waste materials, a spokesman for Hitachi Zosen Inova says: "The focus is on recovering the useful materials contained in waste that would otherwise be sent to landfill. This enables our plants to treat non-recyclable waste hygienically and safely, generating clean energy on a constant basis. The goal is to reduce the use of raw materials and keep the use fossil fuels to generate electricity to a minimum, even to zero."

How is Essential Workwear promoting sustainability? Dorian explains: "We offer a recycling programme allowing customers to return redundant products." All textiles are then securely destroyed in-house and the fibres are turned into a wide range of products such as insulation and geotextiles.

It's not just garments. Everything from hard hats, bump caps to protective footwear can be repurposed under the scheme.

Essential Workwear's managing director, George Georgiou, says: "We wanted to introduce an innovative and powerful new service to help reduce waste going into landfill. Together with our team of uniform specialists, I am immensely proud to have launched this service."

What does the future look like?

When it comes to Essential Workwear's future, there is an excited buzz to see the business grow, and Dorian is keen to emphasise the part played by the Bedfordshire Chamber of Commerce in the company's growth so far. Dorian concludes: "We've been a member for three years and, without a doubt, it has helped facilitate our growth through networking events and readily available support."

"Dominic Murphy, the business engagement officer at Beds Chamber, has always been a champion of our business. We're really excited about our future, which feels boundless with such incredible support."

For more information call Dorian Tranter, National Sales Manager on 0330 2021001 and visit www.essentialworkwear.com. Follow on Facebook @essentialworkwear, Instagram essentialworkwear and LinkedIn <https://www.linkedin.com/company/essential-workwear>. Postal Unit 1 (Unit 8) Aragon Park Foster Avenue, Dunstable Bedfordshire LU5 5GN

Member Profiles


Member Profiles are provided as part of membership to the Bedfordshire Chamber of Commerce. You can learn more about becoming a member, so you too can enjoy this and a host of other benefits, simply by calling us now on 01582 522448 or by emailing info@chamber-business.com

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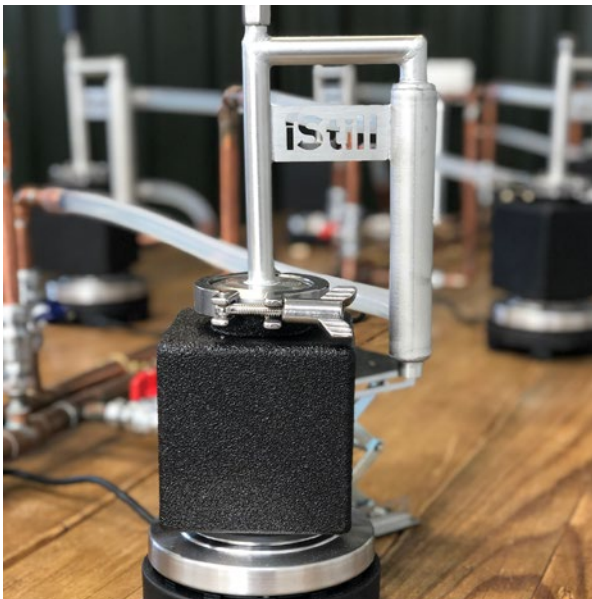
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