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Winter 2026/27

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Working together, achieving more.

Welcome

...to the Winter edition of Business Focus Magazine.

As another year draws to a close, one question feels increasingly important: how do we turn the opportunity around Bedfordshire into tangible growth for local businesses in 2027?

Our Working with Universal event brought nearly 600 businesses together, but the real measure of success was always going to be what happened next. We are now hearing from members contacted by Universal for supplier conversations, including businesses being approached about services needed once the resort becomes operational.

That is why positioning early matters.

Through BedX, we are helping businesses understand where they fit within major supply chains, become tender ready and build relationships that can lead to contracts. Our work around social value, procurement readiness and helping SMEs turn their size into an advantage is about giving Bedfordshire businesses the confidence to compete.

And the opportunity extends well beyond one project.

Expansion at London Luton Airport, East West Rail and ambitions for Bedfordshire's visitor economy all point towards a significant pipeline of investment. Our challenge is to turn that into contracts, jobs, skills and opportunities across the county.

Against that local backdrop, the national picture is more subdued. For me, the Autumn Budget felt like a "steady as you go" Budget. There were welcome measures, but it did not fundamentally change the outlook for growth.

Businesses are still managing higher employment, energy and operating costs, while recruitment and investment remain under pressure. 2027 is unlikely to be an easy year.

Bedfordshire, however, has an opportunity to write a different story.

Businesses that prepare early, invest in their people and build the right relationships can put themselves in a strong position.

2027 will also be special as we mark 150 years of Bedfordshire Chamber of Commerce. While we will celebrate that history, our focus remains firmly on what comes next: connecting businesses to investment, strengthening local supply chains, supporting skills and ensuring Bedfordshire speaks with a strong, ambitious voice.

There is plenty of work ahead, but plenty to be optimistic about.

Let's make 2027 the year Bedfordshire turns opportunity into action.



Justin Richardson
Chief Executive *Bedfordshire Chamber of Commerce*

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The Chairman's VIEW

Rod J Calvert OBE DL

Chairman of Bedfordshire Chamber of Commerce

The nights have drawn in, winter storms lie ahead and consumer confidence indices remain subdued. Is there anything to look forward to? I would argue, yes, there most certainly is.

While the outcome of the US mid-term elections will inevitably have global implications, there are also encouraging signs that the wars in Europe and Iran may be approaching an end on the physical battlefield, with diplomatic solutions being tortuously achieved. These must be more than fragile, temporary ceasefires; the world needs sound and just long-term treaties. Perhaps then, the international community can turn its attention to the other conflicts and tensions around the globe that continue to demand humanitarian resolution.

An end to conflicts in Ukraine and the Middle East will turbo charge the global economy and Bedfordshire's businesses must be ready to capitalise. Much has already been written about the unprecedented opportunities for growth across our county, so there is little point in repeating the detail here. Suffice to say, those opportunities are real, substantial and developing now.

There is no need to wait for oil prices to fall or interest rates to improve before acting. The time to prepare is now. Don't miss the bus!

The major developments and investment projects taking shape across Bedfordshire will create opportunities throughout the supply chain. Their impact will extend far beyond the principal contractors and developers, stimulating local employment, increasing population and household incomes, and generating demand for businesses of every size, from the corner shop to our largest companies.

But growth brings its own challenge: people. Businesses at every level will need skilled and committed employees, and there may not be enough to go around. This is where I want to make a particular appeal to enterprising employers.

Bedfordshire has too many young people who are not in education, employment or training, the so-called NEETs. Rather than seeing this simply as a social challenge, businesses should recognise the opportunity. Go out and find these young people. Give them the chance to develop their skills, secure meaningful employment, experience the camaraderie of a workplace and enjoy the satisfaction and purpose that comes from being part of a team.

Employers who are prepared to invest in people and offer that first opportunity will often find themselves rewarded with fresh perspectives, enthusiasm, hard work and, above all, loyalty. We know this works; we have seen it first-hand through numerous examples of businesses benefitting whilst making a real difference.

Nor is it as difficult as some might imagine. Funding, training programmes, educational partnerships and recruitment support are available to help businesses make this happen. Your Bedfordshire Chamber of Commerce is here to help you navigate these opportunities and connect you with the right support.

So, despite the darker evenings and uncertain economic climate, there is plenty to be positive about. The opportunities are there, the foundations are being laid and the businesses that prepare now will be best placed to benefit.

Have a wonderful festive season, and I wish you every success in making the most of the opportunities ahead.

Rod J Calvert

> *"An end to conflicts in Ukraine and the Middle East will turbo charge the global economy and Bedfordshire's businesses must be ready to capitalise."*

> *"Employers who are prepared to invest in people and offer that first opportunity will often find themselves rewarded with fresh perspectives, enthusiasm, hard work and, above all, loyalty."*

Chamber NEWS

MEET SABRINA & ZAK

The Chamber's newest faces

There are two new faces at Bedfordshire Chamber of Commerce, and they're keen to get to know you. Sabrina Latimer and Zakariya Ali have recently joined the team, bringing fresh ideas, enthusiasm and a shared commitment to helping local businesses make the most of their Chamber membership.

Sabrina joins as Membership Engagement Executive, while Zak takes on the role of Marketing and Events Executive. Together, they'll be working closely with members, helping them make valuable connections, get involved in Chamber activities and share their business successes.

Having both joined on the same day in October, they've been finding their feet together, meeting members at events and discovering just how much goes on behind the scenes at the Chamber.

While they've arrived from very different backgrounds, both are excited about working with Chamber members and the wider Bedfordshire business community.

Different journeys, shared enthusiasm

For Sabrina, joining the Chamber has been something of a full-circle moment. Before taking on her new role, she spent five years working in a school, but her connection with the organisation goes back much further.

Thirteen years ago, she and her husband Richard were starting a new business. It was an exciting but daunting time, and Sabrina turned to the Chamber for support. *"I remember thinking, what are we going to do?"* she recalls. *"I came to the Chamber, met Sue and Paula, and it just went from there."*

Today, Richard is an active Chamber member, regularly attending networking events and delivering seminars. Having experienced the difference that Chamber support can make, Sabrina was delighted when the opportunity arose to join the team herself.

Zak's journey has been rather different. His background includes the Civil Service, recruitment, sales and social media marketing, along with time spent travelling around the Balkans. What attracted him to the Chamber was the chance to combine his creative interests with meeting people and learning about their businesses.

"It's a really interesting role because you've got the marketing and social media side, but you're also out there talking to businesses and building relationships," he explains. *"You're getting to know people, understanding their businesses and finding ways to help them."*

Helping members make the most of their Chamber

Although their roles have different focuses, Sabrina and Zak share a determination to make sure members feel supported and know where to turn for help.

For Sabrina, her own experience of starting a business gives her a particular understanding of the challenges members can face. *"I've been on that side of things, and I know how scary it can be when you're starting a business or going networking for the first time. I'd love to help new members find their confidence, make connections and see their businesses grow."*



She's already reaching out to members, finding out how they're getting on and helping them explore opportunities available through the Chamber. For those who haven't attended an event for a while, her advice is to start small. *"I've been encouraging members to come along to Coffee & Connect because it's relaxed and friendly. I'll be there, so they already know someone they can talk to. Sometimes it's just about taking that first step."*

Zak is keen to help businesses raise their profiles through the Chamber's marketing activities, events and member communications. For him, good marketing starts with understanding the people behind a business. *"People want to know who you are if they're going to do business with you,"* he says. *"I want members to feel they can come to me with an idea, and we can work together to bring it to life."*

He's looking forward to encouraging members to share their news and achievements, while also developing his own skills and experience.

A team that's growing together

Despite being only a few weeks into their roles, both have been struck by the welcoming atmosphere at the Chamber and the relationships their colleagues have built with members.

For Zak, that sense of genuine connection is something he particularly values. *"You can see that members are genuinely pleased to catch up with Paula and the team at events. It's a really relaxed, friendly atmosphere, and I'd love members to feel that same connection with us."*

Sabrina agrees, highlighting the importance of bringing businesses together and making introductions that might otherwise never happen. *"If we think two businesses could benefit from meeting, we can make that introduction rather than leaving someone to make a cold call. There's so much support available, and the whole team works together to help."*

With plenty happening across Bedfordshire and new opportunities emerging for local businesses, there's certainly no shortage of ways for them to get involved.

Away from work, Sabrina enjoys spending time with her family and taking her German Shepherd, Blue, for long walks. Zak loves travelling, going to the gym, gaming with friends and skateboarding, a hobby he's enjoyed since growing up in London.

Both are looking forward to getting to know more members over the coming months, whether that's face-to-face at a Chamber event, through a conversation over the phone or simply through an email.

So, whether you're a long-standing member, have recently joined or want to find out how the Chamber can help your business, Sabrina and Zak would love to hear from you.

CELEBRATING BEDFORDSHIRE'S BEST

The 2027 SME Bedfordshire Business Awards and 150 Years of Bedfordshire Chamber of Commerce!

As we look ahead to 2027, there's plenty to celebrate across Bedfordshire's business community! Following another fantastic year of recognising local business success, we're delighted to be gearing up for the 2027 SME Bedfordshire Business Awards, with this year's programme set to be particularly special. 2027 also marks a significant milestone for Bedfordshire Chamber of Commerce as we celebrate our 150th anniversary, recognising a century and a half of supporting, connecting and championing businesses across the county. With a year of celebrations ahead, what better way to recognise the strength and success of Bedfordshire's business community than by shining a spotlight on the SMEs that make our county such a fantastic place to do business?

Celebrating the Best of Bedfordshire

Year after year, the SME Bedfordshire Business Awards continue to grow, bringing together businesses from across the county to celebrate their achievements, recognise outstanding individuals and showcase the incredible talent within our local business community.

The 2026 Awards once again demonstrated the diversity, innovation and ambition of Bedfordshire's SMEs, with businesses from a wide range of sectors coming together to celebrate their successes.

From established businesses to ambitious start-ups, the Awards provide an opportunity for organisations of all sizes and industries to gain recognition, raise their profile and celebrate the hard work that goes into running a successful business.

And as we enter 2027, we're determined to make this year's Awards another occasion to remember!

150 Years of Supporting Bedfordshire Businesses

This year's Awards will take place against the backdrop of a particularly exciting milestone for Bedfordshire Chamber of Commerce.

2027 marks our 150th birthday and throughout the year we'll be celebrating the businesses, people and partnerships that have helped shape Bedfordshire's economy over the past century and a half.

From our earliest beginnings to the thriving business community we support today, our commitment to helping local businesses connect, grow and succeed remains as strong as ever.

Our upcoming 150th anniversary celebrations will provide plenty of opportunities to bring businesses together, reflect on the county's achievements and look ahead to the next chapter of Bedfordshire's business success story.

The SME Bedfordshire Business Awards will be another fantastic opportunity to celebrate the businesses driving that success today.

Bedfordshire Chamber of Commerce 150 years

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Entering, Sponsoring, Attending – or Winning?

Whether you're considering entering your business, supporting the Awards through sponsorship or simply joining us to celebrate the achievements of Bedfordshire's SMEs, we'd love you to be involved.

Keep an eye out for further announcements about the 2027 SME Bedfordshire Business Awards, including award categories, entry details and key dates, alongside more information about our exciting programme of 150th anniversary celebrations.

For further information, or to discuss how your business can get involved, contact the Bedfordshire Chamber of Commerce team on 01582 522448

150 years

Here's to celebrating 150 years of Bedfordshire business, recognising today's success stories and looking forward to an exciting future together!

Q&S Quarterly ECONOMIC SURVEY REPORT

Bedfordshire Chamber of Commerce Quarterly Economic Survey (QES) forms part of the British Chambers 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 of the economic climate for businesses in Bedfordshire and beyond.

Q3 2026 Findings

Optimism holds, but cash flow and investment signal tougher conditions

Bedfordshire businesses continue to show confidence in their longer-term prospects, but the Q3 findings point to a more challenging trading environment in the here and now. Domestic sales have softened, cash flow has come under significant pressure and businesses remain cautious about investment and recruitment. At the same time, almost two-thirds of respondents expect their turnover to improve over the next 12 months. It creates a contrasting picture: businesses can see opportunities ahead, but many do not yet feel that current economic conditions are giving them the confidence or headroom to invest in growth.

Domestic Performance: Growth loses momentum

Among businesses answering the question, just 9% reported an increase in UK sales, bookings or custom, while 27% experienced a decrease. Almost two-thirds – 64% – reported no change. That represents a marked slowdown from Q2, when 35% of businesses reported an increase in domestic sales. Forward orders provide a slightly more encouraging picture, although momentum remains limited. Some 23% reported an increase in advance orders or bookings, while 27% saw a decrease and half reported no change. The picture emerging from the survey is therefore less one of a sharp contraction and more one of businesses waiting for stronger demand to return. Respondent comments reinforced that view, highlighting customers taking longer to make decisions, increasing price sensitivity and investment being deferred.

Workforce and Recruitment: Employers become more cautious

Businesses also appear to have become more cautious about employment. During the previous three months, 14% of respondents increased their workforce, while 19% reduced staffing levels and 67% reported no change. Expectations for the next quarter are weaker. Some 19% expect their workforce to increase, compared with 24% anticipating a decrease. This contrasts with Q2, when almost a third of businesses expected employment to grow. Recruitment activity itself has also moderated, with 45% of businesses reporting that they had attempted to recruit during the quarter. Where businesses were recruiting, full-time positions dominated, while respondents continued to identify difficulties across skilled manual and technical, professional and managerial and clerical roles. The findings suggest that skills shortages have not disappeared, but employers are becoming more selective about adding to their workforce as wider economic uncertainty continues.

Investment and Capacity: Cash flow becomes the warning sign

Perhaps the clearest indication of tougher trading conditions comes from cash flow. More than half of businesses (52%) reported a deterioration during the quarter, compared with only 17% recording an improvement. In Q2, the picture had been evenly balanced, with 27% reporting an improvement and 27% a decline. Investment intentions reflect that pressure. For plant, machinery and equipment, just 10% of businesses increased investment plans, while 29% reduced them. Investment in training was even more restrained, with only 4% increasing expenditure and 78% leaving plans unchanged. At the same time, 78% of respondents said they were operating below capacity, up from 70% in Q2. That is significant. Bedfordshire businesses appear to have the capacity to take on more work, but demand, confidence, cash flow and costs are preventing that capacity from being fully utilised.

Outlook: Businesses still believe better conditions lie ahead

Despite those immediate pressures, longer-term confidence remains remarkably resilient. Almost two-thirds of businesses (65%) expect turnover to improve over the next 12 months, up from 56% in Q2. Only 13% expect turnover to worsen. Profitability expectations are more measured, with 44% expecting an improvement, 30% anticipating no change and 26% expecting profitability to fall. Cost pressures remain a major factor. Around seven in ten respondents identified labour costs as a pressure on prices, while other overheads, raw materials and utilities were also frequently cited. Meanwhile, 39% expect to increase their prices during the next three months, compared with 57% expecting prices to remain unchanged.

The Bottom Line

Responding to the findings, Head of Research at the British Chambers of Commerce, David Bharier, said:

"The QES points to an economy stuck in low gear. Most firms are reporting no improvement across almost every indicator we track. It's a positive that the decline of the preceding quarters hasn't continued, and turnover confidence has seen a slight bounce. But the underlying trend still points to flatlining, with just 17% of firms increasing their investment, a post-pandemic low. There is also a big imbalance beneath the headline. Larger firms are driving any improvements to indicators, while the smallest businesses have seen sales and cash flow fall further. Hospitality remains the sector under the most pressure.

"Firms are being held back by two constraints. Global volatility is driving up prices and pushing firms to defer investment decisions, while the underlying cost base continues to rise, particularly around employment. Our cost stack calculator shows domestic policy-driven costs alone have risen by more than 70% in the past decade for a typical SME.

"As the Chancellor finalises the Budget, every major measure should be put through our Growth Delivery Test: what will it get firms to do that they aren't doing now?"



David Bharier
Head of Research at the British Chambers of Commerce

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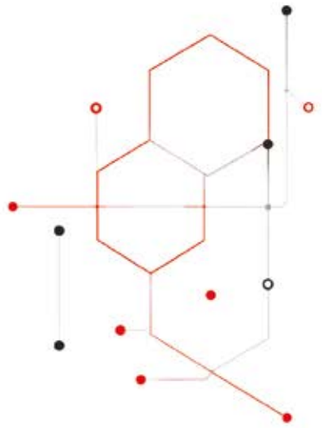

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TWO AWARDS. ONE FUN EVENING.

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Welch Group, the fourth-generation family run logistics business, won two awards at the Motor Transport Awards 2026, at a ceremony marking the industry event's 40th anniversary at London's Grosvenor House Hotel. The company took home the Future Fleets Award and the Partnership Award, the latter for its work with the British Antarctic Survey (BAS). Managing director Chris Welch was joined on stage by two of the people behind the wins: operations manager Julie Payne, for the Partnership Award, and head of solutions Jamie Sands, for the Future Fleets Award.

Award nights are built for a single evening of applause. What they rarely capture is what it took to get there. Behind Welch Group's two wins sit two very different timelines - one measured in decades, one in a deliberate five-year bet - and the same underlying story: nobody wins these awards on a good year alone.

Twenty years, one team

The Partnership Award recognises Welch Group's work with the British Antarctic Survey, the UK's national polar research institution. The relationship began over 20 years ago as a straightforward haulage arrangement - BAS needed a specialist carrier who could move expedition equipment, from snow vehicles to scientific instruments, with the care the work demands. Welch Group's Specialist Movements team, based eight miles from BAS's Cambridge headquarters, had both the capability and the proximity to respond when expedition timelines shifted, as they always do in polar logistics.

Two decades of working the same routes, the same loading bays and the same unpredictable schedules turned a supplier relationship into something closer to one team split across two organisations. So when BAS committed to net zero across its supply chain and Welch Group took delivery of its first electric 42-tonne tractor unit in 2024, there was no tender process. The conversation simply happened, because the trust was already there. It was fitting, then, that it was Julie Payne - operations manager for the Specialist Movements team that has carried BAS's cargo for two decades - who stood beside Chris Welch to collect the trophy.

That trust is now moving BAS's Antarctic expedition cargo - around 100 journeys a season between its new Polar Distribution Hub and the port at Harwich - entirely on electric power, contributing to a 49.3% cut in BAS's transport carbon emissions in under a year. The judges called it an innovative partnership built on 'integrated operations, longevity and excellent customer feedback.'



Five years of being first

The Future Fleets Award recognises a different kind of patience: Welch Group's decision, years ago, to stop waiting for someone else to prove that zero-emission freight could work and start proving it themselves. 'We aren't waiting for the future of freight – we're building it,' the company's winning entry stated.

The company's depots have become live testbeds - trialling everything from a diesel-to-electric retrofit conversion with KleanDrive, to AI freight-matching with Anteam, to autonomous last-mile delivery aircraft with IONA - not because every trial succeeds, but because someone has to run them before the rest of the industry can follow.

That patient, sometimes unglamorous groundwork is now visible in the numbers: two electric 42-tonne tractor units and one 19-tonne rigid in daily operation since 2025, with three more - including Renault's first D Wide 28-tonner - now in operation, the UK's first publicly accessible HGV supercharger, and founding SME status on the Government's £200m Zero Emission HGV and Infrastructure Demonstrator programme.

It's also visible in TwentyForty, the not-for-profit, independent research organisation Welch Group founded to make sure the lessons from all that trial and error reach the independent operators who will never run their own R&D programme - because, as Chris Welch has put it, the transition only works if the whole industry moves forward, not just the operators with the deepest pockets. Head of solutions Jamie Sands, who has driven much of that work from the inside, joined Chris Welch on stage to collect the award.

The judges called it 'an outstanding and comprehensive example of how to develop a future fleet platform,' achieved 'by taking an entrepreneurial approach to a very complex issue.'

'You don't win these two awards in just one year. The Partnership Award is 20 years of a customer trusting us a little more each time we worked together. The Future Fleets Award is five years of being willing to go first, and sometimes get it wrong.

'Neither one belongs only to whoever is holding the trophy. They also belong to the drivers, the warehouse teams and the planners who have been doing the actual work - long before anyone was giving out awards,' said Chris Welch, Managing Director, Welch Group.

welchgroup.co.uk

HOW ERS TURNED BUSINESS RELATIONSHIPS INTO LOCAL CHANGE

What began as a supplier relationship grew into an initiative that brought together businesses, charities, and customers from across Bedfordshire.

When people think about business partnerships, they often measure them by the commercial opportunities they create. Better products, greater expertise, stronger supply chains, and new growth opportunities are obvious benefits.

What if businesses measured a partnership's value by the positive impact it creates in the local community?

For Bedfordshire-based ERS, that opportunity came through its long-standing relationship with Epson. By linking qualifying printer sales to tree planting through the Forest of Marston Vale, ERS transformed a global sustainability initiative into tangible local action.

Businesses don't necessarily need enormous budgets or national campaigns to make a meaningful contribution. Sometimes the opportunity already exists within the relationships they have built.

Bringing a Partnership to Bedfordshire

As Epson's Partner of the Year, 4 years in a row, ERS has worked with them for many years to support businesses across the UK with on-demand colour labelling and printing solutions. Through Epson's ColorWorks range and ERS' Plant a Tree initiative, that relationship has grown into something that benefits not only customers, but also the local environment.

"We're proud to contribute one tree for every qualifying label printer. It's a worthy cause that benefits the land and community right on our doorstep, and we couldn't think of a more suitable partner than Epson to work on this with." – Steve Ball, Managing Director, ERS

For every qualifying Epson ColorWorks printer sold, ERS and Epson fund the planting of a tree in Marston Vale, supporting woodland creation and environmental projects in Bedfordshire.

"The ColorWorks printers help businesses print locally and reduce label waste, while partnerships like ERS help create an impact that can be seen within local communities." – Polly, Channel Marketing Manager, Epson

Since launching nearly six years ago, this initiative has resulted in 1,376 trees planted through the Forest of Marston Vale - with ongoing support from local businesses and Colorworks customers.

The Local Ripple Effect

Successful partnerships rarely involve just two organisations. Turning ambition into action can unite groups with different skills, resources and perspectives—as it did in Bedfordshire.

ERS coordinated the volunteers who turned the initiative into action, planting every tree by hand, with the help of partners and customers. The Forest of Marston Vale provided the location and knowledge.

"As a charity, without support from the local businesses and community, we wouldn't be able to continue to plant trees and manage our woodlands." – Robina, Brand and Fundraising Manager, The Forest of Marston Vale.

Another local business, Greenwood Drones, helped capture the initiative from above, documenting the tree planting and creating a visual record of the work taking place.

ERS customer Letterbox Cocktails went one step further and joined ERS on planting day, showing how a commercial relationship can develop into collaboration around a shared local purpose.



"We thought we'd just buy a printer, and inks every so often, but it's been great to create more of a community and have a relationship with another local business." – Jenny, Owner of Letterbox Cocktails.

The result is bigger than a transaction between a manufacturer, reseller and customer.

One relationship has connected a technology manufacturer, a Bedfordshire business, its customers, and other local organisations around an initiative taking place in their own community.

What Can Businesses Learn?

Not every organisation can access the same partnerships, but every business can build a network that creates value beyond day-to-day commercial activity.

Whether it's working with suppliers, collaborating with customers, supporting local charities or joining forces with neighbouring businesses, opportunities often exist closer to home than many organisations realise.

When considering future partnerships, businesses may wish to ask:

Could this relationship deliver benefits beyond its commercial purpose?

Do you share values that could support a wider initiative?

Could resources, expertise or networks be pooled to create greater impact?

How might this partnership benefit the wider community?

Sometimes the most meaningful outcomes come from asking a different question: not just what a partnership can do for a business, but what it can do for the people and places around it.



A Challenge for Bedfordshire Businesses

At a time when communities across Bedfordshire face growing environmental and social challenges, collaboration has never been more important. Businesses, charities and local organisations all have a role to play, and some of the most effective initiatives begin when those groups come together around a shared purpose.

The lesson from initiatives such as ERS' Plant a Tree is not that businesses need access to major global brands to make a difference. It's that meaningful change can happen when organisations unite to support the places where they live and work.

By building strong local partnerships and investing in their communities, organisations of all sizes can help create a greener, stronger Bedfordshire for future generations.



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Rushmere Park Academy Children
LEARN LIFE-SAVING FIRST AID SKILLS

Children at Rushmere Park Academy have been learning some important life-saving skills, thanks to a visit from Mini First Aid Bedfordshire & Luton.

In September, children from Reception through to Year 4 took part in Mini First Aid Kids sessions, learning practical first aid skills in an engaging and age-appropriate way. The sessions gave the children the opportunity to learn what they could do if someone was hurt or became unwell, while helping them understand that first aid is a life skill that everyone can learn.

There were plenty of questions, lots of enthusiasm and some fantastic participation as the children explored how they could help someone in an emergency.

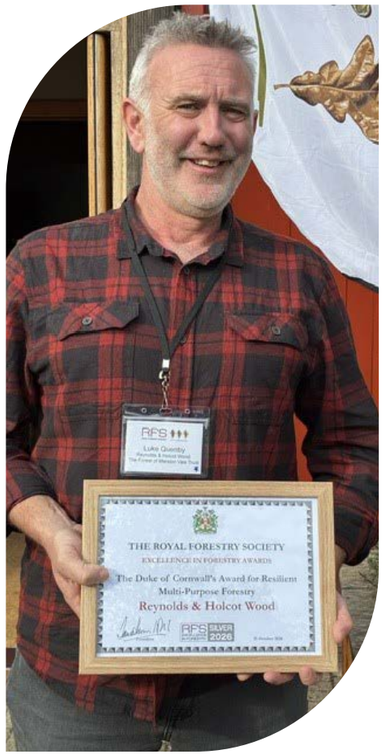
To celebrate their achievement, Mini First Aid Bedfordshire & Luton presented the school with a special Certificate of Congratulations, proudly carrying the message: "Our school can save a life."

Mini First Aid Bedfordshire & Luton owner and trainer Isabelle Viac said: *"It was fantastic to hear how enthusiastic the children were. We want children to understand that they don't have to be a doctor or a nurse to help someone – knowing a few simple first aid skills could make a real difference in an emergency."*

Mini First Aid Bedfordshire & Luton delivers age-appropriate first aid sessions for children from age 3 upwards, alongside first aid training for parents, carers, childcare professionals, schools and workplaces across Bedfordshire and Luton.

View Mini First Aid courses in Bedfordshire at: bedfordshire.minifirstaid.co.uk/





FOREST OF MARSTON VALE TRUST
Celebrates Prestigious Forestry Award

Bedfordshire based environmental charity, the Forest of Marston Vale Trust is celebrating winning a much-deserved silver award in the Excellence in Forestry Awards announced at a prestigious ceremony on 15th October.

The Excellence in Forestry Awards are the leading competition for forestry in England, Wales and Northern Ireland and celebrate the leading lights in woodland management, forestry education and learning. Rotating annually around five regions, the 2026 Awards were for entrants from London and Southeast England.

The Forest of Marston Vale Trust won silver in The Duke of Cornwall's Award for Resilient Multi-Purpose Forestry. The purpose of this award is to recognise woodlands that are "managed for ecological and economic resilience to threats such as pests, diseases and climate change in order to meet commercial, environmental and social objectives". For the Trust this award acknowledges the hard work and expertise that has been applied to breathe life back into Reynolds & Holcot Woods. Covering 90-hectares, these woodlands had suffered from years without active management when the Trust began a 10-year journey to restore them in 2023. Even in these early stages of the restoration plan, the work that has been undertaken is already showing positive results with ongoing ecological surveys. There's been an increase in mammal activity, with five bat species identified, including the rare woodland barbastelle bat; a diverse range of pond species and waterbirds, as well as a diversity of flora.

Luke Quenby, Community Forester for the Forest of Marston Vale Trust, who is leading the restoration programme says, *"There was a huge amount of hard work, resource and faith shown to get this project off the ground. Having such a multi-faceted site (ancient woodland, younger hardwood plantation and pasture with high public access) added to the challenge, which makes getting recognition even nicer. To see the woodland thriving and generating income, employment, trainee and education opportunities alongside leisure and recreation and biodiversity gains is amazing."*

Further details and information about the restoration project and woodland management in general can be obtained via the Charity's website www.marstonvale.org.



BUILT AROUND PEOPLE. DRIVEN BY EXCELLENCE.

Delivering integrated facilities management, construction and engineering solutions nationwide.

HDB SERVICES

Who we are:

HDB Services is an award-winning, family-run facilities management and construction company delivering expert solutions nationwide.
Combining skilled in-house teams with trusted specialists, we provide reliable, high-quality services that keep businesses running safely and efficiently.
More than just a service provider, we're a people-first business built on trust, quality and lasting partnerships





Services we offer:

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- Industrial door specialists
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- Specialist Fabric works

Better together.



Why Client Choose HDB Services:

At HDB Services, we don't just maintain buildings — we build lasting partnerships. Combining technical expertise, exceptional customer service and a people-first approach, we deliver facilities solutions our clients can depend on.

- Award-winning customer service with a people-first approach.
- Nationwide coverage with skilled in-house teams and trusted specialists.
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- Proactive maintenance to protect assets and prevent costly issues.
- Quality, safety and compliance at the heart of everything we do.
- Family-run values, built on trust, transparency and reliability.



More than a contractor. A partner you can count on.



The HDB Snapshot

- 24/7 Helpdesk & Emergency Response
- 50% growth year on year
- Nationwide Supporting Clients Across the UK
- Award-Winning Customer Service Excellence NPS Score of 100
- ISO Certified Committed to Quality, Safety & Environmental Standard
- FIRAS Accredited Certified Passive Fire Protection Specialists
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- Achilles Accredited Pre-Qualified, Trusted & Compliant Supply Chain Partner
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Working together, achieving more.


Hina Sohrab, founder of IT Visionists, with Sarah Owen, MP for Luton North

Luton North MP Sarah Owen
CHAMPIONS IT VISIONISTS

IT Visionists, a Luton-based new member of Bedfordshire Chamber of Commerce, recently met Sarah Owen, MP for Luton North, to discuss local business support and the needs of businesses across Bedfordshire. Sarah also featured the business in her Small Business Saturday shout out, calling founder Hina Sohrab "a shining star and credit to our business and tech community in Luton."

Hina founded IT Visionists in 2021. As a project manager at a digital marketing agency, she had seen what happens when growth outpaces systems: missed deadlines, unclear ownership, delayed reporting and constant firefighting. Today the business helps growing teams replace spreadsheets and scattered emails with ClickUp systems their people actually use. IT Visionists has been a ClickUp Registered Partner and Verified Consultant since 2023 and has delivered more than 200 implementations for clients across the UK and USA, all from its Luton office.

The Chamber's latest Quarterly Economic Survey shows 78% of Bedfordshire businesses operating below capacity. Hina believes better systems help firms get more out of the teams they already have.

"Most businesses don't need another tool. They need a system built around how their team really works," said Hina. "When client work, hand-offs and reporting live in one place, people stop chasing updates and get on with the job."

IT Visionists works with local businesses on-site or remotely. Every engagement starts with a free 10-minute Operations Health Audit and a free 30-minute discovery call.

itvisionists.com/clickup-consultant-bedfordshire

hello@itvisionists.com

IT Visionists

INTRODUCING
Value Chain Management

Who are VCM?

VCM is a business transformation consultancy specialising in business optimisation, including business readiness, strategy outcomes, digital data and innovation, supply chain management, customer analytics, people & change, operational excellence and control management.

Take advantage of VCM's Business Readiness Service

VCM sees readiness as far more than a simple self-assessment. This thinking provides a robust foundation that is essential for members to pursue, win, and successfully deliver the major contracts and exponential growth opportunities emerging across the Bedfordshire region.

VCM has prepared a short Business Readiness questionnaire for members to complete which will assist in understanding businesses' direction, capacity, controls, information, commercial strength and delivery capability required to deliver larger contracts

Complete the questionnaire to get started:
https://readiness.valuechainmanagement.co.uk/info-tqk6snkc

The VCM questionnaire is a private self-assessment. Your result is exclusive to your business, won't be shared with any other buyer, and won't be used to compare or rank members. This is not a pass or fail exercise. Your result will simply indicate where your readiness is strong and or where it may need further work.

Understanding Your Journey

VCM
VALUE CHAIN MANAGEMENT

1. **Define the objectives**
   Agree and define the objectives
2. **Undertake Self Assessment**
   Perform two independent checks:
   Tender Readiness > Compliance ready
   Business Readiness > Capability ready
3. **Rectify Gaps**
   Address what the assessment exposed
4. **Re-run the Assessment**
   To evidence the fixes
   Business Readiness > Capability ready
5. **Bid for Work**
   Now you are compliance and capability ready
6. **Continuously Improve**
   Refresh evidence, continuously improve, stay buyer ready

What happens next?

Once you've completed the questionnaire, VCM will review your responses, provide initial feedback by email and arrange a one-hour conversation to discuss your results and the full Business Readiness diagnostics process.

www.valuechainmanagement.co.uk









SPECIALIST INSURANCE COMPANY KONSILEO
joins Bedfordshire Chamber of Commerce

Konsileo has officially joined the Bedfordshire Chamber of Commerce and are thrilled to become even more involved in the local business community.

It is an incredibly exciting step for the Konsileo Bedfordshire team, placing them in an excellent position to bring their expert insurance advice to a wider audience. For Lee Mounsey, Devon Louise, and Kieran McMahon, local matters. They bring their insight of the local area and combine it with their depth of insurance knowledge to provide tailored advice, solutions, and risk management to businesses of all shapes and sizes.

Not only that, but Konsileo has also seen huge success in the awards world, too. Back in June, the company was named in The Sunday Times list 'Best Places to Work' for medium organisations. Measured by job satisfaction, wellbeing, and engagement, the award is decided directly via employee feedback. Across all categories, Konsileo ranked as 'Excellent'. The average employee happiness rating was at a staggering 95%, and risk indexes were both under 3%, compared to the industry average of 42%.

At the end of last year, Konsileo was also announced as the Commercial Lines Broker of the Year at the Insurance Times awards. This was the second consecutive win and is proof that their offering is not just for their employees – it's also for the clients. The autonomy that Konsileo brokers have enables them to truly look after clients, not just sorting cover at renewal. There's no restriction on placement or access to markets, meaning they have more options to choose from.

Konsileo Bedfordshire are thrilled to be looking after local businesses, getting to know the people behind the names and establishing long-term, transparent relationships.

Konsileo specialises in Construction, Manufacturing and Engineering industries, while also supporting businesses across a wide range of commercial sectors.

With access to a wide range of UK insurance markets, Konsileo can support businesses with cover including Combined Liabilities, Professional Indemnity, Property, Contractors' All Risks, Plant & Equipment, Directors' & Officers' Liability, Motor Fleet and Cyber Insurance.

Get in touch to start the conversation today. Contact us:
E: Devon.luffrum@konsileo.com T: 01234 388591



SIMARCO INTERNATIONAL
Connecting Businesses, Markets and Opportunities

At Simarco International, we connect supply chains through experienced people who listen, understand and deliver exceptional service.

We know that behind every delivery is a complex supply chain, but for our customers, the process shouldn't have to feel complicated. Whether its reaching new markets overseas, keeping stock moving or meeting important delivery deadlines, our role is to make logistics simpler.

As an independent logistics provider, our approach is centred around third-party logistics (3PL), bringing together transport, warehousing, distribution and customs expertise to provide solutions tailored to each customer's needs.

With a network spanning the UK, Europe and beyond, we support businesses of all sizes, from smaller companies moving a few pallets to global brands managing complex international supply chains.

With eight locations across the UK, our Bedford office is a great example of the breadth of expertise within our network. Our experienced team brings together extensive knowledge across all areas of logistics and supply chain management, helping customers navigate complex requirements with confidence. Bedford is also our Centre of Excellence for Italian freight, where our bilingual representatives combine specialist market knowledge with a wider understanding of international logistics to deliver a seamless, personalised service.

It's this combination of international reach, local expertise and personal service that shapes how we work.

Because for us, logistics is about more than moving goods. It's about building relationships, solving challenges and helping businesses grow.





LONDON LUTON AIRPORT
maintains sector leader status for fifth year

London Luton Airport (LLA) has been recognised as a GRESB Sector Leader for the fifth consecutive year, achieving a perfect score of 100, retaining its five-star rating and remaining the highest-performing airport in its European peer group.

GRESB is an independent global benchmark for environmental, social and governance (ESG) performance. The recognition reflects LLA's commitment to reducing environmental impacts while delivering social value for local communities.

Key environmental achievements include reducing carbon emissions from airport operations by more than 40% compared with 2019, cutting landing and take-off emissions per passenger by 13.2%, and increasing the number of quieter, more fuel-efficient aircraft based at the airport to nearly two thirds, one of the highest proportions in Europe. LLA has also continued to reduce energy use, increase recycling and expand its low-carbon vehicle fleet.

As one of the region's largest employers, LLA supports around 14,700 local jobs, employs 50% of its workforce from Luton postcode areas and spent £41.2 million with businesses within 20 miles of the airport.

During 2025, the airport supported almost 1,000 local people through education and skills programmes, raised more than £60,000 for charity partners, supported 45 community projects and contributed more than 800 employee volunteering hours.

Alberto Martin, Chief Executive Officer at London Luton Airport, said: "Maintaining a 100% score, five-star rating and sector leader status from GRESB for a fifth consecutive year highlights our commitment to the highest standards of ESG performance and delivering lasting benefits for our local community."


Karen Perkins,
BLCF Chief Executive Officer

Bedfordshire and Luton Community Foundation
MAKING BUSINESS GIVING GO FURTHER

Businesses have an important role to play in building stronger, healthier communities. But how can they ensure their investment creates the greatest possible impact?

At Bedfordshire and Luton Community Foundation (BLCF), we help businesses turn their corporate social responsibility (CSR) and social value commitments into meaningful action that makes a lasting difference.

As the leading local grantmaker, we understand local needs and the challenges facing the charities working to address them. We bring this knowledge together with the resources, expertise and ambitions of businesses to create opportunities that benefit both.

Our partnerships take many forms. We work with London Luton Airport to deliver its community investment, distributing grants to a wide range of local organisations. Through our partnership with Peabody Housing, we distribute £24,000 annually to support work tackling violence against women and girls, developing young people's skills and improving local lives.

We also help businesses make their own CSR commitments go further. Working with Ashe Group, we matched its investment in free health screenings for local construction workers, doubling the number of places available from 22 to 44.



We're also developing the Bedfordshire Business Giving Circle, bringing businesses together to pool their resources and increase investment in local communities.

These are just a few examples; social value isn't one-size-fits-all. It might mean establishing a funding programme, offering pro-bono legal advice, strengthening a charity's governance or helping it build financial resilience. The key is connecting what businesses can offer with what communities genuinely need.

Working with BLCF helps businesses turn good intentions into practical action, creating stronger communities and making every contribution count.

To start your giving journey or to take your CSR and Social Value ambitions to the next level, contact Dawn Bainbrdige, BLCF Head of Business Development for an informal conversation: dawn.bainbridge@blcf.org.uk

BUILDING BEDFORDSHIRE'S next generation of businesses

Every successful business starts somewhere: a side hustle, a passion project or an idea that won't go away. With the right support, those first steps can become something much bigger.

Across Bedfordshire, investment, regeneration and changing market demands are creating fresh opportunities for aspiring entrepreneurs and established businesses alike. But recognising an opportunity is one thing. Knowing how to make the most of it is another.

That's where Wenta comes in.

A not-for-profit social enterprise and strategic partner of Bedfordshire Chamber of Commerce, Wenta has spent more than 40 years helping people start, run and grow successful businesses.

And its mission goes beyond business advice. It's about opening doors, strengthening local communities and giving more people the confidence and opportunity to succeed through entrepreneurship.

From developing an initial idea and writing a business plan to managing cash flow, winning contracts, embracing new technology and exploring new markets, Wenta provides free, expert guidance at every stage of the business journey.

Through one-to-one mentoring, practical workshops, and accessible online resources, entrepreneurs can build the knowledge, skills, and connections they need to take their next step.



And that support is already making a difference across Bedfordshire.

Earlier this year, Wenta welcomed more than 55 local businesses to its AI Roadshow at the University of Bedfordshire, helping entrepreneurs explore how emerging technology could benefit their businesses. The event received overwhelmingly positive feedback, with 100% of delegates rating the session Good or Excellent.

One attendee shared: *"I'm a complete newbie to the AI space but feel it will benefit my business in the future."*

Building a successful business isn't just about having a great idea; it's about having the right support to make it happen.

Whether you're taking your first steps into entrepreneurship or preparing for your next phase of growth, Wenta is here to help turn potential into progress.

Discover free business advice, training and events at wenta.co.uk



THE AI CYCLOPS:
Making Artificial Intelligence Work for Local Businesses

Artificial intelligence is transforming the business world, but for many business owners, knowing where to start can feel overwhelming.

Milton Keynes-based The AI Cyclops is changing that by making AI accessible, practical and affordable for businesses of all sizes.

Founded by local entrepreneur Andy Jones, The AI Cyclops delivers hands-on, CPD-accredited workshops and specialist masterclasses designed to help businesses save time, reduce costs and unlock new opportunities.

From ChatGPT and Claude to AI-powered marketing, website development, business automation and video production, the focus is on real-world applications that deliver genuine results.

"We want business owners to see AI as an opportunity, not something to fear," explains Andy. "You don't need technical knowledge. You just need to understand what's possible and how to make it work for you."

The company has also launched The AI Cyclops Business Club, bringing together local entrepreneurs through monthly networking events, expert speakers, live demonstrations and collaborative learning.

With practical training, ongoing support and innovative business solutions, The AI Cyclops is helping local organisations confidently embrace the future. Discover how AI could transform your business.

Visit www.theaicyclops.com to explore workshops, masterclasses, membership and networking opportunities.



MAKING REAL EXPERIENCE WORK FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

In 2010, Working Options delivered its first session in a school in Luton. Now, sixteen years later, it's been brilliant to see businesses across Bedfordshire helping to shape the next chapter of that story through our Hybrid Work Experience programme.

Rather than simply telling young people about work, employers set them a real business challenge. Over the course of a week, students worked in teams to explore the brief, developed ideas and created a solution before presenting their recommendations back to the business (Dragon's Den style!).

The results can be remarkable. Given a problem to solve and the freedom to think creatively, young people often showed great confidence, curiosity and teamwork that can be difficult to unlock in a traditional classroom environment.

One school told us that some of the students who can be hardest to engage were among those who got the most from the experience.

Employers enjoy it too. *"Students enthusiasm, engagement, and willingness to get involved was outstanding from start to finish. It was fantastic to watch them work together, share ideas and challenge themselves throughout the activity."*

For many students, the programme provides their first meaningful interaction with employers and a chance to understand how businesses actually operate. It also helps them see opportunities they may never previously have considered.

"It allowed me to see other options which are available," said one student.

Last year alone, Working Options engaged more than 6,500 young people through its Regional Accelerator programme, with businesses across Bedfordshire playing a key role in helping students develop skills, confidence and a better understanding of the opportunities available to them.

To every business that got involved this year, thank you. Whether you hosted a challenge, shared your experience or gave young people a glimpse into your organisation, you helped make a real difference.

Working Options is a national charity working across England and Wales. Last year, we engaged more than 90,000 young people through our programmes, events and activities, while our digital content reached over 3 million people online.

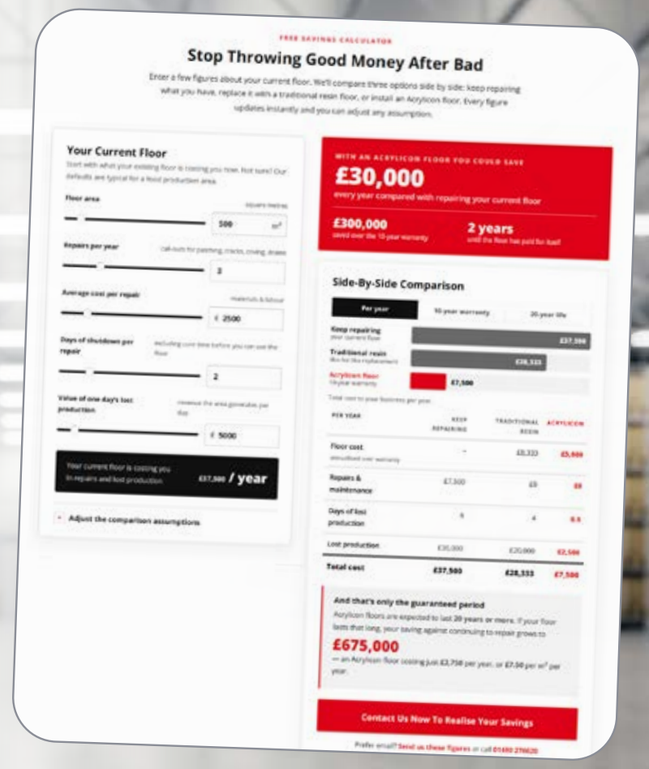
If you'd like to get involved, there are plenty of ways to support local young people. You could volunteer in a school, join one of our employer networks, host a Workplace Taster Day, contribute to our digital content, or take part in next year's Hybrid Work Experience programme.



To find out more, contact Evie Gretton, Project Manager for Bedfordshire, at evie@workingoptions.org.uk

ACRYLICON UK

Launches AI-Developed Savings Calculator to Help Businesses Save Money



As Acrylicon increasingly integrated artificial intelligence (AI) into its business operations, the opportunity arose to transform this established formula into a simple, automated, web-based calculator that anyone could use.

When choosing an industrial flooring system, the initial installation cost is only part of the picture. Repairs, maintenance, replacement costs and operational downtime can quickly add up, making it essential for businesses to consider the total cost of ownership.

To help businesses make more informed decisions, Acrylicon UK has developed an online Savings Calculator, designed to demonstrate the potential financial benefits of investing in a high-performance Acrylicon resin flooring system.

The concept began several years ago, when Acrylicon developed a formula to help business owners, facilities managers and finance teams calculate the true cost of repairing or replacing their flooring. However, the calculations were complex and often required support from the company's technical team.

Using AI to help develop the tool, Acrylicon has made a previously complicated process accessible, enabling users to compare flooring options and understand the potential long-term financial implications of their decisions.

The calculator takes into account factors including installation costs, maintenance, repairs, replacement cycles and operational downtime. By looking beyond the initial price per square metre, businesses can gain a clearer picture of the potential savings available over time.

For environments where keeping operations running is critical, minimising downtime can make a significant difference. Acrylicon's rapid-curing resin flooring systems can be installed in as little as two hours in suitable applications, helping reduce disruption and return facilities to operation sooner.

The message is clear: the cheapest flooring to install is not always the most cost-effective over its lifetime.

Acrylicon UK encourages businesses, contractors and specifiers to look beyond upfront costs and consider the bigger picture when planning their next flooring project.

The Savings Calculator is available via the Acrylicon UK website, alongside a video explaining how to use the tool.

For further information, visit www.acryliconuk.com or contact Adam Clements on 07788 914260 or email info@acryliconuk.com.



Manchester AO Arena Refurbishment



Driver Hire Bedford and Huntingdon:

BUILT ON CONNECTION

Driver Hire Bedford and Huntingdon is a locally owned franchise of Driver Hire, the UK's leading specialist transport and logistics recruitment company. Backed by a national network of over 100 offices and more than 40 years of industry experience, the business combines established expertise with a personal, local approach to recruitment.

Under the direction of franchisee Gbola Laoshe, the business is built around a simple principle: "We're the bridge between employers and candidates." For Gbola, communication is central to building strong relationships with clients and candidates, helping businesses find the staff they need and people find the right opportunities.

Since opening in November 2020, the Bedford and Huntingdon franchise has grown from a one-man operation into a team of five, united by a shared commitment to connecting people with work and supporting local businesses.

The team's commitment to service is reflected in client feedback. Client A.M. praised the team: "Professional drivers, easy to work with office staff and always have availability. Best in the county I've used!" Beyond recruitment, Driver Hire Bedford and Huntingdon supports local communities through sponsorships, demonstrating its commitment to building relationships and making a positive difference across the area.

As Gbola puts it, *"We have that drive, and our team is at the heart of what we do."*

driverhire.co.uk

Empowering Conversations That Save Lives:

THE WORK OF THE OLLIE FOUNDATION

Every suicide is a tragedy, leaving families, friends and communities with unimaginable grief. At The OLLIE Foundation, we believe suicide can be preventable through education, early intervention and compassionate conversations.

The Foundation was established by three St Albans parents who had each lost a son to suicide. United by their shared experience, they wanted to prevent other families experiencing the same heartbreak. Their vision is captured in the strapline: "One Life Lost is Enough."

At the heart of our work is the belief that empowering conversations can save lives. We equip parents, carers, teachers, youth workers, professionals and community members with the confidence, knowledge and practical skills to recognise when someone may be struggling and respond appropriately.

We work alongside schools, counselling services and community organisations to create stronger networks of support for young people. Our expertise also helps schools develop and test suicide-prevention and postvention policies, enabling them to respond safely and compassionately when concerns arise or a suicide affects their community.

Alongside prevention, we support those navigating life after suicide loss, helping them feel less alone and connected to people who understand.

We are calling on individuals, businesses, schools and community groups to support The OLLIE Foundation as charity partners, donors, fundraisers and advocates. You could make a donation, organise a fundraiser, host an awareness session or promote our work within your community.

Your support will help us train more trusted adults and open more life-saving conversations before someone reaches crisis point.

Visit www.theolliefoundation.org, email contactus@theolliefoundation.org or contact Naomi@theolliefoundation.org to become a Charity Partner.

#OneLifeLostIsEnough



URGENT WINTER APPEAL to cover soaring cost of aviation fuel

Magpas Air Ambulance has launched an urgent winter appeal to close an unexpected £50,000 funding gap the charity is facing.

Demand for the lifesaving service is at a record high, but more missions mean more flying hours, and right now Magpas Air Ambulance is having to pay around double what was planned for aviation fuel.

The air ambulance charity responds to patients in life-threatening emergencies across the East of England 24/7, delivering treatments usually only available in hospitals. From their base in Cambridgeshire, Magpas Air Ambulance can reach places such as Bedford in as little as seven minutes, bringing specialist care closer when every second counts.

Aviation fuel prices rose sharply across the UK earlier this year following the outbreak of the conflict in the Middle East, and its fuel costs jumped by 82.5% in a single month.

Simon Lewis, Executive Medical Director at Magpas Air Ambulance, said: *"As the nights draw in, working in cold and dark conditions brings added challenges for our teams. However, our doctors and critical care paramedics remain ready to respond to people who urgently need our specialist care.*

"We can't control the fuel price or the number of calls for help. But with the support of our community, we can make sure nothing stops us reaching the next patient who needs us this winter."

Visit magpas.org.uk/winterfuelappeal to find out more.





FROM BEDFORD TO BRITAIN: Two Award-Winning Women on a Mission to Transform Trauma Recovery

What began with one therapist's vision has grown into an award-winning Bedfordshire business with international reach and ambitious plans for national expansion. Based at Bedford Heights since 2017, Future-Edge Therapy was founded by Bonita and Claire Ackerman du Preez, bringing together Bonita's 24 years in senior educational leadership and specialist trauma therapy expertise with Claire's 30-year policing career, retiring as a Chief Inspector.

In 2026, they were named Gold Winners of Business Owners of the Year at the National Businesswomen's Awards and won the Service Excellence Award at the Bedfordshire SME Business Awards, progressing to the national finals in November.

Today, their team of five specialist therapists supports adults, children and families, while The Trauma Recovery School reaches clients internationally. Their new Child and Family Programme combines structured therapy with practical parental support.

Looking ahead, January 2027 will see the planned launch of Future-Edge Therapy Accreditation (FETA), a specialist trauma and PTSD qualification being developed for accreditation by the CPD Standards Office, alongside their expanding therapist licensing network. Their vision? To make specialist trauma recovery accessible in every UK city.

www.future-edgetherapy.co.uk

The Admin You Shouldn't Still Be Doing by Hand

Most small businesses in Bedfordshire aren't short of ideas. They're short of hours. And a surprising number of those hours go on work a computer could do: copying orders from one system to another, filling in forms that weren't built for the job, rebuilding the same report every Friday.



At Franklins Farm, online orders used to be re-typed by hand before the kitchen could see them. Today they flow straight from the shop into a simple order app, saving the team four to five hours every week and removing the risk of a missed order. At Box & Charnock, engineers used to wrestle with an Excel stock form on their phones. Now they use a simple mobile app that sends each order straight to head office by email, so the office knows what's needed before the van is back.

Neither business bought expensive enterprise software. Both started by asking one question: which task do we repeat every week that follows the same steps every time? If the answer is "quite a few", that's usually where automation pays for itself fastest.

Three good places to start looking:

- Anything you copy and paste between two systems

- Forms or spreadsheets your team fills in on the move

- Customer messages that get the same reply every time

Modern AI tools have made this kind of automation affordable for businesses with five staff, not just five hundred.

James Marlow runs AgentMarlow, a Bedfordshire-based automation consultancy building practical tools for small businesses.

To find out what you could automate, visit agentmarlow.com or email james@agentmarlow.co.uk.



LOGISTICS SKILLS INVESTMENT opens opportunities for local employers

The National College for Logistics (NC4L) in Leighton Buzzard, part of The Bedford College Group, is strengthening the region's logistics workforce through a Driver Academy and proposals to support London Luton Airport's expansion.

NC4L has invested around £325,000 in vehicles, equipment and facilities for the academy, delivered with specialist provider SP Training. It aims to train 80 HGV drivers over the next 12 months.

Alex Mayer, MP for Dunstable and Leighton Buzzard, visited in September to officially open the academy, getting behind the wheel of an HGV and learning about its training programmes.

Apprenticeships and commercial courses will provide routes into professional driving for school leavers, career changers and people returning to work. Training will also support progression into fleet planning, supervision and management, helping employers address recruitment challenges and develop their workforce.

Rachel Hopkins, MP for Luton South and South Bedfordshire, visited for a tour the facilities and discuss skills and regional growth. NC4L outlined its ambition for an Airport Logistics Skills Partnership and associated academy to coordinate recruitment, apprenticeships and career development.

The proposed partnership would support the airport's growing logistics operations and supply chain, alongside workforce needs during construction. NC4L's existing relationship with GXO Logistics provides a foundation for collaboration, with GXO's new airport consolidation centre highlighted as an early opportunity.

For local businesses, these initiatives offer opportunities to shape training around operational needs while widening access to skilled recruits and supporting regional growth.

Find out more about training and employer partnerships at bedfordcollegegroup.ac.uk

New MEMBERS

Bedfordshire Chamber of Commerce 150 years

Better Together
Working together, achieving more

We would like to extend a very warm welcome to all New **MEMBERS** of the Bedfordshire Chamber of Commerce. You can learn more about becoming a member and all of the associated benefits by calling us now on 01582 522448 or by emailing your enquiry to info@chamber-business.com

A1 Minibus & Coach Ltd
a1minibus.com
We operate an up to date fleet of vehicles of many sizes including 6-32 seaters minibus and coach hire.

AG Employment Ltd
Recruitment Agency.

Amara MK Ltd
Business Services.

Avalon Cleaning Systems
avaloncleaningsystems.co.uk
A professional cleaning company providing reliable office cleaning services to various organisations and commercial properties within the Home Counties, London and Greater London.

AXSIM
axsim.racing
At AXSIM, we create full-motion racing simulators that capture the excitement and joy of driving.

Barker Parry Town Planning Ltd
barkerparry.co.uk
Barker Parry Town Planning provides a comprehensive solution to all your planning needs. Whether you're a landowner unsure how best to utilise your property, a homeowner looking to build or expand your own home, someone facing the challenges of obtaining planning permission or wishing to object to a proposal, we can help.

BKS Partners Ltd
bkspartner.co.uk
BKS is a dedicated consultancy firm specialising in delivering tailored solutions for small to medium-sized businesses. With a focus on leadership and organisational development, we pride ourselves on simplifying complexity and amplifying success.

British Mica Company Holdings Limited
britishmica.co.uk
Engineering Solutions - Design, Fabrication, Machining.

CBB Supplies Ltd
cbbsupplies.co.uk
Specialist suppliers to the HVAC Facilities engineer. CBB Supplies Ltd are specialist suppliers of Products and services from many major manufacturers as a "One Stop Shop" for the busy building services engineer.

Chasestead Ltd
chasestead.co.uk
Leading sheet metalwork and fabrication engineers offering the complete custom sheet metal engineering solution.

Cinch Self Storage - Bedford
cinchstorage.co.uk/facility/bedford
Self storage units in Bedfordshire are easier with Cinch Storage. No lock-in contracts. Refunds for unused storage days. No waiting periods.

Credence Homes Limited
credence.org.uk
We specialise in beautifully furnished, fully equipped short-term rentals designed for modern travellers, remote workers, families, and corporate guests.

DGH Construction Ltd
dghconstruction.com
Main contractors working in education, residential and commercial sectors. At DGH we look to work closely with architects, surveyors and our clients. We believe a strong working relationship helps to deliver a high quality project, one that delivers in quality, programme and value.

Eat With Your Eyes
eatwithyoureyes.co.uk
Eat With Your Eyes are a Bedford based branding and creative design agency specialising in the hospitality, food and drink sectors. Services include brand strategy, brand positioning, customer journey communication engagement, brand experiences, menu design, marketing campaigns, digital and social, packaging.

ELT Cost Management Ltd
Providing professional estimating, tendering and pricing support to contractors, developers and consultancies within the construction industry.

Exclusive Vehicle Contracts Ltd
evcltd.co.uk
We are here to assist with all your day to day fleet requirements. Here at Exclusive Vehicle Contracts, we are a dedicated team of experienced professionals. Tailored to work with your company, using specialised software systems to manage all aspects of your fleet. We offer: Contract Hire, Full Fleet Management, New Vehicle Sales, Short term vehicle rental/daily hire.

FTF Worldwide Event Management Ltd (Face-To-Face Events)
fullyfused.co.uk
Exceptional events. Expertly managed. From concept to completion. One Team. Every detail. Our strength lies in bringing everything together. From the initial idea and logistical planning, through to production, delivery and the final detail on the day, FTF Worldwide brings you one experienced team to manage your entire journey.

Gardiff EPOS
gardiffepos.com
EPOS & Payment Solutions for Hospitality & Retail. Reliable EPOS you can depend on with integrated payments and 365 day support.

Harlington Upper School
harlington.org
Harlington Upper School is a very special place. We are a high attaining, academic school with outcomes at GCSE and A Level that consistently top the Bedfordshire league tables. We embrace an approach to teaching and learning that combines innovation with established best practice, and equip our young people with the skills, knowledge and qualifications they need to progress successfully beyond their school years.

Homely Spaces Ltd
homelyspaces.com
Making working away feel more like home. Thoughtfully managed accommodation for project teams across the UK and Ireland.

Hot Spring Professional Limited
hot-spring.it
Provide managed IT, cybersecurity and fractional CTO for growing, regulated and tech-forward businesses without internal overhead.

ICW Powermode Limited
icwpowermode.com
For over 50 years ICW Powermode has designed, delivered, and maintained UK-manufactured switchgear and power systems for mission-critical environments where failure is not an option. Based in Luton with 4,000+ completed projects powering £4B+ of electrical infrastructure — trusted by leading institutions including Barclays, Colt Data Centres, HSBC, O2, Serverfarm, The Shard, Royal Brompton Hospital and many more.

Ideas Forums
ideasforums.com
Awards, Festivals, Retreats, Dinners, Adventures, Content. We run the programmes that bring the UKs most ambitious entrepreneurs together.

ITS Interiors Limited
itsinteriors.co.uk
ITS Interiors is a Principal Contractor and Bespoke Joinery Manufacturer delivering complex, high-specification commercial interiors and fit-out projects across the UK and internationally. We provide an integrated service spanning pre-construction, design development, project management, specialist manufacturing, fit-out and final handover. Bringing these capabilities together gives our clients greater control, clearer accountability and confidence throughout delivery.

Konsileo Bedfordshire
konsileo.com
Konsileo Bedfordshire provides local, personal commercial insurance advice to businesses across Bedfordshire and the surrounding areas, backed by the strength and resources of the nationwide Konsileo brokerage.
Our team specialises in Construction, Manufacturing and Engineering, while also supporting businesses across a wide range of commercial sectors.

Land and Marine Environmental Ltd
landandmarineenvironmental.com
The provision of environmental monitoring, hygiene inspections, water quality management services, training and the supply of testing, disinfection and sanitation products worldwide.

lifesafety.ai
lifesafety.ai
LifeSafety.ai is a cloud and mobile H&S platform built around UK rules rather than generic checklists. Teams can complete 5×5 risk assessments, RAMS and method statements, digital permit-to-work, inspections and audits (including offline), COSHH assessments with SDS data extraction, fire-safety records to British Standards, training and competency tracking, and incident reports with photo evidence, witness statements, and auto-populated RIDDOR fields.

MEVA UK Formwork Systems Limited
meva.net/en-gb
Whether you need brand-new formwork, assistance with designing an automated climbing formwork system, spare parts or refurbishment services, MEVA UK Formwork Systems can help.

P1 Construction Ltd
p1construction.co.uk
Civil Engineering and Construction Solutions.

Phoenix Crane Service Ltd
phoenixcranes.co.uk
Phoenix Crane Services LTD provides specialist lifting, auditing, labour and consultancy services to the crane and lifting industry, with a strong focus on safety, compliance and professional standards, we support clients across a wide range of lifting operations and projects.

Queens Drive Laundry Ltd
queensdrivelaundry.co.uk
Providing professional linen hire and laundry services throughout the Midlands including Northamptonshire and Bedfordshire, even travelling as far as London. We aim to always provide a friendly and highly efficient restaurant laundry, hotel laundry and linen hire services, ensuring our customer's requirements always come first. Our linen hire and laundry services provide a number of different businesses including hotels, gyms, restaurants, pubs, bars, care homes, hairdressers and conference centres.

RDT Architects Ltd
rdtarchitects.co.uk
Innovative architectural business known for excellence and creativity.

Reusefully Ltd
reusefully.co.uk
Reusefully provides expert circular economy advice and support within the built environment. We provide a comprehensive, end-to-end service to unlock the full potential of the circular economy. We ensure that all materials and waste from existing buildings are managed according to the material value hierarchy and champion the recovery of products and materials. We assist project teams with design and delivery of new buildings that are circular from the outset and help asset owners and managers to understand their buildings and the circular potential of their portfolios.

S.D.G. Electrical and Mechanical Engineering Limited
sdgservices.co.uk
We specialise in Mechanical and Electrical works in both the Domestic and Commercial sectors with a client base including Schools, Care Homes, NHS Trusts, Hotels, Leisure Facilities and various private companies and individuals.

Sinfield Property Ltd
sinfieldproperty.com
Flexible, Secure Storage Spaces.

Smart Audio Visual Services Ltd
smartaudiovisual.com
Smart Audio Visual specialise in providing audio visual design, installation and video production services.

Smartmist Systems Ltd
mistingsolutions.co.uk
Residential, Domestic & Commercial fire suppression.

Spectrum Acoustic Consultants Ltd
spectrumacoustic.com/
Noise, vibration and surge problems can hold up planning, stop building sign-offs, trigger complaints, damage equipment and shut down operations. Spectrum Acoustic Consultants helps organisations understand and solve these problems. That could mean a housing developer meeting planning conditions, a manufacturer protecting its neighbours and workforce, an infrastructure project controlling construction vibration, or an energy operator preventing pulsation and surge from damaging pipework. Our technical expertise comes with clear, practical advice that reduces risk and keeps projects moving.

Star Platforms Limited
starplatforms.co.uk
Star Platforms is one of the UK's leading powered access specialists, providing access platform hire, sales, servicing, inspections and IPAF training nationwide. With extensive industry expertise, our team supports businesses of all sizes with safe, compliant and cost-effective working at height solutions. We offer a comprehensive range of powered access equipment for hire and purchase, including low-level access platforms, scissor lifts, boom lifts and specialist access equipment with working heights ranging from 3 to 28 metres. Whether you require short-term equipment hire, long-term fleet solutions or expert technical support, Star Platforms delivers reliable access solutions tailored to your project requirements.

Star Power
star-power.co.uk
Reliable Temporary Power Solutions for Construction, Events and Critical Infrastructure
Star Power is a leading provider of temporary power solutions, supporting businesses across the region with reliable, efficient and responsive power services. We work with customers in construction, infrastructure, utilities, events, facilities management and industrial sectors, helping them maintain productivity and minimise downtime through dependable temporary power provision.
Our services include generator hire, battery energy storage systems (BESS), fuel management, distribution equipment, cable hire and specialist power consultancy.

Stark Build
starkbuild.co.uk
We are one of the UKs largest retailers and distributors of building and construction materials, with more than 550 dedicated builders merchant branches and distribution centres.

Tasty Hour Catering
tastyhour.co.uk
Tasty Hour Catering Ltd provides professional catering and food service solutions for businesses, construction sites, corporate workplaces, events and private functions. Our promise: Fresh food. Reliable service. Flexible catering made around you.

The AI Cyclops
theaicyclops.com
The AI Cyclops helps businesses, entrepreneurs and organisations understand, adopt and use artificial intelligence in practical, meaningful ways. We provide hands-on AI training, CPD-accredited workshops and masterclasses, consultancy and implementation support designed to help businesses move from simply talking about AI to actually using it effectively.

The Carat Shop
thecaratshop.co.uk
20 years of creating officially licensed jewellery, accessories and gifts.

United Welding Supplies Ltd
unitedwelding.co.uk
Leading supplier to industry for welding, abrasives, PPE, fume extraction, power tools, industrial gases and all associated products. We offer next day delivery, sales, service, hire, technical support and have ISO 9001, 14001, Cyber Essentials Plus and Mission Zero Gold accreditations .

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AXSIM
Sam Lambert
go@axsim.racing
axsim.racing

AXSIM creates premium full-motion racing simulators inspired by a heritage of aerospace engineering and innovation. Combining advanced motion technology, meticulous craftsmanship and immersive design, our simulators deliver the excitement, engagement and joy of driving for entertainment venues, motorsport enthusiasts and discerning private owners.

BKS Partners Ltd
Nathan Baker
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bkspartner.co.uk

BKS help organisations solve growth challenges, strengthen leadership and deliver meaningful change. We work with businesses and public bodies that need structure, direction and hands-on support to move forward with confidence. Our approach: Analyse → Plan → Implement. An end-to-end solution that turns insight into action and action into results.

DGH Construction Ltd
Beth Perry
01462 812255
beth@dghconstruction.com
dghconstruction.com

DGH Construction is a Bedford-based main contractor delivering education, residential and commercial projects across Bedfordshire, Hertfordshire, Cambridgeshire and London. We work across both public and private sectors, with projects ranging from £50k to £2.5m, and pride ourselves on a practical, reliable approach and strong client relationships.

Eat With Your Eyes
Tony Chambers
tony@eatwithyoureyes.co.uk
eatwithyoureyes.co.uk

Eat With Your Eyes is a strategic creative agency specialising in the hospitality, food and drink sectors. We work with leading high street restaurant groups, pub restaurants, hotels, foodservice and leisure destination operators. We create and transform brands to deliver outstanding results, making connections with consumers worth savouring.

Hatch Creative Design
Sophie Bolton
hello@hatchcreativedesign.com
linkedin.com/in/sophie-bolton-0a8610191/
hatchcreativedesign.com/

Hatch is a strategic web design agency based in Bedfordshire. We work with established businesses to create thoughtful, high-performing websites that reflect who they are, communicate their value and support where they're going next. Our approach brings together strategy, design and development to create websites that strengthen brands, build credibility and support long-term business growth.

Hot Spring IT
Parmi Lally
07794 851177
parmi@hot-spring.it
hot-spring.it

We specialise in supporting law firms and accountancy practices across Hertfordshire and North London, where client confidentiality, regulatory compliance and dependable systems are essential. Our services include managed IT support, cybersecurity protection and advisory, and fractional CTO services.We focus on practical, plain-English advice and proactive support, so your team can concentrate on clients rather than technology problems.

ICW Powermode
Adrian Barthaud
01582 227222
a.barthaud@icwpowermode.com
icwpowermode.com

Founded by Ian Charles Wright in 1974, for over 50 years ICW Powermode has designed, delivered, and maintained UK-manufactured switchgear and power systems for mission-critical environments. Based in Luton with 4,000+ completed projects powering £4B+ of electrical infrastructure - trusted by leading institutions including Barclays, Colt Data Centres, HSBC, O2, Serverfarm, The Shard, Royal Brompton Hospital and many more.

ITS Interiors
Anna Muskett-Quirke
07714 207141
amq@itsinteriors.co.uk
itsinteriors.co.uk

ITS Interiors delivers exceptional commercial fit-outs and bespoke joinery, combining principal contracting with in-house manufacturing. From workplaces and hospitality to retail and stadia, we bring craftsmanship, clear accountability and reliable delivery. Planning a refurbishment, new space or seeking a delivery partner? Talk to us. Built for when it matters

Konsileo - Bedfordshire
Lee Mounsey Cert CII
01234 672939
lee.mounsey@konsileo.com
konsileo.com

Local, personal commercial insurance advice to businesses across Bedfordshire and the surrounding areas, backed by the strength and resources of the nationwide Konsileo brokerage. Our team specialises in Construction, Manufacturing and Engineering, while also supporting businesses across a wide range of commercial sectors.

Phoenix Crane Services Limited
David Miljkovic
info@phoenixcranes.co.uk
phoenixcranes.co.uk

Phoenix Crane Services provides reliable, professional lifting and crane solutions backed by over 25 years of experience. Serving construction, industrial, and commercial projects, the company focuses on safety, efficiency, and customer satisfaction. With experienced operators and well-maintained equipment, Phoenix Crane Services delivers dependable lifting solutions, ensuring every operation is completed smoothly and safely.

RDT Architects Ltd
Marion Clapp
marion@rdtarchitects.co.uk
rdtarchitects.co.uk

RDT Architects is an award-winning architectural practice delivering sustainable, peoplecentred design across Bedfordshire and the wider region. Working collaboratively with clients, communities, and stakeholders, we create inspiring places for people to live, work, learn and connect, helping to shape vibrant communities.

Reusefully Ltd
Graham Adams
01234 385940
hello@reusefully.co.uk
reusefully.co.uk

Reusefully Ltd believes the greenest building is often the one already built. We provide expert consultancy on material reuse and sustainability, helping clients reduce carbon, save resources and unlock value. Our team has supported major development and regeneration projects across the UK, delivering practical, sustainable and commercially successful outcomes.

RMC Electrical Contractors Limited
Richard Copperwheat
richard@rmcelectrical.co.uk

RMC Electrical Contractors is an NICEIC-approved electrical and REFCOM certified air-conditioning specialist, delivering reliable solutions for commercial, residential and new-build projects. From full electrical installations and testing to EV charging and energy-efficient climate control, our experienced team combines technical expertise, clear communication and dependable service from quotation through to completion.

SDG Electrical & Mechanical Engineering Ltd
Gavin Spendlove
01234 328209
admin@sdgservices.co.uk
sdgservices.co.uk

SDG provides a range of services including HVAC installation, plant room upgrades, electrical projects, ongoing PPM programmes and reactive call-out support. We offer a streamlined service that helps clients improve reliability, maintain compliance and maximise the performance of their facilities.

Securycor Ltd
Abdullah Asmari
01234 515254
operations@securycor.com
securycor.com

Securycor delivers professional security and facility management services across construction, corporate, industrial, and public sector environments. From manned guarding and technology-based security solutions to comprehensive risk assessments, we protect your people, assets, and operations. Fully accredited and operationally driven, our approach is simple: Deploy. Detect. Deter.

Smart Audio Visual Services Ltd
David Chapman
david@smartaudiovisual.com
smartaudiovisual.com

At Smart we Design, Supply & Install AV systems inc. large format LED Video Walls, Projectors, Videoconferencing (Teams & Zoom) & Webinar setups, Control Systems, Assisted Hearing, Interactive Touch Screens, Indoor & Outdoor Audio, Servicing, Accessories and Repairs. We have been the official AV supplier to Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire & Hertfordshire Constabularies for over 16 years.

Spectrum Acoustic Consultants Ltd
Nick Treby
01767 317738
enquiries@spectrumacoustic.com
spectrumacoustic.com

Noise, vibration and surge problems can delay projects, trigger complaints, damage equipment and disrupt operations. Spectrum Acoustic Consultants Ltd helps organisations understand and solve these challenges. From building acoustics and planning applications to construction vibration and industrial process systems, we provide practical advice that reduces risk and keeps projects moving.

The Carat Shop Ltd
Anna May
anna.may@thecaratshop.co.uk
thecaratshop.co.uk

Established in 2006, The Carat Shop has over 20 years' experience in designing and manufacturing bespoke products for leading global brands and attractions; developing and delivering high-quality custom merchandise that strengthens brand identity, boosts revenue, and delivers memorable experiences for customers worldwide. We specialise in Keyrings, Pin Badges, Jewellery, Tote Bags, Stationery and more.

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We can't thank our amazing customers enough for making our trade show the success it always is!

Thank you DEWALT, Makita & Hikoki for your support, as always. Without fail, you make sure our customers walk away happy.

The end of Q3, and beginning of Q4 has been a busy time for us with lot of new power tools arriving. It was fantastic to see so many of you getting your hands on the demo models, putting them through their paces, and asking all of the right questions.









We have taken an important step towards supporting the health and safety of our staff, customers and the wider community by having a defibrillator installed on our premises.

The defibrillator has been supplied by the Mark Law Charity, an organisation committed to helping make life-saving equipment more accessible and improving the chances of survival for people experiencing a cardiac emergency.

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