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Official Magazine of Bedfordshire Chamber of Commerce

Winter 2019/20

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BUSINESS focus

**Official Magazine of Bedfordshire
Chamber of Commerce**

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Welcome to the last edition of **Focus** in 2019... and what a year it has been!

We can safely say it's been dominated by two words: Brexit and uncertainty. In spite of this backdrop, I have seen some fantastic success stories from the Bedfordshire business community but was keen to share with you some of my own personal highlights.

Back in December 2017, we committed to developing a more active engagement programme and we promised to focus on creating a vibrant network; one that was conducive to collaboration and connecting, learning and growth. As I write this, I am pleased to tell you that we are fast approaching our 1,000th member to member connection.

We also launched our Growth & Productivity pilot programme with partners Wenta which saw a number of businesses share their expertise to support fellow members in their quest for business growth. A special thanks to the experts on the panel; Machins, Foxley Kingham, Plain Talking HR, VGD, Jam Crackers, ASA Consulting, Alpha Marketing, Partners in Export and Bell Consulting that gave their time to create a local support ecosystem. Many local businesses have and still are benefitting from the programme and experiencing measurable results.

I also had the honour of being involved as a Commissioner in the Luton Inclusive Growth Commission and I must say it had a profound impact on me. It's given me insight and inspiration into how we, as a Chamber, can help shape this exciting region in which we all do business, and take advantage of our local opportunities and assets.

Finally, Bedfordshire Chamber of Commerce became the seventh fastest growing Chamber in the Network! This is a testament to the team's hard work and dedication, and we can promise that no matter what 2020 brings we will continue to connect, support and collaborate to achieve more for Bedfordshire.

May I also take this opportunity to offer all our members a Merry Christmas and prosperous new year.

#workingtogether #achievingmore

#businesstogetherness

Justin Richardson
Chief Executive



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Jeremy Brockis
Chairman of Bedfordshire
Chamber of Commerce

“I am not holding my breath, but if the politicians can sort themselves out and start acting like responsible individuals then hopefully we can all get on with investing in the future.”

The **Chairman's** View

So the time has come for me to write another piece for Focus magazine. Unfortunately the same Brexit record keeps playing. We have a deal (possibly), which may (or may not) get past a new House of Commons, if there is a majority government (which there might not be). I was going to say that we were still stuck in limbo but, as Jacob Rees-Mogg pointed out in Parliament recently, the Pope abolished that in 2007 and we are actually all trapped in purgatory. However, at least we now all have a general election to look forward to(!).

Elsewhere in the world, trade is looking distinctly lacklustre and will probably continue to do so for so long as the US and China continue their protectionist spat (more self-interested politicians, am I detecting a common theme...?).

With the added problem of Brexit here at home, the UK economy has fallen to the slowest annual rate since 2010. We may have avoided a recession, but not by very much and this is nothing to shout about. It appears that no-one has much enthusiasm for stock-piling of goods (again) in preparation for (another) possible hard Brexit and the economy just limps on. The High Street is in dire straits, and the Government (whichever one it turns out to be) needs to boost what is a vital part of the UK way of life. In the last few weeks Karen Millen, Bonmarché, Mothercare and Mamas and Papas have entered administration, reports suggest Clintons may be entering into a CVA and other retail groups have announced widespread closures. That said, it may just be that the UK has more shops than it needs, given the fact that internet retailing is not going to go away. Companies with the right product offering and which provide great service will still survive and prosper.

We all need a Brexit solution that ensures a benign trading environment. I am not holding my breath, but if the politicians can sort themselves out and start acting like responsible individuals then hopefully we can all get on with investing in the future. The local potential is huge, as is demonstrated by the Glenmore Business Park development in Bedford, the selection of Cranfield Village for a trial of ultra-fast fibre optic broadband and the investment in the Hat Factory Arts Centre in central Luton. If only the politicians will provide the proper environment to enable us to do so.



2019 Chamber Business Awards Regional Win for Essential

Essential, a family owned and operated business supplying branded apparel and corporate clothing from Dunstable, has been crowned one of the winners in the East of England heats of the Chamber Business Awards 2019. Now in their 16th year, the Awards are a highlight of the business calendar, recognising the key role that local businesses play in driving the UK economy.

The Family Business of the Year winner, Essential will now go forward to represent the East of England in the national finals, which take place in London in November.

Essential was started back in 1998 as Essential Embroidery Design by husband and wife duo, George & Nicki Georgiou. Back then they focused solely on Embroidery and had just one machine. With a lot of hard work and impeccable customer service the business took off!

As they grew, they added much more than just embroidery to their offering and so Essential Embroidery Design became simply 'Essential'. Today they employ close to 60 people at their factory and offices in Dunstable, with both George & Nicki still working in the business along with their two children!

George said about the win: 'We are absolutely thrilled that our team has been recognised once again for an award, being our second award in less than 6 months it is really a testament to our teams hard work! This time it is extra special being a family business award,

family values are very important to us and we think of everyone within our company as part of that family. Following these awards we have to back it up with more hard work. We are growing and have aggressive expansion plans over the next few years and I am absolutely sure our team can achieve our ambitions.'

Justin Richardson, Chief Executive of the Bedfordshire Chamber of Commerce said: "Congratulations to Essential on winning this prestigious award, the accolades keep coming for this fantastic family run business. We couldn't be prouder of what they have achieved and it's a testament to all their hard work."

Francis Martin, President of the British Chambers of Commerce (BCC) said: "The Chamber Business Awards are a great opportunity to celebrate the best of British business. Across the country, there are firms of all sizes and sectors thriving and showing their innovation and adaptability, even in the midst of turbulent times.

"Our businesses communities continue to generate prosperity and opportunity so it's only right that we support and shout about the fantastic things they are doing.

"Each year the calibre of applicants impresses our judges, and this pool of entrants was no different. All our finalists should be proud of their success in reaching this stage and we wish them the very best of luck."

Chamber Events

You'll find plenty of opportunities to connect with other Bedfordshire Chamber of Commerce members and local businesses at any of our upcoming events in 2020. Events are being added to our calendar all the time, please visit www.chamber-business.com to see what is new.

14 Leadership Blindspots: Building a Bulletproof Business

Wednesday 22nd January 2020

9.30am - 12.30pm

Bedfordshire Chamber of Commerce, Luton

FREE OF CHARGE - a saving of £395+VAT

With over 260 training centres globally, Sandler® Training is the world's largest training organisation of its type. Today, Sandler® is partnering with us to provide the business skills workshop 'Building a Bulletproof Business'. It's as applicable to newer, growing businesses as it is to well established organisations that have either reached a plateau or looking to sell within the next 2 to 5 years.

Join us at this lively, immersive 3 Hour workshop valued at £395.00+VAT which Bedfordshire Chamber are providing FREE OF CHARGE. Learn from the experts and gain access to the information that will help you make your organisation robust, protected from external & internal 'surprises' and free up the time for Leaders who find themselves spending way too much time IN the business rather than ON the business or simply resenting amount of time away from family.



The session will cover:

- Insight as to why just managing a handful of obvious functions in our business isn't enough
- Greater company worth, more profit, more sales, better people and less mistakes
- Identify the 6 key organisational business areas to manage & control
- Understand the 14 personal leadership "blindspots" in businesses that prevent "excellence"
- Support to identify the priorities in your business that need your attention to take away with you and act on immediately
- Looking forward, what level of detail a future health check on your 6 business areas should look like.

Who should attend?

- New enterprises needing an organisational structure in order to deliver profitability to take the business to the next stage
- Businesses that have survived the initial 'Survival' stages requiring a platform to grow teams logically and build the organisation
- Established trading operations that started enthusiastically or perhaps provide traditional skills that have plateaued or are going backwards. Unsure why things that worked in the past are ineffective now
- Essential for anyone requiring infrastructure support for exponential growth or looking to exit or sell within the next 2-5 years.

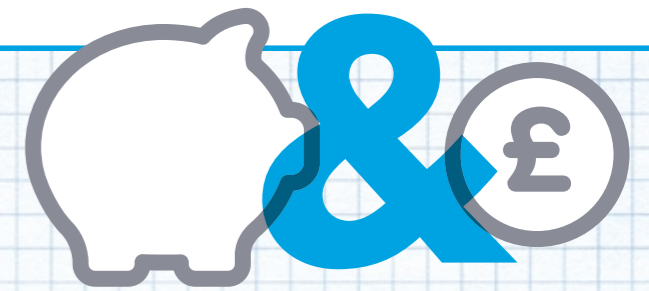
You will be provided:

- 3-hour workshop using your data for you to take away and apply immediately into your business. FREE OF CHARGE, a saving of £395+VAT
- Award-winning program content, facilitated by certified, award-winning speaker and coach with 40 years SME & Enterprise experience
- Time to complete your own "Personal Blind Spots Survey" sample section of "Business Assessment Survey"
- FREE Membership of Sandler® E-Learning Library comprising of 100+ Videos, 100+ Podcasts, whitepapers and 1,000's of 'tips' on Sales, Systems and Leadership programs valued at \$993.

2020 CHAMBER EVENTS

Tuesday 21st January	Networking at Vindis Volkswagen, Bedford
Thursday 30th January	New Year New Start, HMP Bedford
Thursday 13th February	Networking at Metro Bank, Luton
Tuesday 3rd March	Connect Over Coffee, Hat Factory Luton
Tuesday 24th March	Meet the Neighbours, Venue Cranfield

For further information on any of our courses email events@chamber-business.com or call Paula on 01582 522316



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 2019 saw a decline in business confidence with 45% of respondents expecting turnover to improve over the next 12 months and only 38% expected profits to rise.

- The forward order book for exporters in the next quarter looks particularly challenging with only 8% of firms expecting to see increases in sales.
- In stark contrast, domestic demand in Q3 2019 outperformed expectations with results showing overall net gains of 10% points in reported sales and future orders.
- Firms reported freezes in investment intentions for plant & machinery, recruitment and training.

The Bottom Line

To see the report in full please visit www.chamber-business.com

Economic conditions weaken as manufacturing slump continues

Responding to the results, Suren Thiru, head of Economics at the British Chambers of Commerce, said:

"Our findings point to a worrying drop-off in UK economic activity, with unrelenting uncertainty over Brexit and a notable slowing in global growth prospects dragging down almost all the key indicators in the quarter."

"The manufacturing sector continues to toil under the weight of diminishing cashflow, weakening global demand and disrupted supply chains, and the data indicates that the sector was a drag on UK GDP growth in the quarter. Although the slowdown in a number of the key service sector indicators was relatively modest, slowing activity in the sector is a concern given its dominant share of overall UK economic output. A stuttering services sector coupled with a worrying downturn in manufacturing activity indicates that any bounce back in UK GDP growth from the contraction in the second quarter is likely to be underwhelming at best."

"Looking forward, weakening orders, confidence and investment intentions suggest that unless action is taken the UK's current weak growth trajectory could drift markedly lower over the near term."



Suren Thiru, Head of Economics
at the British Chambers of
Commerce

Business is done better together.

You don't have to run your business on your own

We're dedicated to getting you exactly what you need to make your business fly. And while there are sure to be challenges ahead, your membership will give you access to a network that has a wealth of expertise and support to share. That's really what Business Togetherness is about.

- **Raise Your Profile**
- **Go Global**
- **Networking & Events**

Any business, any size, we know and understand the pressures and ambitions your business has. Imagine what you could achieve being part of a local, national and international business community.

Find out how we can help your business at www.chamber-business.com

Get in touch.

Phone us: 01582 522448 Email us: membership@chamber-business.com



STEPPING OUT OF THE SHADOW

Why 'shadowing' members of staff can result in such a dramatic skills uplift... for everyone

It's fair to say no-one likes to feel they are being watched over their shoulder and yet many employees are realising the benefit of having a mentor, of sorts, to oversee younger members of staff.

Similarly, in reverse, having a junior employee sample a 'day in the life of' someone in a higher department can provoke interest, optimism and a desire to move up the ladder.

Welcome to 'shadowing'.

Modern shadowing in the office takes a much less formal approach to employee support than our perceptions allow us to believe. In reality, there will rarely be one figure stationed behind a colleague assessing their every move. Shadowing in the workplace these days can be done digitally, can take the form of casual catch-ups, and can be as much about the 'shadowed' going to the 'shadow' for help, rather than that person being watched over.

What's more, employers have found it's not just those members of staff involved directly in shadowing who enjoy the benefits.

'THE SHADOWED' AS A JUNIOR

In this situation the work being overseen is that of the junior. This may be someone new to the company - they may have moved into the department, or perhaps have been away for a period (such as on maternity or paternity leave). Similarly, it could be a member of staff being introduced to new work systems, such as the adoption of new tech or software, and shadowing a senior.

Here are the key advantages for the person being shadowed as a junior:

- It allows good practice to be brought back to the shadow's current role
- It encourages them to work fear-free, yet with the safety net of someone casually overseeing them
- It presents the option of one specific person who can be contacted or called upon to help, rather than the shadowed having to search out assistance
- It improves interaction and communication between that person and someone of a higher status at the company
- In bringing those people together it improves networking possibilities
- Using the skills of a senior member of staff brings an accelerated uplift in capabilities for the shadowed that would only otherwise be achievable over a much longer period of time
- It allows the opportunity to compare and contrast standards and achievements in the shadow's own department with those elsewhere, identifying areas for further personal development and future career opportunities
- It breaks down barriers and myths about how others work

'THE SHADOWED' AS A SENIOR

When the person being shadowed is the senior, there are a similar set of advantages - notably the understanding of job roles other than their own, and all the networking ideas already outlined. More than that though, being shadowed can often help a senior member of staff brush up on their own skillset, where time has meant some habits have been discarded or shortcuts have begun to creep in.

OTHER STAFF

Researchers have found that shadowing in an office environment can have a positive follow-on effect for other members of staff. The process breaks down myths and status barriers between colleagues and produces a work environment where people are seen to be operating on a much more even playing field.

It also reinforces the point that different people have different ways of going about tasks, and that these variations can all be embraced in a working environment, no matter what the status is of those involved.

DISTINCTIONS

Effective shadowing

Effective shadowing must fall into an agreed process, where parameters are set out at the beginning. While the time period for shadowing can be flexible, the aims and objectives must be spelled out, such as:

- Key goals
- Certain areas of interest
- Shadowing as a benefit to the shadow and the shadowed
- Listed times and dates
- Confidentiality

These objectives can be checked and updated during the process, with a full assessment occurring at the end. Only proper appraising of the shadowing process can ensure it works best for both parties. This is important as shadowing that puts too much of a strain on either person can be extremely detrimental.

The premise

The premise for effective shadowing is often on the shadow, and the selection of this person must be done carefully. Frequent interrupting of someone is bad practice, and the shadow must ensure they combine the correct quantity of critical observation and praise.

Shadowing isn't training

It's also important to state the fact shadowing is the understanding that this isn't a training process and, for instance, in the case of new systems being learned, this should be done in the first place by a qualified trainer. The shadowed should be able to get on with work autonomously and then turn to the shadow, be it for help (when the shadowed is senior) to check their understanding of concepts (when the shadowed is junior) or just for feedback and a progress report - it isn't a constant training programme. *JE*

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LONDON-GATWICK | LONDON-LUTON

PHOTO: Anouchka



How print advertising has kept ahead of the digital pitch for businesses looking to reach out

If you've got a few spare minutes to fill, amuse yourself by looking online for news stories from two decades ago forecasting the end of civilisation as we know it, courtesy of the Millennium Bug. What's interesting about those who published these 'spectre of doom' news pieces – casting fears of computers malfunctioning, power stations switching off and even planes falling out of the sky – is that they were the same news sources who told us the digital revolution would make print media completely redundant within a generation.

Of course, as we know now, both predictions were spectacularly misjudged. Air traffic remained true to its name – in the air – and print media has evolved, upcycled and reinvented to such an extent it has arguably never been a more attractive proposition for editors and brands alike.

Certainly in the sense of using printed press as a method for companies, brands and corporations to convey their wares, the medium continues to shine brighter than digital, despite the advent of social media and its ability to infiltrate and permeate so many aspects of our daily lives.

Here are a few reasons why print media continues to stand out:

LONGEVITY

Our consumption of digital mirrors perfectly its delivery – rapid. Its ability to land on our devices is matched by our tendency to brazenly swipe it off the screen. Experts suggest an online story has 15 seconds to grab our attention and encourage us to stay 'on the page', as it were. Compare that to 150 seconds – the time we allow ourselves the chance to be engaged by something we are reading in a magazine, newspaper, booklet or brochure. Put another way, a captive market with a limited quantity of pages will pore over each longer than someone presented with content that is the breadth of the entire internet, and who can move on quickly with nothing to keep them loyal to a story.

And our engagement time in print isn't limited to a one-off view, as it is on a digital product. A monthly lifestyle title we will put down and pick up again; even with a daily newspaper we will 'dip in, dip out', which makes the chances of potential clients seeing our promotional messages that much greater.

SPACE

The very nature of print advertising offers clients the chance to utilise space in a way that isn't possible on a mobile phone screen. At its peak, a double-page spread can produce a range of sales messages, ideas and executions. Can the same be said about a graphic on an iPhone?

POSITION

Where print media really succeeds is in offering clients a bespoke place for their advertising. From unapologetic premium

positions such as inside front cover and back cover, to more subtle marketing executions, such as using the centre-page spread (where a saddle-stitched/stapled magazine will fall open), to advertising positioned around likeminded pieces of editorial. Ultimately, the chance to land a concept and an idea in a unique position implies engagement well beyond the messages on the page, and that's something only print can provide.

TANGIBILITY

People like print because in a world of tech, pixels and Wi-Fi, it represents the feeling of satisfaction that comes with a physical product. It is for that same reason vinyl sales have gone through the roof in recent years, even though a sizeable proportion of those buying music on that format will never even take the record out of the sleeve. Ultimately, consumers like something to hold, to feel and to build a rapport with; and there are very few things that do that better, and offer so much variety, than magazines and newspapers.

SUBCONSCIOUS VALUE

Research has found consumers subconsciously add greater weight to print, in reflection of the processes that have gone into its physical creation. Readers understand that magazines and newspapers need to be flatplanned, designed, printed and distributed. Because of that they attach a greater weight and a stronger sense of commitment to the title and, crucially, its advertisers, than they would to something seen online.

DEMOGRAPHIC

From the very first newspapers ever published, the print medium has obsessed over demographics. As a result, titles are now deeply versed in knowing who readers are, where they live, how much their disposable income is and, most importantly, what they consume. Smart print advertising means aligning yourself closely with titles that match your own company's targets and ambitions.

With online, the barriers to entry are zero, the accessibility to titles is unrestricted and the specificity over the user is vague – a grey area most digital salespeople are happy to maintain and profit from.

Of course, those same digital sales execs will rightly point out a number of features that only online advertising can offer, and no-one is disputing the value of that proposition.

Ultimately, whether advertisers choose to focus on one or mix and match across the two, what remains certain is that the print world continues not just to meet the expectations of its audience, but in almost every way, surpass them too. *JE*



Marston's are committed to Bedford and the Eagle brewery. We're a Bedford brewery and what is really important to us is that we want to retain that local feel, we want to work with the local area and deliver great beer to the people of Bedford. Consistency is key with beer quality and we want to make sure people know they're going to get a great beer every time.

This is why Marston's has invested heavily in both the site and the brands, including a new delivery network that ensures the beer is fresher than ever before with it being extremely likely that the beer you're drinking in your local could be brewed as recently as three days ago. We want the brewery to reconnect with the local area and this is why Marston's has invested heavily in a series of exciting partnerships including Bedford Blues Rugby club and Bedford park concerts.

WHY DON'T YOU COME DOWN & VISIT YOUR LOCAL BREWERY?

The Eagle brewery has been at the heart of Bedford ever since Charles Wells bought the Horne Lane Brewery in an auction at the Swan Hotel in 1875. Throughout the last 144 years the brewery has gone from strength to strength and has been responsible for producing some of the world's most popular beers including Red Stripe, Corona, Cobra and Kirin Ichiban.

To this day with a capacity to brew over 100 million litres of beer annually the brewery is still brewing some of the nation's most recognisable lagers and ales. This includes the likes of Bombardier, Eagle, Courage, Young's and Estrella Damm. It truly is a brewery that is like no other.

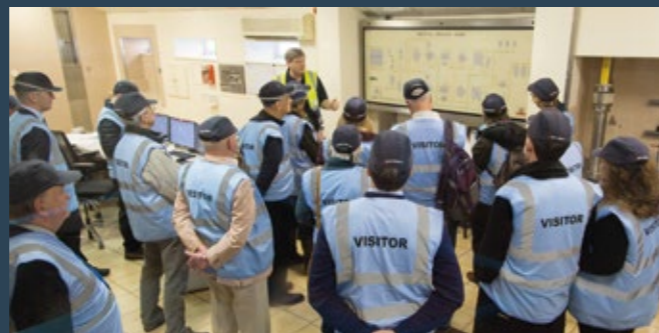
The Eagle Brewery is one of four breweries in the world that is licensed to brew Kirin Ichiban under the unique Ichiban Shibori brewing process as well as having the capability to brew Kaltenberg Royal Lager to the Reinheitsgebot German beer purity laws.

Tours of the brewery are available Monday to Saturday and provide you with the opportunity to delve deeper into the history of the brewery, discover the brewing process as well as sampling our range of beers.

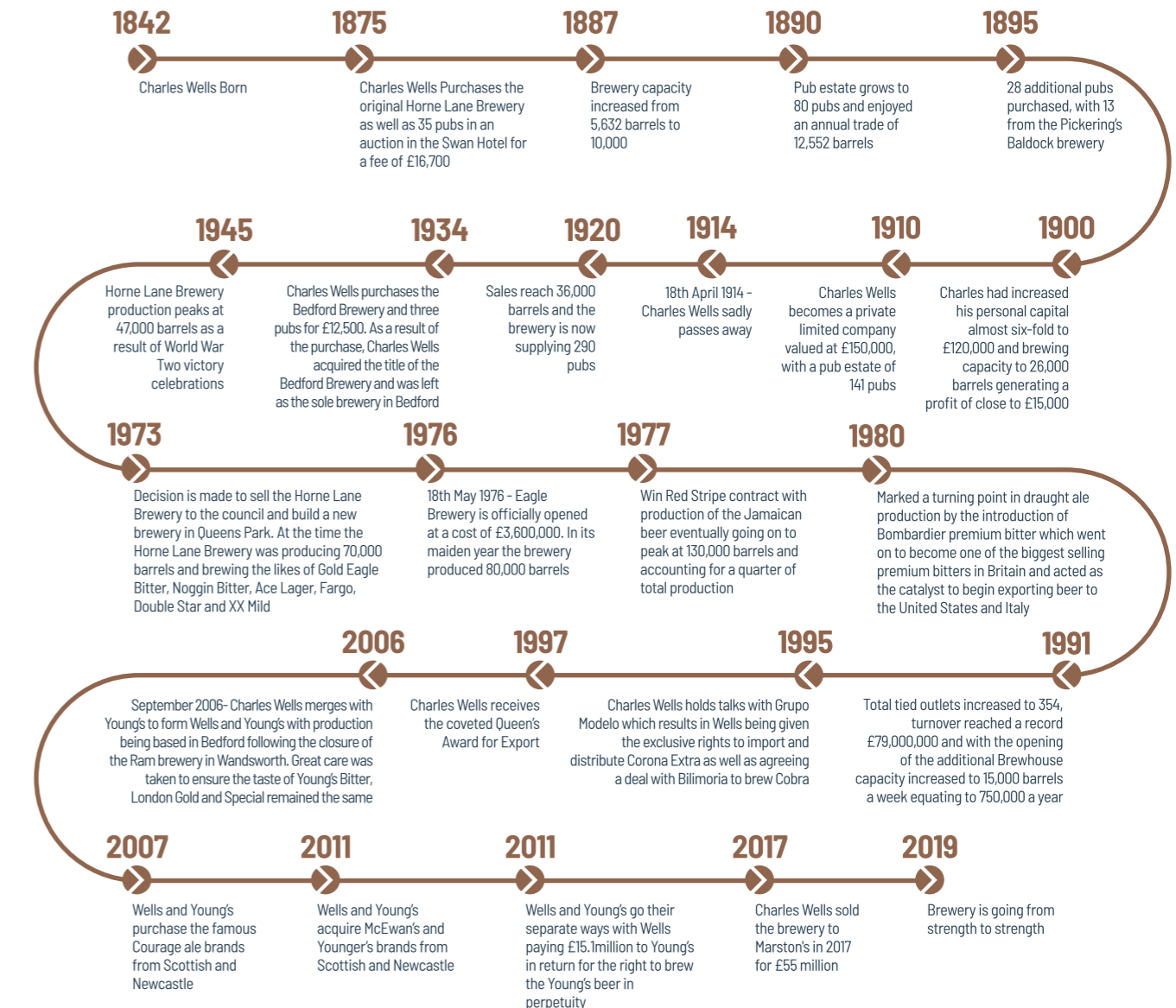
The Eagle brewery experience includes a 45 minute guided tour, a tutored beer tasting and a free takeaway glass.

A 10% discount is available to Bedford Chamber of Commerce members on tour groups over 10 people.

For more information on how to book a tour or check function room availability please visit our website eaglebrewery.co.uk or alternatively you can email eaglebrewerytours@Marstons.co.uk.



BREWERY TIMELINE



THE MARSTON'S EFFECT

- Drays operating from the site have doubled.
- Eagle IPA in 5.4% growth.
- Young's Bitter in 6.4% growth.
- McEwan's in 6.0% growth.
- Estrella in 3.6% growth.
- Kaltenberg in 6.3% growth.

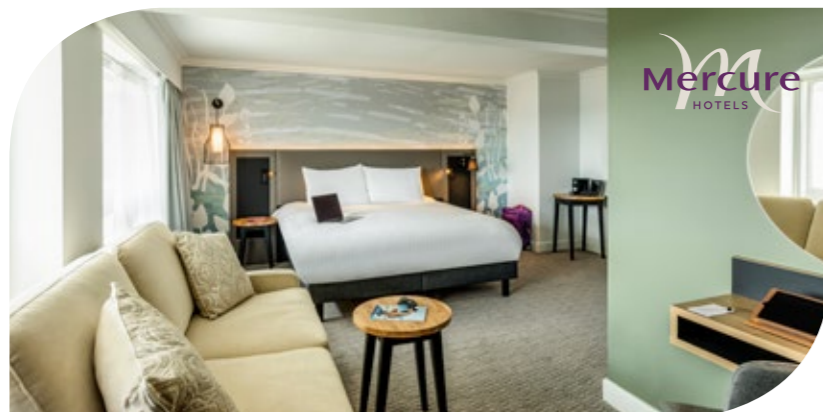
Take a different view.

KIRIN ICHIBAN
一番搾り

Kaltenberg
BIER VON KÖNIGLICHER HOHEIT



Member News



New Mercure Hotel Open in Bedford

Leading hospitality group Accor announces that a new hotel is now open in Bedford under the Mercure brand. The hotel was previously operated under the Park Inn brand but is currently being extensively redesigned and fully refurbished to align with the Mercure standards.

Mercure Bedford Centre Hotel, located in St Mary's Street, Bedford, is owned by Danish real estate group Proark and managed by Mercure. Half of the bedrooms have already been refurbished and the remaining bedrooms and public spaces will be complete by the end of October 2019.

Every Mercure hotel takes its inspiration from the features, traditions and history of its individual location while sharing the consistent quality of an international brand. Each hotel features locally inspired artwork, design, décor and even textures encompassing elements of its area's cultural and historic past.

Mercure Bedford Centre Hotel takes its inspiration from the River Great Ouse, seen by many as the jewel in the crown of Bedford and popular for canoeing and kayaking as well as the biennial River Festival. The design of the hotel features lots of timber from canoes, water graphics and rowing illustrations.

The hotel has 121 guest rooms available and provides a convivial eating and drinking experience with a 20-cover restaurant, bar and café area as well as lounge and meeting spaces. The largest meeting space is the County suite which can seat up to 450 people theatre or 340 people banqueting style ideal for corporate or private functions.

Jean-Marc Vendieux, Senior Vice President Managed hotels UKI, said: "We are delighted to be partnering with Proark on this new hotel in Bedford and are proud to brand it as a Mercure. Guests can already expect an incredibly high level of quality and personalised service, as they would receive in any Mercure, and this will be elevated by the look and feel of a hotel rooted in its local Bedford community once the refurbishment is complete later this year."

Michael Brag, Chairman of Proark commented: "We have worked closely with Accor since signing this hotel and are extremely pleased with the ongoing work being done to redesign and refurbish it. The hotel has the Mercure service and features guests expect but it will also offer local touches specific to Bedford, which we are confident will be well received by business and leisure travellers alike."

If you would like more information about the Mercure Bedford Centre Hotel please contact either Les Wood les.wood@accor.com or Darren Talberg GM Darren.talberg@accor.com or call 01234 799988 www.accorhotels.com



Local Communities Set to Soar Thanks to Airport Funding

Vital local charities working around London Luton Airport will have the opportunity to apply for an annual share of £4 million to improve their communities.

Thanks to its excellent local knowledge and strong track record of awarding funding, Bedfordshire and Luton Community Foundation has been chosen to manage the London Luton Airport Limited (LLAL) Community Investment Fund (CIF).

The programme will award grants to key community groups each year focussing on three areas: education, skills and employability, prosperity and wellbeing and stronger and safer communities. Decisions will be made by a panel of community representatives who best understand their local area and the change they want to see.

Fozia Irfan, Chief Executive of Bedfordshire and Luton Community Foundation, said: "We are proud to be working with London Luton Airport to manage this substantial funding programme for the benefit of local people and communities. We passionately believe that there should be opportunity for all and the lives of the most disadvantaged should be transformed through innovative, community-based solutions."

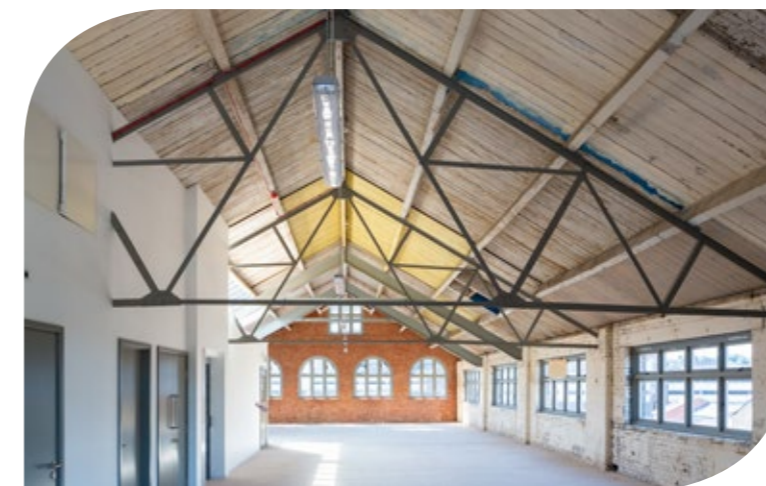
The Bedfordshire and Luton Community Foundation is a grant maker supporting local community groups and charities. They focus on addressing local poverty and inequality by raising and distributing funds from local businesses, individuals, and national organisations to small grassroots community groups.

For more information please visit www.blcf.org.uk

Forest of Marston Vale Gives Away Trees for 'Plant One On Us'

Having planted over 2 million trees in the Marston Vale, the charity are in the midst of confirming a public tree planting site for winter 2020 but for the second year running, are offering free trees to local residents to plant in their gardens. Residents of the 61 square mile Forest of Marston Vale can apply online for one tree, or more depending on the size of their land, now. "As it's a community forest we love working with local people whenever we can; every single tree helps us towards our vision of creating a Forest legacy for future generations." Said Community Engagement Officer Jo Roberts. Last year, over 300 trees were planted in gardens throughout the Forest, as part of the project's first year. Plant One On Us is in partnership with Blue Chip who are funding the materials for the project.

Find out more at www.marstonvale.org.



Two Global Creative Businesses Choose Luton's Hat Factory

After the re-opening of the Hat Factory Arts Centre in September 2019, the second building in the Culture Trust's Hat District four-site creative cluster opened its doors in October. Hat House is also a former hat factory, originally built in the 1880s, providing contemporary workspace in the heart of Luton. The upper three floors consist of individual studios in a range of sizes. The ground floor is a light industrial space whilst the basement is ideal for creative retail.

Two Luton-based companies have already moved in. Clearhead, an award winning global creative content agency, has taken 2,700 sqft space on the second floor to expand their team as their client base continues to grow. The Panama Hat Company, an international manufacturer of handwoven hats, move into the ground floor of the newly restored building, former home to several hat manufacturers.

This feels like a significant milestone in reviving creativity in the centre of Luton.

For enquiries call 01582 547 470 or visit www.hatdistrict.co.uk

Sophia Montagna wins the IACC Europe Future Leaders Award

Sophia Montagna, HR Manager for the Woodlands Event Centre at Wyboston Lakes Resort (pictured centre), has won the IACC Europe Future Leaders Award.

Sophia won the coveted award for producing and implementing innovative ideas and initiatives in her workplace. The ideas were designed to create the best possible delegate experience following a major refurbishment of the venue by maximising engagement among all the teams working there. The initiatives included introducing new workplace practices, a coaching programme, a 12 month course for middle managers and future stars and team building meetings for all staff.

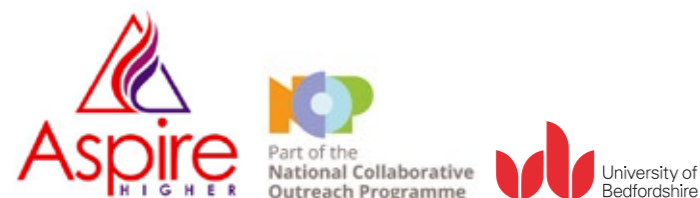


The award was presented at a ceremony held at the 2019 IACC Europe Knowledge Festival, which recently took place at Dolce La Hulpe in Brussels. This educational conference was attended by over 120 delegates from IACC certified conference and meeting venues from counties throughout Europe (UK, Sweden, France, Denmark, Germany, France, Belgium, Netherlands), America and Australia that represent the top 1% of small to mid-size venues.

Accepting her award, Sophia said: "I am honoured and delighted by this recognition. Wyboston Lakes Resort has always developed and produced top talent by encouraging young professionals to introduce their own ambitious ideas. It is through this corporate ethos and the support of my managers that I have been able to implement these wide-ranging policies. I would like to thank Simon McMahon, my general manager, for nominating me and the rest of the team for their tremendous support."

For more information, please visit www.wybostonlakes.co.uk/business

Member News



What is Aspire Higher?

Aspire Higher is part of the National Collaborative Outreach Programme (NCOP) consortium of University of Bedfordshire, University of Hertfordshire and University of Northampton. NCOP brings together 29 local partnerships across England. This is a national initiative funded by the OFS. It is aimed at Year 9 to Year 13 students to raise aspirations and reduce the gap in higher education participation between the most and least represented young people. As part of our role we support young people to make well-informed decisions about their future education.

We would like to work with you...

A key element of our role is to support effective and impactful local collaboration by higher education providers working together with schools, colleges, employers and partners. We are creating a Hub website that is a single point of contact for advisors and teachers to find out about outreach that universities and employers nationally take part in. The website will signpost your employer opportunities to schools and advisors.

We would love to work with employers from each of the counties to support our schools and colleges. If your business takes part in outreach in schools or would like to get involved please contact:

Bedfordshire: Colleen Galley, Outreach Hub Officer
colleen.galley@beds.ac.uk

Hertfordshire: Emma Pearce, Widening Access Officer Hubs
e.pearce@herts.ac.uk

Northamptonshire: Sam McKay, Hub Officer
samantha.mckay@northampton.ac.uk

Bedford Academy wins Best School at the Careers Excellence Awards 2019

Bedford Academy is delighted to have won 'Best School or College of the year' at the national Careers Excellence Awards 2019. Attended by Head Teacher Mr Deller and Director of Aspirations Miss Green, the annual awards ceremony is organised by the Careers and Enterprise Company and celebrates the work of schools, colleges, businesses and careers professionals. With over 200 nominations across 10 categories, the winners are chosen by an independent panel of expert judges. Mr Deller, Head Teacher at Bedford Academy, commented. "I am extremely proud to have received this award on behalf of Bedford Academy, an award that recognises the outstanding careers provision that students receive at our school. The efforts of Director of Aspirations Miss Green and Careers Advisor Mr Dawe are monumental. Their detailed offer sees every student receiving tailored and specialist careers advice throughout their time at Bedford Academy. Our dedication and commitment to improving the aspirations of young people in the community has been the basis of our careers offer at Bedford Academy. This is an offer that we are driven to improve further, by continuing to seek ways for our students to access outstanding and impartial careers advice that supports them on their own unique pathway."



www.bedfordacademy.co.uk
www.heartacademiestrust.co.uk



Happy Anniversary Paule Rochelle

Celebrating my 10th Anniversary as a Chamber member, I muse about the past and wonder, at the eve of a national election, about the future. As a non-British born (I arrived in the UK in 1972) Brexit is an enormous emotional rollercoaster!

In 2009 I launched Paule Rochelle, Sales & Marketing Consultancy, delivering immediate and long-term marketing solutions to SME; some of my clients are still with me today. That same year I joined the Bedfordshire Chamber of Commerce; a few months later I was elected one of its directors. It was hugely exciting to sit in the imposing boardroom with LLA, Vauxhall, NatWest and other large businesses and feel that I had a voice, that I could help make a difference to other small businesses.

I launched the Wenta incubator, lobbied for Junction11A the Dunstable bypass, created Luton Bury Park Business Community and organised a very successful event dedicated to women going back to work. In 2014 I became a Business Ambassador. At the time, the chairman Brian Hibbert was hugely supportive, he made sure I was invited to interesting and relevant forums. The staff were wonderfully caring and professional; Paula was a delight and a tower of strength while Justin kept the finances and fabric of the building together. There is much to celebrate, and I am looking forward to the next 10 years.

Skip the Terminal with Signature Elite Class

For many commercial airline passengers, the most stressful part of the journey is on the ground in the main terminal. For business travellers, who often are tight on extra time, unpredictable security or passport control queues can mean missing a critical meeting or closing the deal. That's where Signature ELITE Class comes in.

Signature ELITE Class delivers the ultimate stress-free travel experience. For long or short haul flights, Signature ELITE Class offers a luxurious, private and seamless journey, avoiding the unpredictable queues and stress of the main terminal with dedicated security, customs and immigration, baggage check-in, and discrete car transfers to and from the aircraft.

For departures, have your car drop you at the private terminal to relax or work in the comfort of a private lounge whilst the ELITE Class team complete the airline check-in process.

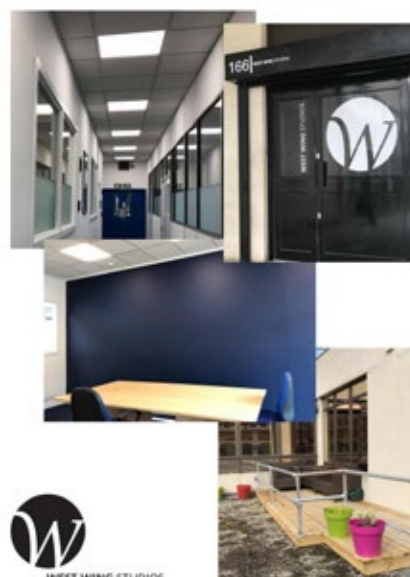
When your flight is ready to board, you will be escorted through dedicated security and customs screening and transferred in a VIP car directly to the aircraft, avoiding the main terminal altogether.

For arrivals, you will be greeted at the aircraft and simply step straight into a VIP car back to a private lounge where dedicated immigration personnel will facilitate your entry process. Any checked-in luggage will be brought to you, ready for your onward journey - all within minutes of landing.

Available in the UK at London Luton and London Gatwick, and in the Caribbean at Barbados, Grenada, and Tortola, ELITE Class is the perfect way to start or end your journey.

For the perfect gift, the ELITE Class gift card is available for an arrival or departure for 2 people at London Luton (easyJet flights) or London Gatwick (all airlines).

eliteclass.com | ELITEclass@signatureflight.com



West Wing Studios

After a four month refurbishment program Luton's latest creative business space opened in November. Andrews UK Limited (one of the UKs leading independent digital book publishers) has taken over a close to 4500sqft space, attached to The Mall in Luton.

Newly renamed to 'West Wing Studios' the venue houses 10 studios for creative and professional businesses right in the heart of Luton town centre. As well as AUK itself, other companies such as Retro Games (the creator of the global game console smash THEC64) will be moving in, also Pixel Games, Rhombus, and various others pending.

The refurbishment has included an all new communal kitchen space, a spacious seating area lobby which allows for tenants to mingle and potentially collaborate, and also a roof top garden for tenants to use in the summer months also. One of the studios is an audio recording studio, West Wing has high speed internet access, and within the confines of the existing building designs, it has been made as carbon natural as possible by installing new LED lighting in most areas.

With only a few studios left unspoken for, interested parties should contact Paul Andrews on paul@andrewsuk.com



Member News



Is posture causing us to suffer musculoskeletal injuries at work?

Although statistics for MSKs are demonstrating a slow decline they still account for 35% of all work-related ill health. It has been well published in studies from around the globe that manual handling training does not protect employees from sustaining MSK injuries, yet we are legislated to deliver this training.

At PostureFit we look at the individual much closer to identify the historic physical injuries and experiences which alter our resting posture, that can then predispose many of us to future pain and injury.

With both our private and business clients we dedicate time to individuals to uncover long forgotten experiences which lay dormant in our bodies.

For examples sprained joints, pulled muscles, broken bones, operations, childbirth, car crashes and many other events will cause our bodies to adopt a compromised posture and movement to enable us to continue with our daily life. These issues "heal" but can leave lasting altered postures, which create an imbalanced and restricted musculoskeletal system.

It is possible to identify these imbalances and restrictions before they become a bigger issue through simple screening and movement repatterning exercises.

PostureFit deliver corporate workshops to improve employee posture and reduce risk of future injury.

www.posturefit.co.uk
info@posturefit.co.uk

British School of Aviation Flying High With Veruth Holdings

The world-renowned Monarch Airlines Engineering Training Academy facilities at London Luton Airport have been purchased from the joint administrators at KPMG, by British School of Aviation (BSA).



BSA has chosen the former Monarch Airlines Engineering Training Academy building as the base for its first ever Aviation Academy, with plans to expand into more facilities nationally and internationally over the next 5 years. The School will launch its first UK Civil Aviation Authority approved Engineering courses in November, with other aviation disciplines following shortly after. BSA is proud to announce that airlines have already booked onto the first courses at the site at London Luton Airport.

Industry recognised experts Anoop Singh Bamrah, Shonu Bamrah, Matt Harvey and Richard Cooper form the Directors of the Board at British School of Aviation (pictured above), alongside Peter Kara (a non-executive director of Veruth Holdings).

BSA will provide a new and simplified model of training for the aviation industry, which will enable airlines to outsource all of their requirements for a broad range of key specialist aviation personnel to one industry leading training organisation. The aim is to create a footprint in the UK, which will ultimately be adapted at a local level worldwide.

With a need for improved diversity within the aviation sector and BSA's passion to produce the best aviation personnel, the company aims to open up the airline industry to all, working with local communities to encourage more students to train for careers in aviation.

This very exciting launch has been equity and loan financed by Veruth Holdings Ltd, Peter Kara and Falcon Flying Services.

Owner of Veruth Holdings Limited, David Sheridan, comments, "As a long-term equity investment company, we are delighted to add British School of Aviation to our portfolio. With their experienced and dedicated team, we see great opportunities both in the UK and globally for the company."

Director of BSA, Matt Harvey, comments: "We are so pleased to have secured this lucrative investment from Veruth Holdings. We now have the capacity to grow exponentially and we are confident that this investment will ensure the long-term growth of British School of Aviation."

For more information on British School of Aviation visit www.britishschoolofaviation.com or contact Richard Cooper on info@bsa.world. For Veruth Holdings enquiries visit www.veruthholdings.com



Development of 23 Units Open for Business

A multi-million pound speculative development of 23 units – the first of its kind in Bedford for more than 20 years – is open for business after reaching practical completion. Contracts have already been exchanged on two units, with a third under offer, at the Glenmore Business Park development in Arkwright Road, with others under negotiation. Local businesses have been keen to relocate to the mix of light industrial and warehouse units, available for sale freehold or lease, according to Andrew Clarke, head of commercial agency at Kirkby Diamond in Bedford.

"Glenmore Business Park is a very welcome addition to the Bedford market and we have been inundated with enquiries from firms looking for high quality accommodation in an excellent location," said Andrew. "Agreements for lease have been exchanged with a building contractor and a vehicle wrapping business, and we are in advanced negotiations with several other potential occupiers. With rents starting at £11,750, and freeholds available, the development is proving to be extremely popular among the region's business community. Bedford has had to wait more than 20 years for a development of this kind and there is significant pent-up demand for the high quality space on offer."

Units range in size from 1,104 sq ft to 1,550 sq ft and can be combined to create larger units. Each unit will have a first floor capable of being used as offices, sectional roller shutter loading doors, six-metre eaves height, and allocated parking spaces.

For more information contact Andrew Clarke on 01234 905130 or email andrew.clarke@kirkbydiamond.co.uk

What is Rett Syndrome?



Imagine being told the child you thought was 'normal', albeit a bit slow to progress in some areas, had a rare, devastating, neurological disorder that would leave them needing lifelong 24/7 care. Imagine watching helplessly as it robbed them of their ability to walk, talk and feed themselves. Feel their pain as their body is wracked by seizures, muscle spasms and even breathing becomes a struggle. This is Rett Syndrome and this is the reality for the families we support. Rett UK is the only national charity providing professional family support services in the UK and has over 30 years experience of doing so.

But what does that support look like? Do people really understand what impact our work has?

Research on the other hand is an easy concept to grasp. Research today is all about gene therapy, gene editing and potential cures. These are undoubtedly exciting times for many rare disorders including Rett Syndrome. Our families, understandably, need to look forward to a life more normal and maybe, one day, we will have a safe effective treatment for the disorder. Maybe even a cure.

Everyone can relate to the clarity and urgency of that message. But what of support? We empower families with information and advice about Rett Syndrome, about services and therapies they should be accessing and what financial benefits they are entitled to. We build their emotional resilience as they battle with the challenges that living with Rett throws at them on a daily basis.

And battle it is – Rett UK is at the frontline for our families – fighting social services, education and health services so they get what they are entitled to, so they get a chance to have a life worth living. In the last few years, the demand for our services has increased hugely as the savage cuts to statutory services has left families at breaking point. Rett UK supports over 1000 families; every quarter, we take over 700 calls to our telephone helpline.

To summarise just a handful of those support calls as headlines and the subsequent outcomes after Rett UK intervened, they would read like this:

'31-year-old lady in Glasgow with Rett Syndrome comes out of a coma after medical advice from Rett UK.'

'Second chance of life for 16-year-old girl. Parents told by hospital doctors to take her home and make her comfortable but intervention from Rett UK provides the answer they were missing to get her well again.'

"I love you mum"; the first words spoken by a 34-year-old lady with Rett syndrome to her mum after she gets her eye gaze communication device supported by Rett UK.'

Battle weary family celebrate as Rett UK help them secure a specialised college placement for their 19 year old, daughter worth £265,000 per year, after advocating on their behalf to overturn the decision of the local authority and health board not to give her a place.

Help us make a difference today and every day!

www.rettuk.org

New Members



We would like to extend a very warm welcome to all **New Members** of the Bedfordshire Chamber of Commerce. Members who have joined in the past three months are listed below. 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

Altodigital
LEIGHTON BUZZARD
Business solutions / office technologies

Bower HR Consultancy
LUTON
HR Consultancy for SMEs

Caston Construction Limited
BEDFORD
Construction, joinery, new build and renovations

Century 21 Technologies Ltd
BEDFORD
Guard Tour Patrol Systems, Time & Attendance Terminals and Lone Worker Alert Systems

Chief Resilience Officer Ltd
HITCHIN
Business continuity management

GA Living Spaces Ltd
BALDOCK
We take a human-led focus to designing functional spaces that achieve what people want from them, and, as we're all different, one size doesn't fit all. And this doesn't stop with the house as it is today, nor is it limited to indoors. We want to challenge and to be challenged to get the maximum value from every home.

MacIntyre
MILTON KEYNES
MacIntyre provide learning, support and care for more than 1200 children, young people and adults with a learning disability and/or autism

Mercedes-Benz of Bedford
BEDFORD
Sales of New and Used Mercedes-Benz cars. Also After Sales and Servicing facilities

Mortgage Quest Hitchin
BEDFORD
We offer our clients expert advice to finding the right Mortgage and Protection solutions. The Mortgage and Protection market is complex and constantly changing but you don't have to do it alone. So, let us help you. We can and will guide you every step of the way by being your trusted partner.

Narrative Industries Ltd
BEDFORD
We provide enterprise-level digital strategy & web services to help our clients innovate, compete and be more efficient in complex online arenas. We can work from the early stages of digital strategy to help integrate back-office systems with customer-facing websites to SEO & conversational rate optimisation

Posturefit Ltd
BEDFORD
We treat muscle and joint pain by restoring a balanced posture and efficient movement patterns

Mercure Bedford Centre Hotel
BEDFORD
Mercure Bedford Centre Hotel is conveniently situated in Bedford town centre - the perfect location for guests looking to explore the town or visiting on business. Boasting panoramic views across the Great River Ouse, this hotel is an ideal retreat and a great place to unwind on a weekend away.

Red Bird Tutoring
WOBURN
Small group tutoring and coaching in maths, english and science for 8-18 year olds

Serco - Skills Support for the Workforce
HOOK
Skills Support for the Workforce (SSW) is a programme developed to upskill employees within small and medium sized businesses. SSW provides funded, recognised bespoke training courses to progress SMEs and boost the local economy.

South East Midlands Local Enterprise Partnership
CRANFIELD
Helping local businesses through free, impartial, tailored information and guidance

The Fire Beam Company
DUNSTABLE
Manufacturer of the Firebeam Xtra - Reflective optical beam smoke detector

Xylem Analytics UK Ltd
LETCWORTH
Sale of environmental monitoring equipment

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

Bedford Independent
Julia Course-Crofts
www.bedfordindependent.co.uk
julia@bedfordindependent.co.uk
The Bedford Independent is a modern news desk on a mission to inform and inspire the people of Bedford bringing you the news that matters. This may be: holding public officials to account, championing a local hero, celebrating business, helping police bring a criminal to justice, or simply keeping readers informed. Our current monthly average unique users are just over 116,000, so an ideal platform to advertise your business at competitive rates.



Century 21 Technologies Ltd
Michael Johnson
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DBWD fuses creativity with strategic insight to help our clients generate more enquiries and orders from the internet. Accredited as a Google Partner, our friendly and knowledgeable team provide complete project management covering web design, SEO, social media, reporting, analytics and graphic design, covering all your online promotion needs.



Eagle Graphics (Printers) Ltd
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We work with our clients to meet "their" needs. Our experience covers applications across many markets and industries. We design and produce artwork from scratch, adapt existing or use client files and produce very high-quality products from simple business stationery to complex 5 colour brochures with various finishes that might be required.



Mercedes-Benz of Bedford
Paul Lewis
01234 272888
www.sytner.co.uk/mercedes-benz/dealer-locator/mercedes-benz-of-bedford/
A diverse model range boasting the best residual values in the industry, coupled with excellent customer service, enables us to achieve unparalleled Customer Retention Rates. We look forward to welcoming you to the Dealership, however we are equally happy to visit Local Businesses for Meetings, Presentations and Vehicle Demonstrations.



Mercure Bedford Centre Hotel
Les Wood - Sales Manager
Darren Talberg - General Manager
01234 799988 | www.accor.com | Les.wood@accor.com
Takes its inspiration from the River Great Ouse, the design of the hotel features timber from canoes, water graphics and rowing illustrations. The hotel has 121 guest rooms and provides a convivial eating and drinking experience with a 20-cover restaurant, bar and café area, as well as lounge and meeting spaces. The largest meeting space is the County Suite, which can seat up to 450 people theatre or 340 banqueting style - ideal for corporate or private functions.



Mortgage Quest Hitchin
Harjinder Atwal
07771 944979
www.mortgagequesthitchin.co.uk | harjinder@mortgagequesthitchin.co.uk
We offer our clients expert advice in finding the right Mortgage and Protection solutions. We will guide you every step of the way by being your trusted partner. At Mortgage Quest Hitchin, we have access to the whole of mortgage market providing us with hundreds of products to suit your needs.



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PostureFit - game changers in health and safety. PostureFit support businesses to reduce risk of employees suffering muscle and joint injuries at work. Our unique, fun, informative and effective employee workshops lead attendees through simple exercise to uncover root cause of underlying injury history. We then deliver lasting movement repatterning training.



The Fire Beam Company Limited
Cliff Key
www.thefirebeam.com | cliff.key@thefirebeam.com
Based in Dunstable Bedfordshire, The Fire Beam Company are the inventors and manufacturers of the world's longest reflective optical beam smoke detector "The Firebeam Xtra". The Firebeam Xtra is designed to protect life and property in commercial and industrial premises and is exported to over 60 countries worldwide.





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Julia Brightman

Owner, *Afternoon Teas by Creme Brew Lait*

Specialising in creating and serving freshly homemade vintage afternoon teas, buffets and hospitality, Afternoon Teas by Crème Brew Lait provide all the vintage china and table linen needed and even fresh flowers for the table. Based out of Bedford, the company caters for small and large parties including corporate events, weddings, hen parties, baby showers, family parties, christenings and funeral teas. They are passionate about serving quality homemade food, on beautiful table settings with a 5-star service.

Where did you develop your love of baking?

During my childhood, my mother suffered from illness so I used to cook a lot. This led me into thinking of pursuing a career in Catering. When I was a teenager, I had an interview with Bedford School for a YTS position in the kitchens. Whilst I was there, they told me about another vacancy in the Library. One of my other passions is reading and books. Once I looked at the library and all those books, I was sold on being a Library Assistant, which started me off in my administrative career. I still loved to cook though and wanted to see how I could realise that dream.

How did this develop into a business?

I got married and had children and instead of returning to my job, I wanted to start my catering business. But then my husband was made redundant and I realised that we needed to ensure money was coming in every month so I couldn't take the risk of not having full time work. I had worked for an organisation for over 20 years in a senior position, so I returned to my job. Then, at the age of 44, I was diagnosed with breast cancer. I had some surgery and follow up treatment which meant I had to take some time off work. To cut a very long story short, the organisation I was employed in took the view that I could not keep my position with them and the outcome was that I was dismissed for unsatisfactory attendance due to ill health. After this I became quite housebound but was desperate to do something! When my sister decided to get married, I did some of the cakes for her wedding which were so well received that I decided this would be the launchpad to starting a business from home. I focussed myself and set a launch date of 1st May 2017. Quite daunting but I was determined.

Where do you get your inspiration?

Whilst I was at home recovering from surgery, I realised that the greatest gift anyone can give is time. I was so emotionally lifted when friends came to visit and when I felt well enough I would bake a cake. This and my love of baking inspired me to start my business, I feel such tremendous pride in seeing so many people enjoying my Afternoon Teas. Quite recently I have been catering for 80th and 90th birthdays. It is lovely to see the recipients enjoying cakes and scones with their families and friends, spending time together.

How do you overcome Customer requirements such as vegan, allergies etc?

When I receive an initial enquiry, I always check for dietary requirements, ensuring that I cover all aspects such as diabetes, vegan and allergies/intolerances. I have a separate area for preparation. My kitchen has been 5* rated and has recently undergone inspection. To me it is important that all guests attending my Afternoon Teas have the same dining experience. At a wedding, for example, the guests will cover a wide range of different requirements to cater for intolerances/allergies. An example of vegan sandwiches will include my home made mushroom pate, tofu – which, contrary to a lot of belief, can be very tasty – and vegan cheese. All my containers are marked as are my cake stands. I have a floor plan so I know where individuals are seated. Recipes can be easily adapted too. I have an original Mrs Beeton Cookbook and can amend recipes accordingly.

What is your preferred form of marketing?

Definitely face-to-face networking, I have a Facebook page and website. Word of mouth forms a huge part for me too; nothing works better than recommendation. I will be updating my website to accept reviews – I currently have reviews on my Facebook page. Attending networking events was initially quite overwhelming for me. I was in real need of a confidence boost. I was terrified of standing up to give an overview of my business, I joined a ladies networking group which really helped and supported me. I have developed a range of Gingerbreads which I am just beginning to market, so every method of getting my name out there will be used!

What has been your greatest achievement?

Most definitely my two children. They have both encountered tremendous difficulties during their childhood. When my son was 7 he was very ill but his 'can do attitude' has been an incredible inspiration to me. At the age of 9, my daughter won a National Carers Award for her care of me. I am immensely proud of them both. Of course, they are both adults now but have still retained fantastic attitudes.

www.afternoonteachbycremebrewlait.com

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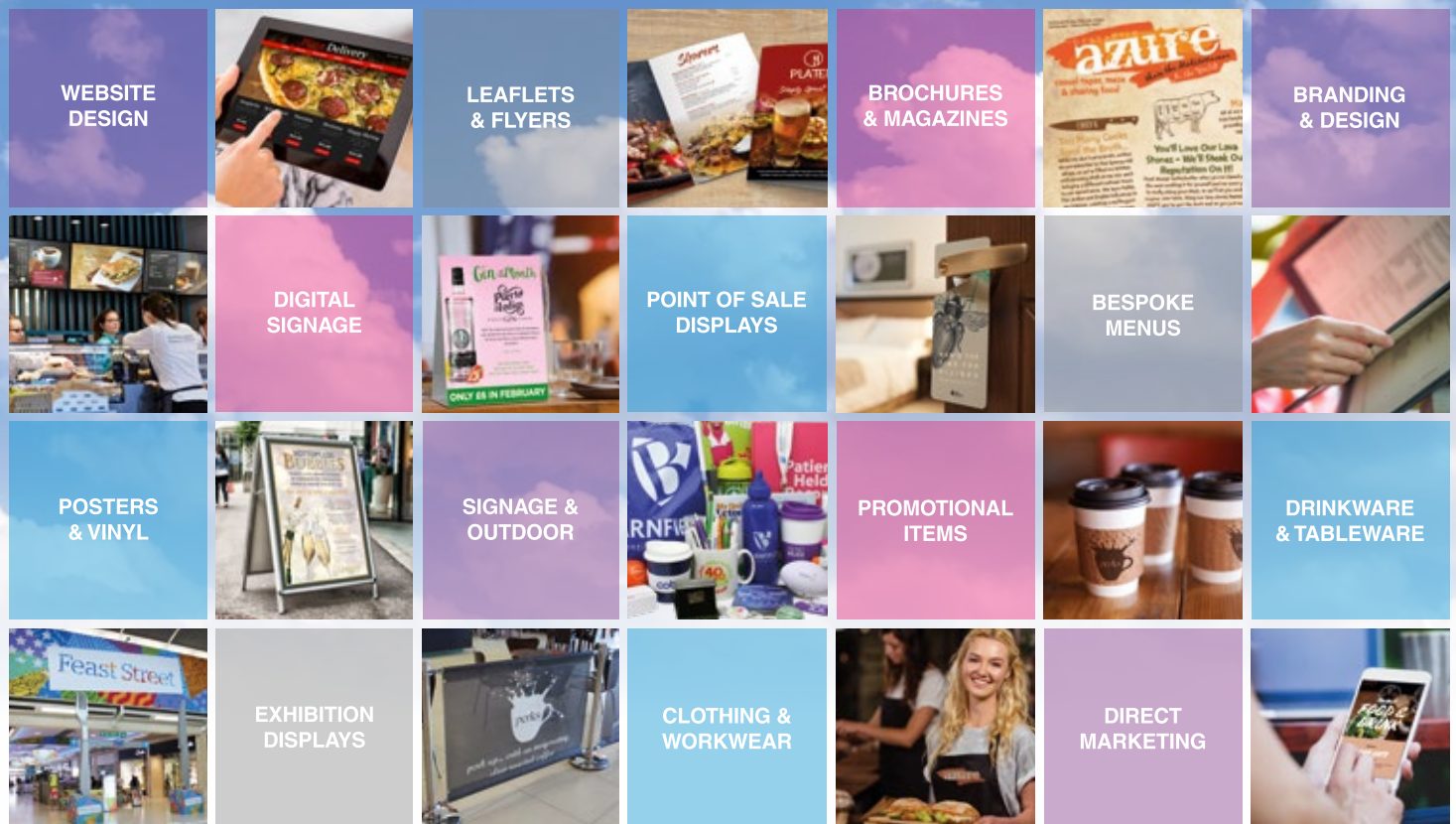
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