

LONDON

Business Matters

Inside

Creative enterprise zones in the capital

How to grow green business skills

Dealing with HMRC enquiries

2024 – year of elections

Professor Tony Travers on high stakes for business

PAGES 6-7



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Letter from the editor

This is a year of elections and who better to assess their impact on business for *LBM* than Professor Tony Travers, a hugely respected academic and commentator on government affairs? We are facing, he writes on pages 6-7, a year of uncertainty and change which will be one where the policy stakes are high for businesses in London and across the UK.

Global city

London is of course a global city with vast international trade interests. The City (p 8) and Thames Freeport (p 23) are key to these, as are Commonwealth ties (p 30), connections with the Arab world (p 32) and, more prosaically, rules of origin for imported and exported goods (p 34). *LBM* is long past featuring regular Brexit news in each issue but on page 31 we examine the fresh challenges three years from the actual secession from the EU.

Culture as well as trade is a significant foreign exchange earner and this and the world of entertainment is covered with reports on art exhibitions (p 19), the world's first radio play (p 18) and the South Bank's Frost Fair (p 10).

Is it stretching things too far to suggest that the Lord Mayor's Show (p 12) is also a form of entertainment?

Twist

A bumper crop of book reviews appears on pages 38-39 with a range of subjects including humour, entrepreneurship, creativity and innovation, and closing the gender gap as well as an art mystery novel with a fascinating twist.

A bumper crop of book reviews appears on pages 38-39 with a range of subjects including humour, entrepreneurship, creativity and innovation

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LCCL's Environment, Sustainability and Green Growth committee is in the spotlight on pages 80-81 while pictures from the events run for the Chamber's Asian and Black business groups appear on pages 63-64.

Many people have contact with HMRC at this time of year so some welcome advice on how to deal with them can be found on pages 58-59. Let's hope all tax returns are filed on time, and that *LBM* readers are in for a happy and prosperous 2024.

Peter Bishop

editor@londonbusinessmatters.co.uk

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Policy stakes high in a year of electoral uncertainty

I by Professor Tony Travers

The first key election for London will be the mayoral vote on 2 May.

Labour's Sadiq Khan is running for a third term. His Conservative rival, Susan Hall, has an uphill struggle, given her party's recent opinion poll performance. Policy battles will centre on crime, housing, transport and planning. As far as business is concerned, the Conservatives' recent attacks on Khan's record relating to ULEZ, Transport for London's (TfL) finances and housing delivery show where they will be pitching their arguments against the incumbent.

In reality, TfL's performance is generally better than the government's management of the national railway and the delayed, over-budget, HS2 project. The future of HS2 at Euston is still undecided, which creates doubts about regeneration at Old Oak Common.

Levelling Up Secretary Michael Gove's recently revised housing policy includes a threat to take over parts of the mayor's *London Plan* to achieve greater Whitehall control over housing numbers in the capital. The stated purpose is to deliver substantial increases in construction on 'brownfield' land and east London areas to protect suburban boroughs and the Green Belt.

Europe

Assuming Rishi Sunak does not call a spring election, the second set of polls with profound implications for the UK and its businesses will be the European Parliamentary elections on 6-9 June. Populist parties are expected to make big gains, which will alarm

national governments in many of the 27-member bloc, but particularly France and Germany. Victor Orban's populism in Hungary and Geert

Wilders's recent success in the Netherlands attest to shifts in public opinion.

The risk for business in Britain is that the EU and its member governments will become more protectionist, increasingly insular on defence policy, and less likely to trade with the UK.



UK

Next, and least predictable date-wise, is expected to be the UK general election, though the Chancellor's decision to hold the Budget on 6 March has been seen as increasing the chances of an earlier poll. This contest is probably still most likely to occur in the autumn. It could, of course, then come either before or after the US presidential vote on 5 November. The Conservatives have been trailing in opinion polls for many months and show few signs of revival. Labour, out of power since 2010, are taking great care not to appear radical.

GDP and productivity growth are likely to be key manifesto battlegrounds. However, the intractable nature of the UK's (and Europe's) dismal economic recovery from the cumulative shocks delivered by the 2008 banking crisis, Brexit, the pandemic, the Russia-Ukraine war and now conflict in the



Middle East suggest that the major parties' policy makers have few ideas (beyond boosterism) about what to propose for the next five years. Promises of future tax cuts are inevitable.

USA

The US presidential election has the potential to be the most impactful of the four outlined here. The possibility that Donald Trump may return to the White House, which is self-evidently a real one, could affect economic and trade policy, the US's approach to NATO and much more besides. Europe may find itself with a far less reliable American ally, with consequences for the EU/UK relationship.

Other contests

There are also electoral contests in other countries, notably Austria, Belgium, Finland, Ghana, Mexico, Rwanda, South Africa and Venezuela which have the potential to influence policy, notably in relation to

trade, in the UK. Elsewhere in England, mayoral contests take place in Greater Manchester, the West Midlands, West Yorkshire and six other combined authorities.

In short, 2024 will be a year of significant electoral uncertainty and possible change. For businesses in London and across the UK, the policy stakes will be high.

Tony Travers is a visiting professor in the London School of Economics department of government, and director of LSE London

www.lse.ac.uk



Stepping up

Claire Broadbelt has been appointed interim deputy chair of the LCCI board. A skilled commercial litigator, she is the co-chair of the UK civil fraud and business disputes practice at Greenberg Traurig, and the London chair of diversity, equality and inclusion.



outstanding work, the latest being in *The Legal 500 UK 2024*. Who's Who Legal 2023 described her as a "brilliant practitioner" and an "exceptional asset recovery lawyer".

She has been a non-executive director of LCCI and an advisory board member of the London Chamber of Arbitration and Mediation since 2019. She also chairs the Chamber's remuneration committee.

Exceptional

Broadbelt has been regularly recognised for her

SPONSORED COLUMN

Safeguarding your future – Personal protection through business

By **Görkem Barron**,
Chartered Financial Planner



Protecting yourself and your loved ones from the financial effects of premature death or long-term illness is the foundation of financial planning. As a business owner, you have a unique opportunity—obtaining personal protection through your business can offer cost savings through tax efficiency.

This article delves into two key policies: Relevant Life Cover and Executive Income Protection, highlighting their benefits in personal financial planning.

Understanding Relevant Life Cover

Relevant Life Cover is a life insurance policy owned and paid by the business and will pay out a tax-free lump sum in the event of your death. It's worth noting the person covered must be an employee of a UK business which can include salaried company directors, but not sole traders, equity partners of a partnership or members of a Limited Liability Partnership.

Advantages of Relevant Life Cover:

- **Tax Efficiency:** There are significant savings for the business owner as premiums paid by the business are typically viewed as an allowable business expense.
- **Security for Loved Ones:** The policy is written into Trust and, therefore, typically inheritance tax-free, thereby ensuring the family receives the full benefit without any additional tax burden.

Understanding Executive Income Protection

Future financial stability often hinges on continued health and

the ability to work. This would be jeopardised if you were to suffer from long-term illness and were unable to work.

Through an Executive Income Protection policy, businesses can provide a monthly benefit to the business if you are unable to work due to long-term ill health. The amount paid is based on a proportion of your earnings and can include dividends and P11D benefits.

The terms for these policies vary and most usually choose a benefit that is inflation-linked which runs until the expected retirement date (e.g., age 65 or state pension age).

It differs from personally-owned income protection in that the benefit is paid to the business that then passes on to you as the employee after deducting income tax, National Insurance and pension contributions.

Advantages of Executive Income Protection:

- **Financial Stability:** The policy ensures you can meet essential expenses like bills and groceries during illness.
- **Peace of Mind:** Knowing you have a financial safety net reduces stress and aids recovery.
- **Long-Term Security:** This support continues until you recover or retirement, offering long-term financial security.

How can we help?

Our team is ready to provide guidance and help you make informed decisions about your financial future. To have a confidential chat, please get in touch with our Chartered Financial Planner, Görkem Barron (gorkembarron@lfwm.co.uk)

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LUBBOCK FINE
WEALTH MANAGEMENT



The evolving City of London

| by Chris Hayward

“The City of London Corporation is the oldest elected municipal governing body in the world. Across a thousand years of history much has changed. But one constant has been our championing of London’s businesses from the ancient merchant Guilds before the Norman Conquest to advanced AI companies today.

From the darkest hours, the bombing and blitz, to the brightest lights of innovation and adaptation, through all that time, the City of London has not only survived but continued to thrive.

Global gateway

We’ve done this by constantly evolving to the challenges we face at any given time while retaining the traditions that helped build our success. Today, London is the global gateway for financial and professional services. We’re home to a globally-leading financial centre, one that’s open for business and trade with unparalleled reach, deep, liquid pools of capital, and a significant presence of international investors.

We are continuing to evolve to address the global challenges facing us today. That’s why last year we launched our *Vision for Economic Growth*, our flagship policy to help the country unlock up to £225 billion of investment

and economic growth by 2030 and beyond. Our ambition is that the City and its businesses – as they have always done – should help drive progress and economic growth, creating the jobs and businesses of the future, right across the country.

Roadmap to prosperity

If the City is to continue to thrive, we must continue to evolve. Our *Vision for Economic Growth* is a roadmap to prosperity, suggesting how we can raise investment levels, become a digital-first economy, and anchor the UK as a leader in sustainable finance. That’s why last year we worked with the Chancellor to launch the Mansion House pension reforms to boost saving returns and boost businesses. We want investment in high-growth companies in tech and biotech. They need the capital to start here, scale here, and stay here.

Unlocking that private capital will drive transformative economic growth which will be good for the financial and professional services sector, the wider economy, and the country.

History and heritage

But it’s not enough to maintain the City of London’s role as a leading global financial centre; I’m determined to make it a great place to visit. That’s why at the start of my term as policy chair – the political leader of the City of London Corporation – in May 2022, I launched our flagship *Destination City* vision for the square mile to become a thriving, seven-day-a-week location.

We have unrivalled history and heritage, world-class arts and culture, outstanding restaurants, cafes, hotels and bars. We not only want to welcome more workers

We have unrivalled history and heritage, world-class arts and culture, outstanding restaurants, cafes, hotels, and bars.

and visitors to the Square Mile but attract more companies too – strengthen the overall business ecosystem. We want businesses to be here, and we want their workers wanting to be here and coming into the office.

Industries of the future

Already we’re beginning to see the results. Demand for City office space is booming as firms adapt to new ways of working, with 11 tall new buildings set for construction in a major sign of long-term economic confidence. The number of Square Mile workers has increased to a record 615,000, up 29,000 on the previous year. And we’ve seen increasing business confidence with recent announcements of moves to the City from HSBC and OpenAI, the owners of ChatGPT.

Here at the City of London Corporation, we’ve long made a success of using the traditions of our past as a platform to build our future. I want to embrace that ethos, using our history, heritage and culture to attract a global and diverse talent pool to build the industries of the future, right here in London.

Chris Hayward is policy chair of the City of London Corporation

www.cityoflondon.gov.uk

Data as an asset

Data is often described as a strategic asset but what does that mean? It isn't an asset such as a building or equipment; it's intangible, an abstract representation of something else, but unlike physical assets, can be copied and distributed widely.

Data must be processed into information in order to add value and, without it, organisations struggle to articulate and meet their strategic aims.

If you're asking yourself questions like:

How can I reach new markets?

How do we effectively target recruitment and sales?

How can we improve performance by understanding strengths and weaknesses?

You need to be using data to help with decision making, but you also need to understand the quality of the data being used to make them.

Make data fit for purpose.

In order to treat data like an asset you can start by creating quality specifications for your data and putting processes in place to monitor that your standards are being met – don't leave it to chance, make sure you have a sufficiently detailed understanding of what and where your data is and who is responsible for it.

Improve data management by mapping out processes, ensure data architecture has



been documented and staff are well versed in data use and business rules – without this, data cannot be understood or useful. Make sure you do this in the right order – just as you wouldn't build the top of a skyscraper before laying the foundations, you cannot architect after implementation.

As well as the risk to operational efficiencies and strategic insights, businesses have the added hurdle of meeting external regulatory data requirements and poor-quality data returns can result in audit, fines, or even the retraction of funding.

Well managed data gives a level of assurance in terms of cyber security, knowing where your sensitive data



is held and that it is being managed properly. But not just this, when data quality is enhanced, you know that the information you are being provided via business intelligence is trustworthy and you can gain more interesting and timely insights. The experience of staff is improved via more automated business processes that remove manual data entry, and access to reports and systems that provide the data they need to do their jobs well.

Data management is not just about security, or quality or accessibility, it also ensures that the foundations are in place so that when you want to innovate with data you can, anything from investigating new market areas and creating new products to fulfil customer demand.

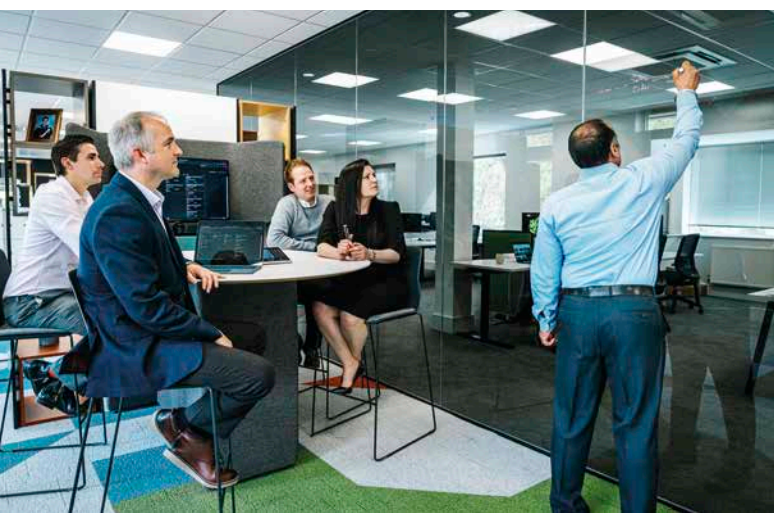
But how to we quantify its value?

The practice of giving a

real monetary value to data is still in its infancy, not least because most organisations do not understand what they are spending in terms of time or technology to enter, process, store, and gain insight from their data. If we were to think about the value of university student data as an example, a student cannot participate without a student record, so at a minimum it is worth a student's fees, but the creation and maintenance of that record requires input from many different departments and from the student themselves. Beyond these operational realities lie questions of the strategic value of data – what would be the financial impact to a university if it only grew by a quarter or half of the targets that have been set?

A data management strategy will set out the starting point for improvement activities and can cover many themes such as data governance, data quality, technology, and data culture. This guidance should be the cornerstone of a digital organisation.

To find out more about data management, governance, and use, get in touch with our team at info@waterstons.com



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Don't hold back London business

by Kriti Gupta

LCCI marked the end of 2023 by speaking to the media on issues that hold back the London business community. From rogue pedicabs to lack of support on energy bills, LCCI also called for a reconsideration of the government's immigration policy.

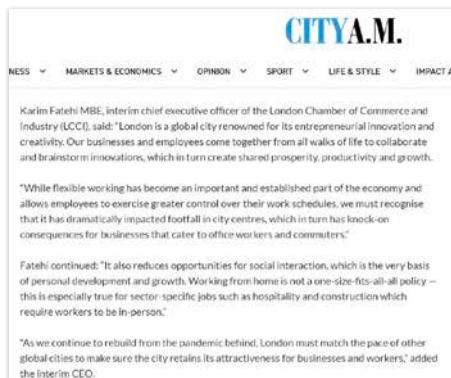
Fast and loose

The last quarter of 2023 was significant due to two major announcements - the King's Speech and the Autumn Statement. LCCI welcomed the crackdown on dodgy pedicabs in the King's Speech. James Watkins, head of policy and public impact, told the *Evening Standard* and *City AM*, "For too long, rogue pedicab operators have played fast and loose with the law. Too many visitors to our city have been fleeced and intimidated - which has harmed London's global reputation. Those days will soon be over thanks to the news that the licensing of pedicabs is in the King's Speech."

Costs

LCCI welcomed changes to National Insurance and business expense taxes in the Autumn Statement, noted *OnLondon*.

James Watkins called on Ministers to address the high cost of doing business in advance of the Chancellor's Autumn Statement in separate interviews with *Greatest Hits Radio* and *BBC Radio London*. He urged the



Crackdown on dodgy pedicabs in King's Speech hailed by London business chiefs

Chancellor to bring back VAT-free shopping for overseas visitors. He also spoke of how the Black Friday sales can help retailers across the capital.

Cabinet reshuffle

Tim Donovan, BBC London political editor, tweeted of LCCI's optimism regarding James Cleverly's appointment as the new Home Secretary. Dave Hill, founder and editor of *OnLondon*, also shared LCCI's call for reform to the visa policy so that the London arts scene can welcome musicians from around the world which will enable business people who are interested in investing in the country to visit the capital.

Working practices

On the back of a report that found London losing out to New York due to its home working trends, LCCI chief executive Karim Fatehi told *City AM*: "While flexible working has become an important and established part of the economy and allows employees to exercise greater control over their work schedules, we must recognise that it has dramatically impacted footfall in city centres, which in turn has knock-on consequences for businesses that cater to office workers and commuters."



Plans to cut the levels of legal migration into the country have raised concerns among members, partly owing to the existing skills challenges in the city. Fatehi told *City AM* that the government should not be imposing more costs and red tape on businesses during this cost of living crisis. Instead, it should help people who have low skills with bespoke training and ensure immediate needs are addressed by ending the visa regime's needless complexity.

Winter in the capital

Bankside's Frost Fair returns to the south banks of the river this winter with a weekend of merriment and winter festivities at the end of January.

Taking place on Sumner Street behind the Tate Modern from Friday 26 to Sunday 28 January, the show promises to transport attendees

back to the 18th and 19th centuries, when the Thames turned to ice.

Walking on ice

The modern day fair is a reimagining and celebration of an extraordinary period in London's history which saw the River Thames freeze over 24 times between 1605 and 1814. Out of work sailors, bargemen and the local community responded by creating a unique fair 'on ice' where Banksiders hosted markets, played traditional games, gambled and indulged in various pursuits on the frozen river. During the last Frost Fair in 1814, an elephant

famously walked across the ice alongside Blackfriars Bridge.

Donations

The event is free, but Better Bankside, the Business Improvement District, behind the event, is encouraging donations to help 'freeze out homelessness' for the Manna Society, a local day centre working with the homeless and vulnerable.

Meanwhile the rather newer tradition of the Christmas tree donated annually by Norway to grace Trafalgar Square has been attracting its fair share of visitors north of the Thames.

www.mannasociety.org.uk



Kind, curious and self-defined

Naomi Riches MBE DL was the inspirational speaker at an LCCI event last autumn writes *Elizabeth Skewes Castañeda*

The paralympic rowing medalist (bronze: 2008, gold:2012) was born with a severe visual impairment and experienced some tough times as she grew up. When trying to build a career, she told an enthralled audience, all she thought she had for a CV was: "I'm a girl, I'm tall and I can't see."

Three 'musts'

Things changed in 2004 when she had the opportunity to join the GB adaptive rowing team. The rest is history and after her medals in Beijing and London



she has been working in psychometric assessment and as an inspirational speaker. She spoke about the challenges women faced in their careers and the dangers of 'imposter syndrome'.

She concluded her talk with three 'musts' to help navigate a successful path: always be kind; always be curious; never allow others to define you.



Championing London's interests

Mayor of London Sadiq Khan has appointed Howard Dawber as his new deputy mayor for business

Best known for his work at Canary Wharf Group, Dawber will focus on championing London's interests across the globe, banging the drum for the capital as a place to visit, expand to and invest in, and work to protect jobs and growth as London continues to recover following the pandemic.



continued prosperity for our vibrant city.

Growth

"London is an undisputed global economic hub" commented Fatehi "but we must always be looking for ways to improve and protect our status as one of the great world cities through entrepreneurship, and growth in the capital."

Dawber replaces Rajesh Agrawal who stepped down from his role last November after being selected as a candidate in the next general election. Agrawal worked closely with LCCI and previously was a much-valued deputy chair of its Asian Business Association.

Pivotal role

Welcoming the appointment Karim Fatehi MBE, LCCI's interim chief executive, said that Dawber would play a pivotal role in "fostering a business-friendly environment, encouraging innovation and job creation, attracting investment, and ensuring the

SPONSORED COLUMN

When Brand Licensing Leaves a Bad Taste

by Rachel von Hossle
Marketing & Copyright Expert
at Wynne-Jones IP



It's a given that, while most of us are picking up our popcorn and settling back to watch the MrBeast Burger fail unfold, somewhere in darkened rooms sit MrBeast's senior officials and their attorneys, with their heads in their hands, hoping that the ground will open and swallow them whole...

It all started as a sweet deal. Back in 2020, the megastar YouTuber, Jimmy Donaldson – better known as MrBeast, climbed into the frying pan with Virtual Dining Concepts in a deal that saw the MrBeast brand licensed by VDC to distribute beef burgers across the United States. The business model was simple: ghost kitchens that are owned and operated by different people would make the burgers and deliver them. As easy as pie, right?

Wrong. With so many fingers in the pie, it appears there hasn't been any quality control and a complete lack of consistency in the food that's served up. It wasn't long before MrBeast fans were taking to social media to share pictures of poor quality and undercooked burgers, leaving MrBeast with a bad taste in his mouth. Not content to simmer quietly behind closed doors, MrBeast has been vocal on social media about the sour deal, saying, "Yeah, the problem with MrBeast Burger is I can't guarantee the quality of the order."

And herein lies the problem. Not only can the brand, which has contracted the rights to use its logo and name to be attached to the burger, not control the quality of the product, but it also appears they can't get out of the bargain.

A well-drafted licensing agreement will contain an appropriate clause that allows either party to terminate the relationship in the event that the activities of one party cause damage to the brand and/or reputation of the other. And

this is a two-way street. Businesses should be able to escape deals when an influencer behaves in a way that is detrimental to the reputation of their product. Think Kerry Katona and Iceland.

Seemingly unable to terminate under the provisions of the contract, MrBeast has spiced things up by filing a lawsuit against VDC. The claim alleges that there has been a rapid decline in the quality of the food over the years due to a focus on expansion. Donaldson has asked for a jury trial and is suing for the royalties he says he's owed and to cease production of the MrBeast Burger. The suit also alleges that VDC registered numerous trade marks with the MrBeast brand outside the US without Donaldson's knowledge or permission, another hint that the agreement sandwich itself was missing a filling or two. With MrBeast pivoting to packaged snacks – a more traditional supply chain that is easier to quality control – and plenty of concept developers poised to exploit the still massive reach of influencer helmed brands, there are several basic licensing and drafting lessons here to be digested.

But has MrBeast jumped out of the frying pan and into the fire? VDC are putting him under the grill and has also filed a lawsuit that claims "bullying" and "wanton conduct," resulting in \$100 million in damages. Who will come out on top? It doesn't sound like there's a provision in the licensing agreement for a minimum standard of quality, and if VDC can prove the damages they claim to have suffered as a result of MrBeast's vocal criticism of the product, they *could* bring home the bacon.

Rachel von Hossle

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Large, noisy and colourful

Float holders, marching bands and representatives from a diverse range of community groups and charities took their places in last November's Lord Mayor's Show – the parade for the largest, noisiest and most colourful event in the City of London's calendar

Over 150 floats and several military and civilian bands joined thousands of people, 250 horses and Lord Mayor Michael Mainelli in the three-mile-long parade, setting off from The Mansion House.

Statement

Prominent among the floats was the LCCI's Ukraine-themed one bearing the legend *London and Kyiv – Two Cities United*. To create it, LCCI collaborated with two Kyiv agencies and a London design company. The float's design

incorporated the bright colours of the Ukrainian flag, a mirror reflecting the City of London as a powerful statement of the established relationship between London and Kyiv.

Celebration

Overseas representation was strong, with some eye-catching displays from China, Nigeria, Hong

Kong, Italy and Mongolia. It is hard though to rival the Lord Mayor's splendid and historic carriage, occupied by Michael Mainelli who said: "These marvellous marchers, specially selected to represent their communities and good causes, help make The Lord Mayor's Show what it is – a tremendous celebration of our great City's diversity and a genuinely fun day out."



World's first digital ATA Carnet

The ATA Carnet – known as the 'passport for goods' – has been a paper document in the 80+ countries which are part of the system since its inception in the early 1960s

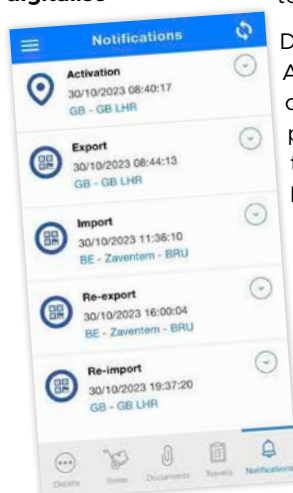
In recent times, the UK has been prominent in a project to digitalise the document in a global pilot led by the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) and the World Customs Organisation.

Now the UK leads again. Last November, EFM Global and Business West achieved a full set of digital Carnet endorsements on their round trip from Heathrow to Brussels. This demonstrates that the digital Carnet infrastructure works and brings for a more

efficient and streamlined future for temporary exports a step closer.

Davor McKinley, head of ATA Carnet procedures and compliance at UKNATACO, has played a huge role in getting the e-document over the line. He thanked colleagues at ICC, UK Border Force and HM Revenue and Customs for their work in making the transaction possible. McKinley commented: "Reaching this milestone is an assurance that we can transition to the final stage of the digitalisation project with confidence."

www.uknataco.co.uk



Doctors without borders

Médecins sans frontières (MSF) has been around for over 50 years, treating patients in crisis zones. The world being what it is, there has been no shortage of crises for them to react to.



Personal experiences

Last December the charity hosted an evening of storytelling in which a packed audience at the Ciné Lumière in South Kensington heard the personal experiences of a doctor, a midwife and a nurse who had worked in Yemen, Iraq and Afghanistan.

To call their role demanding is an understatement. Their work ethic and compassion was truly humbling but practical details and facts emerged too. Nurse Diana Pereira de Sousa, for example, made the point that when she tried to refer a child to a hospital with better equipment – not possible because there was no space – “MSF was the only option available.”

No distinction

Moreover, the whole set-up was egalitarian and when the intensive care unit had to be transformed into a burns unit because of a sudden and unexpected need, they “just got on with it with no distinction between doctors and cleaners.”

Doctor ‘Finn’ Ryan, who worked as a paediatrician in Yemen, was overcome with emotion when she looked back on some of the challenges she faced (and the lives she and her team saved). There is no doubt though that she would have been the epitome of calmness and efficiency when galvanised for action in the field.

www.msf.org



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AI and HR – a legal challenge

By Rhian Radia, Consultant Employment Lawyer

Bishop & Sewell



AI technologies are already being used at every stage of the HR cycle, from recruitment to dismissal. Legal cases have swiftly followed, says Rhian Radia, Consultant Employment Lawyer at Bishop & Sewell.

It is commonplace for larger employers to use AI-assisted technology to sift through CVs to determine who might progress through to interview stages and to monitor the performance and productivity of existing staff.

Where AI technology is used, there is the very real risk that it might reflect and replicate the biases and inequalities that already exist in society. And that is where employers can find themselves facing legal challenges.

Bias can arise in AI decision making through the datasets in which it is trained and the continued information it receives. Those biases can be exaggerated over time as the technology ‘learns’.

Apple, in 2019, had to withdraw its credit card when it found applications from women were routinely refused or issued with considerably lower credit limits than men.

AI in HR is widely used in measuring the performance of employees. Whilst AI may

identify top performers based on key business metrics, it lacks personal experience, emotional intelligence and the ability to form an objective opinion to shape decisions.

In 2022, both Meta and Estée Lauder found themselves under intense scrutiny when staff were sacked for poor performance based on decisions made by AI-assisted technology. Some employees who were dismissed successfully brought Employment Tribunal claims against their employers.

Whilst it might be tempting to a business to place its trust in AI software to improve HR processes, there remains a very clear and important role for human interaction. People matters inevitably need that human touch.

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**Bishop
& Sewell**

**Monro Wright
& Wasbrough**

Katja Ogrin as photographer.



Out of the historical shadows

Mongolia has been very much in evidence in London in recent months, all part of the celebrations marking the 60th anniversary of diplomatic relations with the UK. The most high-profile event perhaps was the production of *The Mongol Khan*, a grand theatrical spectacle which opened at the London Coliseum last November. *Sejal Singh* was there

The Mongol Khan is a lavish production, a testament to the enduring spirit of Mongolian culture, which unfolded against a backdrop of elaborate sets inspired by the traditional nomadic life of the Hunnic Empire.

Quandary

Adapted from the poignant three-act tragedy by Lkhagvasuren Bavuu, the narrative unfolds around the fictional saga of Archug Khan. As the King of the Huns, Archug finds himself entangled in a succession quandary when both his wife and his consort bear heirs to the throne. What ensues is a drama, rife with betrayal, adultery and a Machiavellian plot involving the clandestine switching of infants - all in a ruthless pursuit of power.

Authenticity

The production not only captivates with its storyline but also serves as a cultural ambassador, offering a

vivid glimpse into Mongolia's rich and storied past. The authenticity of the production's sets and costumes provided a sensory feast for the eyes.

Beyond the artistic triumph, the Mongol Khan premiere stands as a symbol of Mongolia's resilience and its ascent from historical shadows. The narrative subtly echoes the resilience of a nation that, at times, found itself on the unpopular side of history.

Connections

Today, Mongolia emerges not just as a backdrop for ancient tales but as a beacon of cultural pride and diplomatic strength. The performance serves as a testament to how Mongolia has overcome its historical challenges, celebrating its identity on an international stage and forging enduring connections with nations like the UK.

Sejal Singh holds an MSc in international relations and diplomacy from the University of Edinburgh



Celebrating and supporting small business



Small Business Saturday UK - which takes place annually in the first week of December - is a grassroots campaign which celebrates small business success and encourages consumers to 'shop local' and to support businesses in their communities.

The focus for LCCI last December was Deptford High Street - voted one of the coolest high streets in the world by Time Out readers - and, with local MP

Vicky Foxcroft and London Local Chambers president Helen McIntosh and Karim Fatehi, LCCI chief executive, went on a 'meet and greet' with local small firms.

Community spirit

Deptford has a high proportion of micro businesses and the challenges they face include maintaining footfall, rising operating costs and competition from online shopping. It does, though, have a strong community spirit and is something of a creative centre, being home to the Albany Theatre. Innovative developments include Cockpit Arts, a social enterprise hub for over 100 businesses, and the creation of a new public square and market yard including the refurbishment of a Victorian carriage ramp.

The Small Business Saturday campaign clearly works. In the last ten years it has encouraged billions of pounds to be spent with small businesses and it is endorsed by the major political parties.



SPONSORED COLUMN

The year ahead – what does 2024 have in store?



For all of us, a New Year usually signals a time to reflect on the last 12 months and to consider what lies ahead. Looking back at my predictions for 2023, formal corporate and personal insolvency numbers have been rising, as anticipated, through to November 2023, with indications of numbers continuing to rise into 2024.

Inflation is on a downward projection, with the Consumer Price Index at 3.9% to the end of November 2023. UK property prices dropped by about 2% during 2023 and the FTSE 100 was up by just under 4%.

Interest rates appear to have peaked at a base rate of 5.25%, which is lower than the 6% anticipated in my June 2023 column. It seems that rates are set to go down, perhaps from May 2024, with maybe a second reduction later in the year.

With wars in Ukraine and Israel and a cost-of-living crisis, the figures for 2023 above show resilience and perhaps a turning point for the start of some good news.

The New Year has opened with the prospects of tax cuts in a Spring, pre-election, Budget and an Autumn general election. It seems like the ingredients for financial progress are in place, but remember growth brings its own challenges,

particularly the availability of working capital.

The Post Office scandal has drowned out some of the other interesting cases recently lost by the State, notably the prosecutions of Camila Batmanghelidjh of the Kids Company and the non-executive directors of Carillion. Perhaps we will see greater integrity from those in high office, as well as a long period of electioneering.

As we enter the New Year, now is a great time to reset personal and business goals. I have started with a dry January, although it is likely to end up being a damp one - a new term that I have just learned which apparently allows for a couple of moments of indiscretion.

By the time this article is published, it will be too late for your January reset, but the Lunar New Year starts on 10 February 2024. On this occasion, it is the Year of the Dragon; an animal attributed with profound strength and courage. Both attributes will come in handy for the year ahead!

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MENZIES
BRIGHTER THINKING

Creative thinking – and action

Alexa Michael takes a look at the development of focused zones to support culture and the arts – and create employment opportunities in London

Creative Enterprise Zones are an initiative from the Mayor of London to promote 12 areas across London as spaces where artists and other creative industries can thrive. The intention is to help these businesses to find permanent accommodation and give them the support to grow. They also encourage local people to learn artistic skills and find employment in the creative sector. There are four aspects:

- **Space** – creating permanent, affordable workspace and live-work space for people working in creative industries at rents below the market price.
- **Skills and business support** – helping artists and other creative professionals to develop the necessary entrepreneurial skills and providing business support to artists, business start-ups, sole traders, micro enterprises and small businesses; providing professional advancement and opportunities so that people can develop their careers in the creative sector.
- **Policy** – producing effective policies to

support artists and the creative sector through Borough Local Plans, housing and business rates.

- **Community engagement and socially inclusive places** – instilling creative production in the community, creating attractive public spaces and promoting strong links with education providers.

Launch and expansion
London's first six zones were

launched in 2018 – Brixton, Croydon, Deptford and New Cross, Hackney Wick and Fish Island, Hounslow and Tottenham.

In June 2022, they were expanded, with £800,000 to be invested across London to boost jobs, training and workspace. This funding was intended to support 5,000 young Londoners into artistic careers and to create over 25,000 square meters

of low-cost artists' studios. Hammersmith and Fulham and Ealing were announced as the newest sectors.

In Hammersmith and Fulham, the zone extends from Imperial College, London's White City campus in the north of the zone to West Brompton Station in the south, including Shepherd's Bush, the White City Innovation District, Olympia and Earl's Court.



Creative Enterprise Zone success stories

Projects benefitting from the £1.2million in grant funding to help creative workplaces in the zones become greener and more sustainable include:

- £200,000 to access the highest quality materials that will make the new Sutherland Studios at Waltham Forest's Blackhorse Lane zone a 'best in class' for retrofitting existing buildings to meet energy standards.
- £50,000 for the new digital creativeLab in Croydon that will give local aspiring creators access to state-of-the-art energy efficient production equipment, as well as £50,000 to support a range of

creative workspace and creative businesses to make practical changes to their premises to increase energy efficiency.

- £150,000 Seed funding for a mixed grant/loan programme to support sustainability and futureproof local workspaces in Ealing.
- A £300,000 micro grant and low interest loans for local creative workspaces to act on energy audit recommendations that will make their facilities more energy efficient and improve their EPC rating split across the Hackney Wick and Fish Island, Tottenham and the Westminster zones.



Tottenham: A Platform for Tottenham Creatives is Shaping an Inclusive Area Identity. Vanessa Butt, Upholsterer and Furniture Restorer

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Retirement planning attitudes in 2023



Mike Hardy

A survey of 6,000 people, aged 18 to 80, revealed starkly different views on retirement across the generations.

According to the Office for National Statistics, the median age of the UK population in mid-2021 was 40.7 years, up from 39.6 in mid-2011. Perhaps that gradual ageing and the impact of Covid-19 on working patterns explains why there is a steady flow of research reports on attitudes to, and experiences of, retirement. The latest to emerge is Standard Life's Retirement Voice, now in its third annual edition. One of the more interesting topics covered is the extent and benefit of planning ahead of retirement.

The bad news is that only 29% of those questioned said they were doing "a great deal of planning for retirement." Predictably, households with income of more than £100,000 and those who took professional financial advice were the most likely to fall into this category, but even in those instances the proportion was no more than half.

Just over one in five members of Generation X (born between 1965 and 1980, so in their 40s and 50s) said they had done a great deal of planning, a smaller share than either of the two subsequent and thus younger generations (Millennials and Gen Z). The reluctant Gen Xers would do well to consider that over half of today's

retirees wish that they had thought about retirement finances at a younger age or started saving earlier. However, Gen X may not be completely head-in-sand, as on average they confessed to a six-year gap between their aspirational retirement age (62) and what they expected to be the reality (68).

The benefits of planning were evident in responses to another survey question: "How do you feel about your current financial situation?" Those who had done the most planning were nearly three times more likely to feel positive about their finances than the non-planners (61% vs. 21%). The group that had done "only a little planning" fell in the middle (40%).

The survey found that on average, age 36 is when people start to take a keener interest in their retirement planning. That average figure hides a big generational difference – the Baby Boomers trigger age was 49, while for Gen Z (currently 18-25) it was 20. In this instance, Gen Z looks the wiser generation.

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Positive

There was a further expansion in July 2023 after the Creative Enterprise Zone Impact report revealed positive news from all six original zones. In Brixton, jobs in the arts grew nearly four times as fast as those in London's overall creative sector between 2018 and 2021. In Croydon, the music, performance and visual arts segments saw double the growth compared with the rest of London. In Deptford and New Cross, musical performance and visual arts has seen a 12 per cent increase post-Covid, compared with a 36 per cent fall during the pandemic. Almost all the creative sector in Hackney Wick and Fish Island had seen year-on-year growth while in Tottenham creative businesses had grown by 35 per cent. Almost 90 per cent of creative industry in Hounslow comprises screen and digital businesses.

Brent, Islington and Westminster became London's newest Creative Enterprise Zones with the intention of supporting 200 businesses and creating a further 3,000 square metres of affordable workspace.

Energy efficient

The mayor also announced that nine projects across the zones would receive funds to make creative workspaces in the Creative Enterprise Zones greener and more energy efficient. The awards include £200,000

to help create a new energy efficient workspace in Brixton, £180,000 for better insulation and a more energy efficient heating system at Chiswick House and Gardens in Hounslow and £68,500 to 'green' the Bush Theatre in Hammersmith.

Today there are zones in Brent, Croydon, Ealing (with Old Oak Park Royal Development Corporation), Hackney and Tower Hamlets (with London Legacy Development Corporation), Hammersmith and Fulham, Haringey, Hounslow, Islington, Lambeth, Lewisham, Waltham Forest and Westminster, thus fulfilling a pledge to have 12 zones across London.

By 2026, it is intended that the 12 zones will deliver 71,000 square metres of low-cost, creative workspace, support 800 businesses, generate 500 jobs and support 5,000 young Londoners to work in the capital's creative sector.

www.london.gov.uk/programmes-strategies/arts-and-culture/culture-and-good-growth/explore-creative-enterprise-zones/about-creative-enterprise-zones

CREATIVE ENTERPRISE ZONE

MAYOR OF LONDON

The world's first radio play

On 15 January 1924, the world's first radio play, *A Comedy of Danger*, a suspense thriller by Richard Hughes, was broadcast by the British Broadcasting Company (as the BBC was originally called) from its studios in London

Danger (as the play was commonly called) was the first drama to be commissioned for the wireless (as radio was then known) in Britain. The plot involved three people, a young couple named Jack and Mary and an older man named Mr Bax, who were trapped in the pitch-dark of a flooding Welsh coalmine. The part of Jack was read by Christopher Good with Carol Marsh as Mary. Carleton Hobbs was cast in the role of Mr Bax. Supporting cast roles were read by John Atterbury, Henry Davies, John Rebs and Eilian Wyn.

The play was perhaps an ironic choice for radio, given the setting where neither actors nor the audience could 'see' anything.

In the dark

The play was perhaps an ironic choice for radio, given the setting where neither actors nor the audience could 'see' anything. The play ran for just over 18 minutes and an estimated five million people tuned in to listen. Its key lines include "What's happened?" and "The lights have gone out." For maximum dramatic effect, the audience were invited to listen to the play in the dark.



Listening play

Richard Hughes was aged just 23 when his play was broadcast. Speaking on the BBC Home Service in 1956, he said: "Those were the days of the silent film and our 'listening play' (as I dubbed it) would have to be the silent film's missing half, so to speak, telling a complete story by sound alone."

The son of a civil servant, Hughes was born in Weybridge and educated at Charterhouse School and Oriol College, Oxford. He was employed as a journalist but also wrote poems, short stories, novels and plays. His most famous novel is *The Innocent Voyage* (1929), later renamed by Hughes as *A High Wind in Jamaica*. During World War II, Hughes held a desk job at the Admiralty. Post-war, he spent ten years writing scripts for Ealing Studios and his next novel was not published until 1961. Hughes later moved to Wales and died there in 1976.

Danger was produced by Sir Nigel Playfair (1874-1934), an English actor and director who started his career as actor-manager at the Lyric Theatre in Hammersmith after graduating from Oxford University. The theatre flourished under his leadership over 20 years. Its many productions included *Abraham*

Lincoln and *The Begger's Opera* which ran for 466 and 1,463 performances respectively. As a BBC producer, he commissioned *Danger* as the first radio play. Playfair was knighted in 1928 for his services to the theatre.

As a BBC producer, he commissioned *Danger* as the first radio play. Playfair was knighted in 1928 for his services to the theatre.

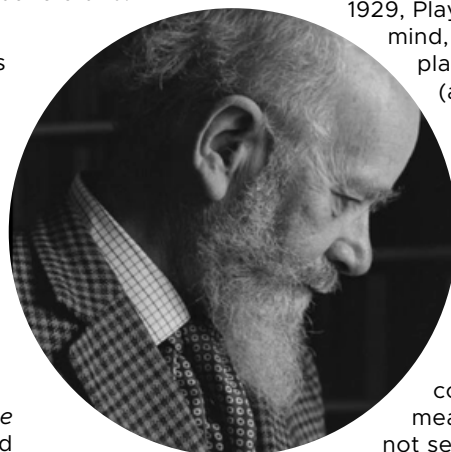
Right atmosphere

Commenting in *Popular Wireless* in 1929, Playfair said: "To my mind, one of the best plays ever broadcast (and I do not say this because I had the pleasure of producing it) was *Danger* by Mr. Richard Hughes. Here was something that was written for wireless only; the scene was in a coal mine and was meant to be heard and not seen. If this play had been produced in a legitimate theatre, the stage would have been in total darkness; the players and the action would remain unseen. It was, therefore, ideal for broadcasting, and probably not so good for use in a theatre. In fact, I think it gained by being broadcast, as a sense of distance for such a setting was an inducement to the right atmosphere."

On 1 October 1973, a new version of the play was broadcast by the BBC to mark the broadcast's 50th anniversary.

Danger (1973): Richard Hughes : Free Download, Borrow, and Streaming : Internet Archive

100 years ago in London is researched and written by Alexa Michael



Parker's pieces

Jonathan Parker is a London-based artist, acknowledged as one of the most innovative currently working in the UK writes Daniel Peters

Belfast-born, he completed a foundation course at Camberwell School of Art before artistic apprenticeships in Spain and Cuba. He subsequently graduated in fine art from Northumbria University.

Spiritual

His latest exhibition of paintings and drawings, *Little Western*, was hosted last December by Brocket Gallery, Sloane Square, and featured a body of work "marking



significant periods in time, place and practice."

Gallery director Lizzie Glendinning speaks of the "spiritual dimension" in Parker's work "that resonates with art historical processes; figures connect to the sky and thought, while the ground is weighted in memory."

Mesmerising

I found many of his paintings mesmerising – ghostlike but with details that deserved lengthy and analytical viewing. *Central Hall*, *End of Season*, and *Owl* (all oil on muslin on wood), the last one inspired by the London Eye, particularly benefitted from an extended encounter. Innovative yes, and engaging and brilliant too.

www.theartistjonathanparker.com
www.brocketgallery.com



Pioneer in the performing arts

Marina Abramović has captivated worldwide audiences for over fifty years

Her compelling performances in which she has consistently tested the limits of her own physical and mental endurance, have earned her an influential place in the artistic sphere writes Elizabeth Skewes Castañeda. She is a pioneer of conceptual and performing arts and I was privileged to witness her work last autumn at the Royal Academy of Arts.



twist which ensured it was no ordinary exhibition. The works on display involved 're-performance' with a younger generation of artists, schooled in the Marina Abramović method. This enables new audiences to experience past performances as she had originally intended them.

The exhibition brought back to life some of her most famous works, such as *Nude with Skeleton*, *Imponderabilia*, *Luminosity* and *the House with the Ocean View*.

www.royalacademy.org.uk

Innovative twist

True to form, Abramović produced an innovative

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UK Immigration

There are a number of immigration categories where a foreign national is able to work in the UK without needing sponsorship.

- Holders of Ancestry visas
 - Spouse of an individual holding a visa
 - Holders of visas as a Spouse of British nationals
- If none of the above apply, then an UK trading entity can sponsor a foreign national if they obtain/hold a sponsor licence.

Isn't it very expensive to sponsor a worker?

The total cost of sponsoring a non-UK employee depends on the following:

1. If you are considered a small company
2. Where the duration is less than 3 years
3. The job type: is it considered a shortage occupation or it's a PhD occupation
4. If the candidate is aged less than 26
5. If the above apply, there are discounts to the overall costs.

An employer must pay for assigning the certificate of sponsorship – the certificate charge and the Immigration Skills Charge. The other costs - Immigration Health Surcharge, priority processing and visa fees – are the responsibility of

the employee and if paid by the employer then is considered to be a "benefit in kind".

Is it difficult to obtain and maintain a sponsor licence?

The main complexity with the sponsor licence applying for is that, if an application is refused, you are unable to reapply for 6 months. The rules surrounding which entities can apply, the evidence required and whether a licence is required for each related entity in the UK is the challenge. Although information is available on the UK Government portal, it is not always clear which sections apply.

Is the process complicated and burdensome for the employer?

Contrary to popular belief, the sponsor licence obligations compliment the compliance required for employment law, tax, health & safety along with other areas of UK law. It is only burdensome if you don't have an effective infrastructure in place.

For more information/ a free 30-minute consultation contact: <https://calendly.com/adbhadvisory/lcci-consult>



Anna Bose

Anna has worked within the immigration sector for over 28 years in the Big 4 accountancy firms, in-house and in several boutique immigration practices as well as in the Home Office. She has assisted a wide range of clients, assisting with immigration strategy, compliance, and services. She has the unique combination of experience of government, service provider and client.



Call for action on London's key events sectors

The All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on London as a Global City has launched its report calling for action from all decision makers to support the capital's arts, business and consumer events

Global London: Enhancing the role of business and consumer events for London and the United Kingdom, states that the capital's business and consumer events and arts are key to the success of the country.

From trade shows to Taylor Swift concerts, the events and music venues sectors are critical for providing jobs and economic growth across the capital. This in turn levers in income for the UK via increased tax revenue and visitor numbers – with London being the country's gateway.

Challenges

However, the APPG has found that despite London's international success – such as being the most googled city in the world – there are emerging challenges which must be addressed to ensure that London not only retains its number one status but can grow and help with the levelling up of the country.



The APPG expressed concern that London's standing as a leading destination to hold international exhibitions had been impacted post-Brexit. In 2015, the capital was the fifth most attractive city for conferences and events. In 2022, London slipped to fifteenth place. This is a significant decline in rankings which should be addressed through proactive initiatives to support this industry.

APPG recommendations

- Reduction of barriers to visas for tourists and businesspeople
- Securing funding for the arts
- Making the temporary movement of goods a frictionless environment for contractors servicing business and consumer events and the arts
- Ending the regulatory ambiguity on VAT for overseas exhibitors and contractors.

Critical

Speaking at the launch of the report at the House of Commons, LCCI interim chief executive Karim Fatehi MBE said: "It is critical that London remains as the global number one centre for business. We cannot be complacent about our city's status. This report from the APPG needs to be acted on so that jobs and business growth can be maintained in the capital".

Commitment

Jeremy Rees, chief executive of ExCeL, sponsors of the

launch, added that there was a huge choice available to organisers to locate their events. "We must actively and intentionally set out London's stall to ensure we remain the most attractive city to compete for a slice of the £1 trillion global business events' industry. Our most recent £220 million investment to extend our convention centre is testament to our commitment to hosting world class events in what we believe to be the world's best city."

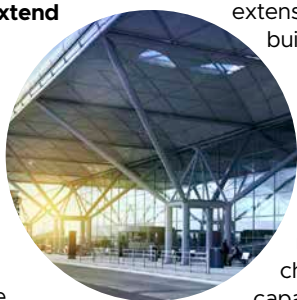
www.excel.london

Transforming Stansted

London Stansted Airport has received planning permission to extend its terminal building.

The decision was made by the planning inspectorate following a hearing last autumn.

The extension will transform the airport experience and provide capacity to accommodate growth towards the airport's approved limit.



The scheme will add a three-bay extension to the back of the terminal building, extending it by 16,500m².

Next generation

It will create a more spacious departure lounge, with additional seating, a greater choice of shops, bars and restaurants, state-of-the-art check-in desks, increased baggage capacity and a larger security hall with more security lanes equipped with next-generation scanners.

The project will improve the airport journey, from when passengers check in on departure through to when they arrive at immigration.

Growth

Stansted has been London's fastest recovering airport, serving more than 27 million passengers in the last 12 months, and has now entered a phase of growth.

The extension will enable the airport to improve its capacity at busy times and provide the extra space required to accommodate forecast growth.

Taking off

Gareth Powell was the guest speaker at a recent LCCI patron roundtable lunch at Mosimann's Club in Belgravia.

The managing director of Stansted London Airport briefed attendees

on the airport's role in supporting connectivity in London, its sustainability, skills and employment programmes, and its recovery from the pandemic and plans for growth.



UK cities edge back towards growth

In the latest quarterly ranking of economic momentum across 20 UK cities, the biggest upward mover was Edinburgh which rose 10 places. The EvaluateLocate Key Cities Tracker index rates the cities on the basis of 96 economic and demographic metrics which are grouped around business density, labour market conditions, average residential values, and population movements.



As the UK economy undergoes a gradual recovery, Edinburgh's index change of -6.6 per cent moved it up to eighth place in the rankings as its economic momentum improved.

Greater London continues to be the top-ranked city across the past 12 months with an index change of -3.6 per cent

followed by Oxford and Cambridge. The proliferation of the life science sector and major residential development around both university cities are underpinning this performance.

Resilience

Adam Kirby of EvaluateLocate comments: "The changes in the rankings of these key cities reflects the 'stop-go' nature of the UK economy which has prevailed since 2020.

"However, the decline in economic vitality which started during the pandemic and was exacerbated by the cost-of-living crisis is now slowing. Key localised economies are showing their inherent resilience and gathering more momentum as they edge back towards positive growth."

[EvaluateLocate.com](https://www.evaluatelocate.com)

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Navigating HR Challenges in 2024: Building the Workforce of the Future



In 2024, HR professionals face an ever-evolving landscape, marked by distinct challenges that will shape the future of work. Here, let's delve into key HR challenges for the year.

1. Embracing workplace diversity: As organisations increasingly understand the value of diverse perspectives, HR must continue to push for change and take a strong lead in creating inclusive environments. This includes hiring, training, and retaining employees from different backgrounds, ensuring equal opportunities, and fostering a sense of belonging for all.

2. Prioritising mental health and wellbeing: Continuing to destigmatise mental health challenges, expanding support programs, and promoting work-life balance become vital concerns.

3. Upskilling and reskilling: Rapid technological shifts necessitate a focus on continuous employee learning, bridging skill gaps within organisations. HR will need to focus more on attracting over-50s back into the workplace.

4. Employee engagement and retention: HR must devise tailored engagement strategies, career development plans, and benefit packages to retain top talent in a competitive job market.

5. HR technology and automation: The adoption of HR technology and automation

will continue to rise. HR professionals will need to adapt to new tools, leverage data analytics for informed decision-making, and ensure ethical use of AI in HR processes.

6. Managing a distributed workforce: Due to remote and hybrid working, organisations are increasingly adopting distributed work models, which bring logistical and cultural challenges. HR will need to manage issues related to legal compliance, team cohesion, and performance management for employees spread across different locations.

7. ESG Integration: ESG integration is becoming increasingly important. HR must incorporate ESG principles into HR practices, spanning recruitment, sustainability initiatives, and diversity efforts.

As we step into 2024, HR professionals will need to be agile, tech-savvy, and equipped to navigate the challenges of the modern workplace. By proactively addressing these challenges, HR can not only adapt to change but also drive organisational success, foster employee satisfaction, and build the workforce of the future. It's a dynamic and exciting time for HR, one that promises to shape the very fabric of work in the years to come.

If you need HR support, reach out to Sarah Jo at sarahjo@peopleknd.co.uk.



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TRANSFORMING PEOPLE AND ORGANISATIONS

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London's biggest opportunity for a generation

by Martin Whiteley

Thames Freeport, a ground-breaking venture, stands as a unique, once-in-a-generation opportunity poised to redefine the economic landscape. Its transformative potential lies in its ability to stimulate trade, drive an energy transition, and uplift communities in London and its eastern boroughs. By harnessing innovation, Thames Freeport is positioning itself as a key player in powering the future economy.

Connectivity

Closer than any other enterprise zone to Europe's largest consumer market – with 18 million people at its doorstep – Thames Freeport is not just a logistical centre but represents a faster, cheaper and cleaner way to serve both UK and European markets. The trio of tax sites – DP World's London Gateway, the UK's largest logistics facility; Port of Tilbury, one of the UK's oldest ports; and Ford Dagenham, London's largest manufacturing site – offers unparalleled global connectivity to over 130 ports across 65 countries.

Private sector investment exceeding £600 million has already flowed into Thames Freeport, set to create over 1000 new jobs. Noteworthy additions include Ranson, a Belgian food and catering products business, and Destiny Entertainments, specialising in importing and modifying audio and video products.

Transformative

Beyond the bustling port terminals, Thames Freeport's commitment to regeneration extends its transformative influence along the Thames. Collaborating with Thurrock Council, Havering Council and the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham, Thames Freeport envisions turbo-charging a high-tech industrial base along the Thames Estuary, unlocking new employment opportunities.

A recent strategic collaboration with The Seoul Digital Foundation exemplifies Thames Freeport's global ambitions. The establishment of a Smart Cities Hub, set to commence in February with the arrival of several South Korean companies, highlights Thames Freeport's commitment to fostering innovation and collaboration on a global scale.

Global challenges

Thames Freeport's footprint encompasses a world-class industrial and innovation cluster taking shape along the River Thames. With London's





iconic food markets, Smithfield, Billingsgate and New Spitalfields relocating to its doorstep, Thames Freeport is poised to facilitate a new era of low-carbon, river-borne food and drink logistics – a critical response to global challenges in moving goods across major waterways.

Freeport’s technological prowess, paving the way for the development of a network of private 5G innovation hubs.

Partnerships within Thames Freeport are pivotal in driving environmental sustainability. Over £2.5 billion has been invested in port and logistics infrastructure in the last decade, with a substantial £3 billion earmarked for future investment. This includes a new ‘all-electric’ £350m Berth Four in London Gateway providing a 25 per cent uplift in deep-sea trading. This commitment aligns with the endeavour to lower the carbon footprint of logistics across London and the southeast, taking substantial freight off the roads and on to river and rail.

Thames Freeport beckons businesses to not only thrive on a global scale but also actively contribute to the regeneration of areas along the Thames. The journey toward global success begins here, where trade meets innovation, and regeneration becomes a shared vision for a sustainable and prosperous future.

Martin Whiteley is chief executive of London Freeport

www.dpworld.com

The venture is set to reshape London’s supply chains, creating commercial value within a vibrant port-centric ecosystem.



Low-carbon logistics

The intermodal networks spanning river, rail and road, coupled with a commitment to decarbonisation and the circular economy, position Thames Freeport as the cleaner choice for investment and innovation in low-carbon logistics and manufacturing. The venture is set to reshape London’s supply chains, creating commercial value within a vibrant port-centric ecosystem.

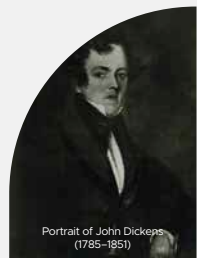
An agreement with Verizon, a global leader in telecommunications, further cements Thames



The Knowledge

LBM’s test of what readers know about London

- 1 What was the clock tower that houses Big Ben renamed as in 2012?
- 2 In which prison was Charles Dickens’ father, John Dickens, imprisoned for debt in 1824?
- 3 In the film of 1984 (starring John Hurt) which building doubled as the notorious Ministry of Truth?
- 4 What strike in Bow, East London paved the way for the foundation of the Labour Party?
- 5 Which former MP for Enfield Southgate and Kensington and Chelsea has made a name for himself as a TV train guide since leaving the House of Commons in 2005?
- 6 Which poet, the ‘wasp of Twickenham’ wrote the Rape of the Lock?
- 7 Which train departs from platform 9^{3/4} at King’s Cross station?
- 8 Who wrote the novel The British Museum is Falling Down?
- 9 Which London underground station is the only one to share a name with a stop on the Paris Metro?
- 10 In 1981 which royal personage became Chancellor of the University of London?



Find the answers on page 66

BLUETOOTH

WI-FI

MODULES

ADAPTERS

ACCESS POINTS

GLOBAL CERTIFICATIONS

WWW.LM-TECHNOLOGIES.COM



Managing the One Constant in a Wireless World: Change.



By Penelope Victoria, CEO of LM Technologies



In the ever-evolving landscape of technology, marked by the exponential growth predicted by Moore's Law, wireless connectivity standards like Bluetooth and Wi-Fi have become integral. This article delves into the multifaceted nature of wireless technology, exploring both the benefits it brings and the challenges it poses, while highlighting the innovative solutions offered by LM Technologies. As a UK market leader with two decades of specialised experience in Bluetooth and Wi-Fi, LM Technologies plays a pivotal role in guiding our partners towards a future defined by seamless connectivity.

The Wireless Revolution

Wireless technology has undeniably transformed our daily lives, offering convenience by eliminating the constraints of cables while simultaneously allowing

for new and innovative connectivity architectures. From wireless earbuds to the connectivity of smartphones and laptops, it has become an essential part of our interconnected world.

The embrace of wireless technology extends beyond convenience, catalysing innovation across industries. It has contributed to the development of smart homes, streamlined communication networks, and the efficiency of healthcare systems.

The ability to connect effortlessly not only enhances efficiency but also fosters creativity, enabling the realisation of once-futuristic concepts.

Navigating Challenges in the Wireless Landscape

Yet, this seamless connectivity isn't without its challenges. In the past five years, significant upgrades have been developed for wireless standards worldwide, with four substantial updates to the Bluetooth standard and two major updates for Wi-Fi. While these new standards bring increased performance and capabilities for customers, they also introduce heightened complexity and extended development time for manufacturers.

New connection topologies, frequency bands, data rates, and modulation schemes can amplify the cost of development and

manufacturing, especially for companies not specialising in these technologies. Additionally, the impact on certifications places further strain on resources, involving regulatory compliance with radio frequency restrictions, emission limits, and electromagnetic compatibility that vary across different countries and regions.

The certification process requires an investment of both time and resources with extensive testing and validation required not only before the mass production stage, but across the product life cycle as the standards are updated periodically. A trusted partner is critical for guidance during this complicated yet highly rewarding process.

LM Technologies: Embracing the Future of Wireless Connectivity

As a UK market leader having specialised in Bluetooth and Wi-Fi for two decades, LM Technologies stands as a beacon of innovation and problem solving. We not only understand the intricacies of the evolving wireless standards but offer reliable, practical and visionary solutions to empower product designers. From pre-certified modules and adapters, such as the LM842, a product that has garnered acclaim with over 30 certifications covering more than 70 countries, LM Technologies sets new standards for the industry in cost, functionality and time-to-market.

in somniis audemus "In Dreams We Dare", the company's motto, encapsulates its commitment to daring to dream, visualising a future beyond current challenges. It reflects the philosophy that addressing immediate needs is crucial, but true innovation arises from envisioning a future shaped by inspiration rather than mere solutions.

My vision of advancing the company in a specific direction stems from recognising the fact that all ideas, whether driven by need or inspired by dreams, shape our future.

For more information on LM Technologies products and services, please contact partner.services@lm-technologies.com

Canary Wharf, London. LM Technologies HQ



Short-sighted – underfunding eye care research

| by Keith Valentine

“As the only registered blind chief executive within the sight loss sector. I have personal experience living with retinitis pigmentosa, a hereditary condition that caused me to lose sight at the age of 36.

What did I ask myself when I discovered I would lose my vision?

- Is there a cure, a treatment which can help save my sight?
- What happens if I do lose my sight? What help is out there for me?

Early in 2023, Fight for Sight / Vision Foundation merged. United, we are the only UK funder seeking to answer both questions. We change lives by funding scientific research and innovative services focused on vision loss.

We change lives by funding scientific research and innovative services focused on vision loss.

We know that we are on the brink of treatments for multiple health conditions and diseases. Yet, research into preventing and treating sight loss only receives 1.5 per cent of public grant funding. We are determined to change that. We fund the research to answer “Can we stop this happening?” with the word “Yes”.

We’re calling for more funding for sight-saving research.

Impact and cost

Our 2020 *Time to Focus* report highlighted the

impact and cost of sight loss. It asserts that the cost to the UK economy is estimated at £25 billion annually.

As we look to the future and re-hone our focus on changing the world for visually impaired people. Funding is at the heart of the problem, as the same issues persist as they did three years ago.

So, what is the actual economic cost of underfunding eye research?

- Sight loss costs London’s economy £6.4 billion - around £750 per Londoner per year.
- By 2030, an extra 194,000 Londoners are predicted to have a sight-threatening eye condition and an extra 74,000 with sight loss.
- One in twelve adults in London already has a sight-threatening eye health condition.

Solutions

What are we doing to solve the problem?

Let’s look at the costs associated with just one eye condition: glaucoma.

Glaucoma is the world’s second leading cause of blindness. It affects nearly half a million in the UK. The lifetime cost of glaucoma is £49,800 per person. We are currently funding 15 projects across numerous strands of glaucoma research looking at treatments which could stop or even reverse the damaging effects of the disease.

Ground-breaking

Another excellent example is research conducted at Moorfield’s Eye Hospital and University College London Institute of Ophthalmology. The ground-breaking findings showed that data



from eye scans can detect Parkinson’s disease up to seven years before diagnosis. As Professor Keane of Moorfield’s Eye Hospital told us, “Fight for Sight / Vision Foundation was the crucial seed for all this work (and the best is yet to come!).”

Reducing the prevalence of eye conditions by one per cent per year could avoid costs to the UK economy of up to £3.1 billion by the end of the decade. And that same one per cent reduction in prevalence each year

until 2050 would result in a societal saving of £9.5 billion.

In May this year we will launch our *Invest to Innovate* fund. Galvanising London’s business community behind saving sight and changing lives. We would welcome conversations with companies interested in supporting this fund. ”

Keith Valentine is chief executive of Fight for Sight / Vision Foundation, an Aldgate-based charity



Train trouble in Europe

Peter Bishop's Vienna diary

WKO – Wirtschaftskammer Österreich – the Austrian equivalent of the British Chambers of Commerce occupies an imposing building south of Vienna's Ringstrasse. Sixty years ago, along with LCCI, they were one of the founding members of the ATA Carnet scheme for temporary imports and exports of goods for trade fairs, professional goods and samples. A good excuse then to host a biannual meeting of the Carnet Council drawn from 80 signatories to the international conventions that govern the operation, and to mark the retirement of its longstanding and valued representative, Herbert Herzig.

Austria punches above its weight economically. It has benefitted from membership of the EU (it joined in 1995), has reduced its dependency on trade with Germany, and currently comes in 13th in the GDP per capita global rankings. Industry and allied services are highly developed, with international tourism also a huge contributor to the country's coffers.

Stunning

Vienna more than plays its part in attracting visitors. The MuseumsQuartier houses over 70 cultural centres, the Secession Building pays homage to the city's golden age of Art Nouveau, and there is the colossal opera house – **Weiner Staatsoper** – which takes up a whole block. I admired its stunning vastness from my

hotel room opposite – tickets are hard to come by – and was surprised to learn that, capacity-wise, it didn't seat as many as the New York Met or Covent Garden. Most central of all in the city, is the soaring spire of the 13th century **Stephansdom** with its distinctive tiled roof.

Despite the grandeur there is a homeliness to Vienna. On the way from my hotel to the WKO I passed an ironmonger, an electrical repair shop, an independent boutique and countless restaurants. Entering some of them you could be back in the later Habsburg days with

wiener schnitzels and sacher torte served by waiters and waitresses in pristine, starched uniforms, and newspapers dangling from wooden rods.

Enviably

I also passed the 'stamtische', the nominated local drinking establishment which features in every Council for post-meeting drinks and discussions, vital for the smooth running of the global guarantee chain that underpins the ATA Carnet system. In Vienna it is the **Café Wortner 1880**, discovered by the ATA group chair **Henk Wit** who has an enviable record in tracking down the right location for the stamtische in the many parts of the world that the Council has convened.

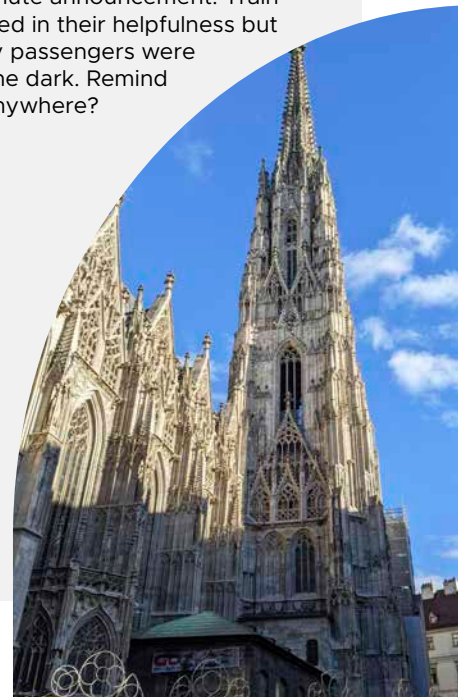
Revelation

The ATA Carnet meeting itself was attended by 50 delegates from 30 countries all issuing the so called 'passport for goods'. The new, digital Carnet was prominent in the agenda – see article on page 12 – as well as how document issuers could forge better relations with their national customs authorities. Most surprising, for me, was the revelation that Ukraine continue to issue and host Carnets despite the ongoing war.

Excruciating

I made the trip by train. Not as quick as a plane but 337 kgs of CO² were saved as a result. That is the good news – the journeys proved to be excruciating. On the outward leg, as the Eurostar pulled into Brussels Midi at midday, it was announced that my connecting train to Frankfurt (onward from there to Vienna) had been cancelled. Oh well, I thought, shouldn't be too tricky to get round it for a seasoned European train traveller like myself. Wrong! Eighteen hours and six transfers later I pulled into Austria's capital.

The return leg went well until the Frankfurt - Brussels train unexpectedly terminated at Cologne and I continued by coach to Liège. A train from there to the Eurostar terminal arrived half an hour after the last service to London had left. Nothing for it but to find a hotel and get the first train out in the morning. Belgian strikes were blamed for the disruption, possibly foreseeable but not mentioned until a last-minute announcement. Train staff varied in their helpfulness but generally passengers were kept in the dark. Remind you of anywhere?



Never a better time to explore export markets

I Elizabeth Skewes Castañeda reports on International Business Week



Last November, businesses celebrated International Trade Week (ITW). Led by the Department for Business and Trade (DBT) and in partnership with LCCI and other industry supporters, the week brought hundreds of delegates and business owners together to champion and celebrate international trade. With more than 170 events in the UK and worldwide, the week was full of business opportunities.

Industry experts

Whether businesses were looking to secure their first export contract or expand their existing international sales, ITW had it covered with webinars, networking receptions and workshops

that enabled businesses to develop their exporting knowledge and skills, gain access to trade advisers and industry experts, and learn about the benefits of the +70 UK trade agreements.

LCCI hosted over 450 guests at four events that highlighted the importance of support, resilience, visibility, communication, knowledge and skills in international trade.

Intricacies

The webinar *Understanding and taking advantage of free trade agreements (FTA)*, led by Lesley Batchelor CBE of Export Angels and Peter Bishop, chair of the advisory board of UKNATACO, guided delegates through the intricacies of FTA, their history and influence in worldwide trade, and the subjects to consider when trading goods overseas. They were joined by Alasdair MacKay from DBT in a Q&A session where delegates were able to interact directly with, and address particular concerns, to the experts.

David Pena from *International Trade Matters* and Duncan Gorst from Osborne Clarke, representing the London Chamber of Arbitration and Mediation, delivered a webinar on supply chain resilience emphasising the importance of prevention, planning, de-localisation, diversification, sustainability and how best to approach conflict resolution.

Cultural differences

The Alembic Strategy team delivered a webinar on *Understanding cross-cultural communication* – a game changer for international trade. Business strategy facilitators Wanda Haddock, Barbara Puddinu and Alice Davies shared with the audience their insights and highlights on how to nurture, secure and maintain a successful business relationship in an international environment where cultural differences and even language are part of the norm and can sometimes be the cause of unnecessary frictions that put businesses at risk.

Resources

Expanding your business internationally featured Karim Fatehi MBE, export champion and interim LCCI chief executive, The Earl of Minto, Minister for Regulatory Reform and Richard Currie, senior director of public affairs at UPS.

They argued that there has never been a better time for UK businesses to consider exploring international markets, even more so considering the many resources available for companies to succeed in their overseas endeavours, such as the UK Export Academy, the +70 trade agreements the UK government has secured, DBT's trade advisers in the UK and worldwide, the support provided by trade champions like UPS and LCCI.

Elizabeth Skewes Castañeda is trade services and business development executive at LCCI

tradeenquiries@londonchamber.co.uk



**INTERNATIONAL
TRADE WEEK**
6-10 NOVEMBER



Funding Support for Strategic Enterprises to Set Up in Hong Kong

Hong Kong is adopting a targeted approach to attract representative and high-potential strategic enterprises from around the globe to set up or expand their businesses in Hong Kong. The Office for Attracting Strategic Enterprises (OASES) was established in 2022, providing bespoke offerings and tailor-made plans that cover aspects such as land and financing to attract strategic enterprises from four major industries, namely life and health technology, artificial intelligence and data science, financial technology, and advanced manufacturing and new-energy technology.



The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government has also stepped up funding support for enterprises who are looking to establish a foothold in Hong Kong. A myriad of funding schemes and incentives cover infrastructure developments, promoting research and development (R&D), training and retaining talents, and facilitating re-industrialisation. Some latest initiatives are:

• Co-Investment Fund

A US\$3.8 billion Co-Investment Fund has been set up in late 2022 for attracting enterprises to set up operations in Hong Kong and co-investing in their business.

• Research, Academic and Industry Sectors One-plus Scheme (RAISE+)

It is a US\$1.3 billion funding scheme

launched in October 2023 to promote transformation of R&D outcomes and facilitate collaboration among industries, academic and research sectors. A maximum of US\$12.8 million funding support will be provided to each approved project.

• New Industrialisation Funding Scheme

The Scheme aims to subsidise manufacturers to set up new smart production lines in Hong Kong. A maximum of US\$1.9 million funding support will be provided to each approved project on a 1 (government): 2 (company) matching basis.

• Research Talent Hub

It subsidises R&D companies for engagement of talents to assist in R&D projects or conduct R&D work. Monthly allowance will be provided to eligible company/project for engagement of up to four research talents at any one time for a maximum of 36 months.



One-Stop Window for Strategic Enterprises

OASES serves as a one-stop window to assist enterprises throughout the whole set-up process from planning, setting up, launching, to further expansion. Key services include:

- Guidance in strategic implementation and evaluation of business decisions
- Connection with critical stakeholders
- Market insights of specific industries

- Setting up and business support (e.g. licencing, visa, intellectual property protection, tax, government funding schemes, talent schemes, business regulations, marketing and public relations, etc.)
- Relocation facilitation (e.g. bank account opening, housing, healthcare, education and networking, etc.)
- Aftercare services for continuous expansion of business

The Dedicated Team for Attracting Businesses and Talents in London is happy to support companies in the United Kingdom. Meanwhile, Invest Hong Kong (www.investhk.gov.hk) continues to provide one-stop service to assist all companies to set up or expand their businesses in Hong Kong.

Contact Us

Please get in touch with OASES Hong Kong office or contact our Dedicated Team head in London to explore further on how we could assist with your business expansion plan.

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OASES

Office for Attracting Strategic Enterprises
The Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region
of the People's Republic of China

UK should take advantage of its Commonwealth ties

As the UK looks to the wider world for new post-Brexit trade and investment relationships, our Commonwealth ties should be front and centre. With 56 member states stretching across every corner of the globe, and a combined economy of more than \$13 trillion, it is home to some of the world's most exciting and dynamic economies. So how can British businesses seize the opportunity? Rosie Glazebrook, chief executive of the Commonwealth Enterprise and Investment Council, explains

The Commonwealth Enterprise and Investment Council (CWEIC) is the Commonwealth's business organisation. With a mandate from the Commonwealth Heads of Government, we work across the 56 member states to forge new trade and investment ties.

Connections

For CWEIC, connections are key. With a network of more than 150 strategic partners, including global names like Standard Chartered and Zenith Bank, we have helped Commonwealth businesses set up operations in new and emerging markets, while convening senior businesspeople from around the world to network and forge new opportunities at our international conferences. Through our network of country hubs, we can support businesses looking to break into new markets with advice, connections and support. In the last year, we have opened new hub offices in Cameroon, serving Gabon and Togo, in Kenya, serving East and Central Africa, as well as offices in Singapore, and Bangladesh following the success of our trade and investment forum in Dhaka last September.

Attractive

So what makes the Commonwealth such an attractive place to do business? Even aside from the fact that it is

home to some of the world's fastest-growing economies in Africa and Asia, Commonwealth member states benefit from the 'Commonwealth advantage'. On average, trade between Commonwealth member states is 21 per cent cheaper, the result of a wide variety of factors including use of English as the language of business, comparable legal systems and compatible commercial cultures.

High-level

This isn't just theory. For an example of the Commonwealth business network in action, look no further than last year's Commonwealth Trade and Investment Summit which brought together hundreds of international businesspeople and ministers for a two-day conference in central London. Delegates heard from high-level international speakers such as Frank Hester OBE (founder and chief executive, TPP), Alderman Michael Mainelli (Lord Mayor of the City of London), H E Wamkele Mene (secretary general, AfCFTA), Prof. Benedict



Rosie Glazebrook

Oramah (President, African Export-Import Bank), and Jim Ovia, CFR (founder and chair, Zenith Bank). We were honoured to welcome ministers from across the Commonwealth, including from Cameroon, Ghana, Gibraltar, Nigeria and the UK.

Potential

We were also pleased to welcome The Honourable Fiamē Naomi Mata'afa, Prime Minister of Samoa who will be the next chair-in-office of the Commonwealth. She spoke of the immense potential of the Commonwealth for small island states and set out her vision for how the Commonwealth will grow and evolve under Samoa's stewardship. CWEIC works in partnership with the host country of the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting to deliver the Commonwealth Business Forum (CBF). Prime Minister Mata'afa formally announced that CBF will take place in Samoa in October 2024, and invited and encouraged stakeholders to join the Commonwealth's premier business-to-business and business-to-government gathering.

Untapped opportunity

CWEIC's key message is this: the Commonwealth is home to several fast-growing emerging markets with immense potential. UK businesses should seize the often untapped, Commonwealth opportunity and harness our web of global connections to branch out and expand into new and dynamic markets. This great global club is home to numerous economies that will shape the next century, in Africa, Asia and beyond. It is past time that the UK took full advantage of its membership.

www.cweic.org

COMMONWEALTH

Enterprise and Investment Council

Lord Marland, chair of the Commonwealth Enterprise and Investment Council

Commonwealth Trade and Investment Summit 2023



Brexit – fresh trade challenges three years on



A new survey by the British Chamber of Commerce's Insights Unit of 733 businesses shows the difficulties facing British firms in using the Trade and Co-operation Agreement (TCA) have not eased

The report also highlights a fresh set of challenges approaching as UK and EU regulations diverge, creating further headaches for traders on both sides of the Channel.

Tariff-free trade

The TCA was agreed on Christmas Eve in 2020 to allow tariff-free trade with the EU once Brexit took effect.

However a high proportion of businesses say trade with Europe in 2023 is now more difficult than it was a year ago.

Solutions

The BCC has sent the government its report examining the main issues the TCA is causing for firms with possible solutions to many of the problems.

The survey also found that 35 per cent of firms buying and selling services faced difficulties due to the Brexit deal, while a lack of recognition for professional qualifications was exercising 27 per cent of firms.

Awareness

Awareness of forthcoming changes in

trade rules and regulations being made by either the UK or the EU was alarmingly low, with 80 per cent or more of firms knowing no details of the legislation.

This includes knowledge of the Electronic Trade Documents Act, Export Health Certificate requirements, new labelling requirements, the EU's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism, new checks on food imports, safety and security requirements for EU imports, UKCA and CE marking, and new EU VAT laws.

www.britishchambers.org.uk

Top five

Three Years On sets out 26 recommendations to improve UK-EU trade. Its top five proposals for quick action are:

- Create a supplementary deal with the EU which eliminates or reduces the complexity of exporting food for SMEs
- Work with the EU to develop simpler guidance on the Brexit deal so that it is applied consistently across all member countries
- Develop new arrangements on changes

to regulations to minimise disruption to businesses and raise awareness of any fresh impacts

- Establish a supplementary deal, like Norway's, that exempts smaller firms from the requirement to have a fiscal representative for VAT in the EU
- Make side deals with the EU, and member states, to allow UK firms to travel for longer and work in Europe, and provide mutual recognition of professional qualifications.



Exports hold the key to economic growth

BCC has brought together a group of politicians, diplomats, civil servants, businesses and chambers to push for export growth

At their inaugural meeting at the House of Lords the group focused on the BCC's Trade Manifesto which sets out steps to get more UK businesses, currently just 10 per cent, involved in international trade.

The manifesto lists actions to take to raise the UK's export game and has specific recommendations on:

- Growing digital trade
- Trade, climate and the environment
- Strengthening economic and trade ties with the EU
- Entering global markets

It also sets out a trade plan for the next decade.

Supply chain disruption

BCC director general Shevaun Haviland, commented: "If our economy is to grow, then we must export more. It's as

simple as that. But the pandemic, supply chain disruption, Brexit, non-tariff trade barriers and global headwinds have all made this more difficult over the past few years.

"Yet firms that trade overseas grow faster, pay better and are more resilient. If the UK wants to remain one of the world's largest economies, then we need more firms selling goods and services internationally.

"Our manifesto sets out a long-term strategy on the key areas where the government must focus if it wants to hit its target of £1 trillion of exports.

"Trade is constantly developing and there are real opportunities for a global Britain to exploit new markets as technology advances, net zero takes hold and the

geopolitical landscape shifts.

"We are already a world-leader when it comes to digital trade, and we must lean more heavily into the opportunities that will provide.

Strengths

"We also need to build a strategy to protect the UK's supply chains – the US, the EU and China are all investing hundreds of billion pounds in sustainable and low-carbon technology.

"We don't have that kind of money, but we do have great strengths – services, renewable energy, green finance, engineering, professional services, cutting edge manufacturing, food and drink exports, and R&D."

www.britishchambers.org.uk



UK-Arab trade partnerships

Sustaining an emerging vision was the theme of the Arab British Chamber's third economic summit last November. The event showcased the opportunities for doing business in key cutting-edge sectors and for strengthening the partnership between the UK and Arab private sectors



Karim Fatehi MBE

Fearlessness

Speakers included LCCI chair Julia Onslow-Cole, a partner at Fragomen.

It was in this capacity that she addressed over 300 delegates in a session on entrepreneurs of the future. Onslow-Cole pointed out the 'fearlessness' that was a common feature in successful entrepreneurs – something that the big three of Bill Gates, Jeff Bezos and Steve Jobs have in abundance. Among the factors necessary for countries to foster entrepreneurship, she particularly mentioned intellectual property rights that were fit for purpose, and business and investor support for innovation and upskilling.



Julia Onslow-Cole

and spoke of the Chamber's commitment to tackling climate change and supporting the sustainable development of businesses and communities in London,

the UK and partners around the world. He briefed delegates on LCCI's *Environment, Sustainability & Green Growth* committee, formed over two years ago, which helps large and small businesses in their journey to net zero, particularly in the areas of green finance, supply chain and the built environment. In practical terms this includes an annual beach clean on the Thames, east of Blackfriars Bridge.

Free trade

Tom Wintle, the British government's chief negotiator in the ongoing UK-Gulf Cooperation Council free trade agreement, gave

an update on talks which should lead to significant growth in trade. Started a year ago, they have now concluded the fifth round but no end date has been set. "Its about the deal, not the date", he said.

www.abcc.org.uk

Climate change

LCCI interim chief executive Karim Fatehi MBE chaired a panel on COP 28 and sustainable development



Fraud risks in international trade

I by Amal Ahmed

Global expansion is the way forward for businesses looking to upscale. The past few years have laid the foundation for international expansion, and now more and more merchants are embracing the opportunities.

Yet as they're venturing into new markets, certain challenges appear. One of them is cross-border payment. While businesses might be familiar with the fraud situation in their home market, new territories present new fraud obstacles. Here is why fraud familiarisation is key to success and what are the fraud profiles of some of the major markets.

Familiarisation

Card-not-present fraud (CNP) is one of the biggest cross-border fraud challenges. In 2020, global CNP fraud cost merchants over £27 billion, and this number is expected to increase to £34 billion by 2027.

Cross-border ecommerce is an appealing target for fraud rings as there are a high number of payment paths created by overseas suppliers, contractors or international subsidiaries that can be attacked. These payment paths may become hard to manage, thus becoming a weak spot for fraudsters.

To mitigate the international expansion fraud risks, merchants should familiarise themselves with the fraud challenges of the market they're expanding into. The best way to do so is by utilising existing

data to build fraud profiles and match that with a robust fraud solution.

Synthetic identities

In a post-pandemic world, North America has experienced a significant increase in fraud. In 2021, fraud attacks increased by 140 per cent in the US compared to 2020, and by 52 per cent in Canada.

Some of the biggest fraud challenges for merchants in the region include synthetic identities and other account-related fraud.

The reason is the struggle to find the balance between fraud detection and an outstanding customer experience.

Merchants in the region need to focus on verifying digital identities and evaluating transaction risk. A fraud solution that leverages machine-learning, cybersecurity and the deliverance of a seamless digital experience is the key to tackling synthetic identity fraud.

Fraud in Europe

During the pandemic, Europe experienced its golden era of fraud. The advancement of fraud tactics matched with the new strong customer authentication regulation presented merchants with severe fraud concerns.

Fraud innovation was underway and more vulnerable links, such as account creation, account login and payment forms, were largely at risk. Fraud challenges such as return fraud,

fraudulent fulfilment disputes and synthetic identities flourished.

The key to overcoming these challenges is adopting innovative fraud solutions that use data about historical and real-time transactions to capture red flags and approve genuine orders through automation.

Tapping into the buyer's profile

Latin America has been experiencing rapid ecommerce growth. In 2021, the region reached £71 billion in ecommerce sales, a 25 per cent increase from £57 billion in 2020. Nevertheless, the region has also been faced with heavy financial instability, and attacks emerged.

According to reports, 3.5 per cent of ecommerce transactions in Latin America during 2021 were fraud attempts, higher than the global average of 2.6 per cent.

To protect against fraud attacks in the region, it's important to develop an understanding of buyers' shopping behaviour. Each sector has a different type of a persona, and that informs the types of fraud risks and fraud protection used.

Gather consumer behaviour data about the region you're expanding into and match that with a robust solution tool to detect fraudulent transactions and approve genuine ones.

With the right use of fraud solutions and the implementation of data, you will be able to guard your business against any type of fraud attacks in the new markets you're expanding into. As a result, you will optimise your revenue and thrive as a business.

Amal Ahmed is director of Signifyd
www.signifyd.com



Jewel of the Caribbean

Dominican Week last November included an evening of opera – *Crown jewels of the opera* – at St Mary Le Strand in London hosted by the country's embassy, Britcham and the British Embassy in Santo Domingo.

Sopranos Stephany Ortega and Verity Wingate, accompanied by pianist Simon Lepper, performed pieces including the *Jewel song* from Gounod's *Faust* and *O mio babbino caro* from Puccini's *Gianni Schicchi*, and finished with a duet, *I feel pretty*, from Bernstein's *West Side Story*.

Appeal

The Caribbean island brought much cheer to a wet autumn night in the capital. *LBM* readers are urged to proceed to the website of the Dominican Republic's investment agency to check out trade opportunities alongside its renowned tourist appeal – it has already welcomed over seven million visitors this year.

www.prodominicana.gob.do



Rules of origin – key access to preferential duty rates in free trade agreements

by Elizabeth Skewes Castañeda

Since January 2021, as the UK departed the EU, the country has accelerated efforts to secure trade agreements with strategic partners around the world.

The UK currently has over 70 free trade agreements (FTA) in effect, some fully ratified, and some provisionally applied – not signed but already available for traders to access and benefit from.

Usually referred to as 'trade agreements', there are different types, each of them adapted to fit the strategic development areas that they focus on. The UK-EU Trade Cooperation Agreement, the UK-Singapore Digital Economy Agreement, and continuity agreements with countries like Mexico, Canada, Israel and Switzerland are some examples.

Benefits

What are trade agreements and what they are for? They are agreements between two or more nations that set out the rules of trading goods and services between said countries. Their main purpose is to reduce restrictions on trading. Trade agreements bring many benefits to the importers and exporters of the trading nations. One of the most important benefits, or at least one that is more tangible to SMEs, is the access to reduced or even zero rates of duty on imports.

Each trade agreement contains a set of specific and strict rules on the origin of goods which must be adhered to in order to qualify for preferential import duty rates. It is important therefore for companies to become familiar with these.

Rules of origin

Although each trade agreement has its own particularities, there are overall



three main categories used to determine the origin of the goods: wholly produced; last substantial transformation; and non-originating.

The most straightforward is **wholly produced** which refers to goods of pure national origin, which means they don't contain any foreign ingredients. They usually apply to animals, vegetables and minerals.

The most complex rule is **last substantial transformation** as this one has its own subcategories, with restrictions and specifications. For example, importing peanuts under tariff code 12023000 to process, produce and export peanut butter under tariff code 20081110.

Change of tariff classification:

requires non-originating materials to undergo a process that will change the tariff code from the goods that were initially imported into the UK to those that are being exported. For example, peanuts imported under tariff code 12023000 which are then processed to produce and export peanut butter (tariff code 20081110).

Value added: requires a certain percentage of the total value of the final product to be added in the UK. Change of tariff and value added usually go hand-in-hand.

Percentage rule: limits the value of non-originating material to a certain 'acceptable' percentage.

Stage of production: requires a specific process to be undertaken at a particular stage of the production process; it is usually applied to textiles.

It is important to underline that substantial processing does not include labelling, packaging, cleaning, sorting, fitting together, shipping or simple assembly.

Non-originating: applies to goods that don't comply with any of the above categories and no preference can be claimed.

Best practices

Traders should be aware that different agreements have different sets of origin rules and what therefore applies with one country might not apply with others. Additionally there may be quotas, anti-dumping or countervailing duties which can impact on the

preferential duty rates

being granted. It is essential therefore that traders fully understand the trade agreement they are looking to access.

Research and due diligence are best practices in international trade. They are key to the success of business overseas ventures, and although there are plentiful sources of information available, the reality is that the information might not be easy to interpret and digest.

1. Exporter (Name, full address, country)		2. Consignee (Name, full address, country) (optional)		3. Transport details (optional)		4. Goods description (1) (Description of goods)		5. Customs endorsement (1) (Declaration certified by the customs office of the exporting country)		6. Declaration by the exporter	
United Kingdom		United Kingdom				12023000		UNITED KINGDOM		United Kingdom	

Elizabeth Skewes Castañeda is trade services and business development executive at LCCI

Achieving global greatness

I UK SMEs called to apply for major government export awards

The Department for Business and Trade has launched its inaugural **Made in the UK, Sold to the World** awards to celebrate outstanding small businesses achieving exporting success.

Little Moons, London-based winner of last year's agri, food and drink award, has since launched into three new international markets including Portugal, Germany and Hong Kong.

Expanded

The categories have now been expanded to ten, with the addition of: consultancy and professional services; healthcare; infrastructure and engineering; low carbon energy; and manufacturing, advanced manufacturing and construction. There are also awards for: agriculture, food and drink; creative industries; education and EdTech; financial services and FinTech;

and retail and consumer goods.

For Information on how to enter including key dates visit www.great.gov.uk/campaign-site/2024-made-in-the-uk-awards



New chair for global chamber group

The World Chambers Federation – the arm of the International Chamber of Commerce responsible for the bi-annual congress and which oversees the issue of certificates of origin and ATA Carnets – has a new chair.

Renowned

Rifat Hisarcıkıoğlu, a renowned Turkish businessman and president of the Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges

of Türkiye, was selected after a formal process and was preferred to candidates from Bangladesh, Bolivia, Egypt, Kenya and Nigeria.

He will chair the WCF Council and have a full role to play in the next congress, scheduled for September 2025 in Melbourne, Australia.

www.iccwbo.org/world-chambers-federation



Rifat Hisarcıkıoğlu



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Overseas business opportunities

A selection of business co-operation offers made by companies wishing to work with UK firms taken from the Enterprise Europe Network Partnership Opportunities Database. To find out more about these and similar opportunities contact Innovate UK EDGE London, International Partner to EEN at innovateukedge@londonchamber.co.uk or 020 7203 1929



Canada

An industry-focused research centre has the capacity to serve a wide range of sectors that require applied research services in the fields of manufacturing and materials science. The centre seeks research and development cooperation agreements with enterprises that want to leverage their resources and access on-demand research and development services.

REF: TOCA20231201001



Austria

MNE developing high quality charging solutions for traction batteries of electrified industrial trucks used in intralogistics. The comprehensive portfolio consisting of a broad range of chargers can be used to charge a variety of lead-acid and lithium-ion batteries. While focusing on sustainability, the company implements smart solutions to enable an efficient charging process and make energy management easy.

REF: BOAT20231211016



Latvia

Company offers wood pellets and briquettes made from 100% softwood with delivery to the client's warehouse/destination. SME is looking for cooperation partners: wholesalers, end-customers, traders to cooperate under commercial agreement..

REF: BOLV20231211014



Czech Republic

Company experienced in CMT (cut-make-trim) textile production of baby carriers, sport and cosmetic bags, pet carrier bags and medical products like

elastic wrist, knee support bands, orthopaedic braces or neck support collars offers its services as a sewer for manufacturing or subcontracting agreement.

REF: TOCH20231018002



Germany

SME and innovative leader in dermatology, specializes in personalized treatment of Chronic Inflammatory Skin Conditions using a unique blend of AI, environmental digital monitoring, and OMIC technologies.

Their approach focuses

on understanding each patient's unique illness pathways to tailor best therapeutic solutions.

REF: TODE20231207018



Belgium

Specialist in high-quality bamboo panties for optimal menstrual comfort. Hypoallergenic and with a four-layer structure for excellent absorption, the focus is on providing security for customers (teenagers and women). Their partner should ensure that top-quality remains a priority. Additionally, they offer menstrual swimwear and would prefer a partner with swimwear manufacturing capabilities.

REF: BRBE20231207025



Ireland

West of Ireland-based company is looking for a lead polymer scientist to improve patient outcomes in heart valve replacement. The company is on a mission to change the way heart valves are made with a vision of sustainability for the patient and the planet.

REF: TRIE20231208005



Cyprus

Company

objective is to advance the engineering R&D work behind its technology via research collaboration in European projects. Its capacity for upgrading industrial by-products and upcycling waste biomass can serve as a case study. The company offers its technology with a view to join R&D consortia experienced in circular economy, chemical engineering.

REF: TOCY20231208005



Korea

SME has been

providing GIS server solutions to major municipalities and government agencies in Korea. With its expertise in spatial data management, analysis, and visualization, the company has been participating in forest fire detection and prediction R&D project together with Singapore SME, and looking for other opportunities. The company is seeking for European joint R&D partners to develop new solutions utilizing spatial information.

REF: TOKR20231208002



Lithuania

Company aims to develop sales in international markets, looking for distributors, partners interested in distributing its products. The company offers innovative, sustainable products: for mothers, babies, and the family.

REF: BOLT20231206001

To obtain details of these and similar overseas business opportunities, contact Innovate UK EDGE London at innovateukedge@londonchamber.co.uk



Unlock the potential of franchising

This February, The British & International Franchise Exhibition opens its doors to provide the spark of inspiration for the next generation of franchise entrepreneurs. Aspiring and established business owners alike are invited to Olympia London to immerse themselves in the world of franchising.

Showcase

Supported by the British Franchise Association, the event will showcase over 100 franchise brands from a broad range of sectors including McDonald's, Vodafone IT Business Hubs, Subway, Anytime Fitness, Visiting Angels, Puccino's and many more.

A programme of over 50 free talks covering all aspects of franchising will help attendees unlock the potential of this tried-and-tested business model. Prospective investors will benefit from An introduction to franchising, Real



Franchise Stories, Q&A sessions and deep dives into specific sectors.

Kicking goals in business

Highlights include a keynote presentation from serial entrepreneur and former Dragons' Den investor Piers Linney. On Friday 2 February, he will share his five essentials for launching a successful business featuring a set of practical tips. The next day, former Premier League footballer-turned-franchisor, Anton Ferdinand, will deliver From pitch to profit: Kicking goals in business.

Industry experts will be on hand to offer complimentary one-to-one advice. Specialist lawyers will decode the legalities, funding providers will shine a light on the range of finance options and franchise consultants will offer insights into the practicalities.

The Growing Your Own Business area of the exhibition will showcase a range of suppliers and support services. From digital marketing expertise to recruitment portals and payment solutions – this is an opportunity to build connections with those who can support ongoing growth.

Franchise empire

Existing franchisees with ambitions to expand or entrepreneurs considering investing in a master licence should register for the Multi-unit & Master Franchise Conference. Established multi-unit operators and representatives from brands including Starbucks, M&S and EE will share how to build a franchise empire.

The British & International Franchise Exhibition takes place at Olympia London on 2-3 February.

LCCI is a partner for the event and has a stand in the Growing Your Own Business area

www.Franchiseinfo.co.uk

Game-changing support for business

The ability to maintain a consistent quality of professional sports fields is a complex business. From football pitches to tennis courts, racing tracks to cricket wickets, the turf and its sub-structure play a crucial part in both the user experience and competitive results

Throughout the year, groundsmen and women walk these fields with special tools to gauge the moisture, temperature, compaction, hardness and structure of the turf, taking notes and using these to action any improvements. This can be laborious and time consuming. They are ideal tasks to be transformed by the application of technology and AI.

SPROUT

That is what the innovation created by London-based company E-Nano is designed to do. The team of four founders, including Erwann Lompech-Leneveu, have designed a robot, affectionately named SPROUT, which roams the surface of the field gathering the data needed to measure turf quality. Pre-seed funding enabled them to talk with sports professionals to get a feel for what was needed and how technology would be a game-changer in their work.

Research, innovate and emerge

“Those early conversations were invaluable as we started to design the robotics for the first prototype,” says Lompech-Leneveu, “but we recognised the need to expand our network to look for potential collaborators and funders and were recommended the RIEm – research,

innovate and emerge – programme at Brunel University London.”

The E-Nano team had started to think about using an AI system which would use pictures and vision analysis to identify weeds, disease and potential defects in playing surfaces. The RIEm team introduced Erwann to Brunel's Centre for AI and Professor Tatiana Kalganova in particular. Between them, they applied for a significant Innovate UK grant for a collaborative R&D project to introduce the new sensors and imaging capability to the robot.

Mentoring

“Although our application was unsuccessful on this occasion, we are exploring alternative funding routes together. In the meantime, we are benefitting from the mentoring support of Dr Mingfeng Wang, a lecturer in robotics and autonomous systems who originally pointed us to the RIEm Programme. We also have a Brunel Masters student working with us to continue the research.”

Like many RIEm Programme participants, Lompech-Leneveu appreciated the opportunity to get to know fellow business founders from other disciplines and sectors. This encouraged an exchange of generic ideas, challenges and possible

solutions, useful whatever the commercial activity. Although the E-Nano founders had previously applied for grants, they found the in-depth knowledge and additional guidance from Brunel invaluable when it came to writing the second-round submission.

“In the coming months, we'll continue to work on SPROUT's capabilities in line with customer feedback and emerging AI possibilities,” he says. “We'll look to scale up our UK manufacturing and grow international sales of the device.”

2024 Edition

The RIEm 2024 Edition is now underway. Participation in the 30-hour programme is valued at £8,000 and is fully funded by the university. It is open to businesses registered in the UK, with a minimum of two full-time staff and expenditure approaching or over £100k in the last financial year.

Dr Michael Joseph, RIEm programme lead, comments: “Since its launch in 2022, RIEm has supported 48 UK businesses and helped them to secure around £1 million in funding. In 2023 we introduced RIEm to India.”

To find out how Brunel University London RIEm programme could help your business, visit www.brunel.ac.uk/riem.

Big adventure

Vincent Burke reviews Peter Kay's latest offering

This is a highly entertaining canter through telly favourites of the 70s and 80s and his meteoric TV career.

It is also a useful handbook for anyone considering a career in show business, outlining his apprenticeship and the realities of the comedy world.

After countless unanswered letters to production companies, Kay finally got to make the tea at Granada TV. His HND in Media Performance was followed shortly by a return to Granada as 'talent' which included a bit part on Coronation Street. He then established himself as a new star at Channel Four, culminating in his six parter *That Peter Kay Thing*.

Illuminating

The rest is history, though it was far from plain sailing. The book describes the up and downs of the journey and the stresses and challenges of film-making. It also contains an illuminating photograph of the sophisticated camera kit installed in the Fiat 500 used in *Car Share*. ("We just couldn't see out the windscreen", as Peter quips).

In charting his rise from cinema usher to household name, some of his gags contain pithy nuggets about the cruelties of the showbiz game, such as: "One minute you're on stage making hundreds of people laugh and the next you're picking up Toffos. That's real life."

Antics

For all his 'lovely fella' image, Kay is not above dishing the dirt on fellow

celebs he's encountered, such as Alexei Sayle mumbling uninterestedly through one of Kay's early script-readings,

Angela Rippon's whining about the cost of borrowing material from the BBC archive or Bernard Manning's boorish domestic antics. Jimmy Savile's weirdness is also recounted in the book.

Some of the anecdotes are tragi-comically hilarious – and will no doubt feature in some of Kay's future stand-up shows.

Chief among them is TV presenter Keith Chegwin's alcohol problems. Keith allegedly was so desperate for a drink that he would gulp down windscreen wiper fluid. His wife (and fellow *Swap Shop* star Maggie Philbin) became suspicious when Keith was washing the car five times a day!

For all that, Kay does come across as a great bloke – whether it is his record-breaking 'char-a-dee' fundraising efforts or rescuing the career of his long-time friend Sian Gibson, *Care Share* co-star Kayleigh. He casually mentions that she was working full-time in a call centre when he approached her to appear in the BBC hit series.

Talent and passion

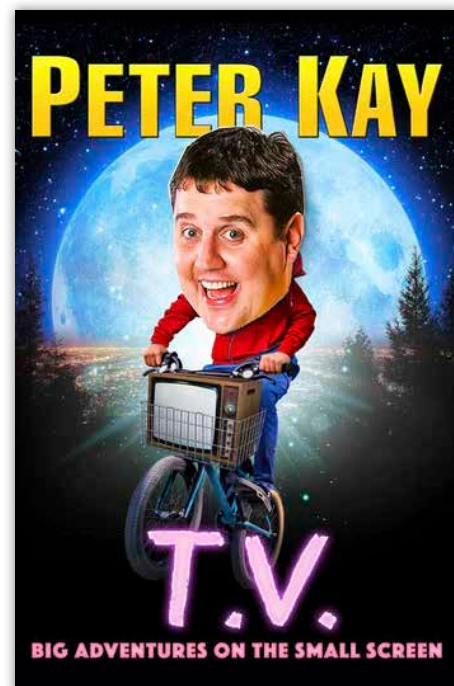
The book is an ideal holiday read but also a seriously uplifting account of what a working-class lad from a terraced house in Bolton can achieve with talent and passion. His constant gratitude and astonishment at realising his lifetime ambition of working in TV and his attention to detail shine through the pages.



Vincent Burke



Alexei Sayle



Having been a top entertainer for nearly a quarter of a century, it's scarcely believable that Peter Kay has only just turned 50.

After such a lengthy absence from our screens and his relative youth, let's hope there are many more moments of TV magic from him to come.

Vincent Burke is a communications consultant, podcaster and film-maker
<https://www.linkedin.com/in/vincent-burke-7b98968/>

Peter Kay – TV - Big Adventures on the Small Screen
<https://harpercollins.co.uk/products/tv-big-adventures-on-the-small-screen-peter-kay>

Finding dignity in work

Bloomsbury Publishing does a fine line in both fiction and non-fiction and it is from books in their business offering that LBM's eye has recently been caught

Sir John Tusa, former Newsnight presenter, director of the BBC World Service and the Barbican Arts Centre is supremely qualified to contribute to this genre. *Bright Sparks: how creativity and innovation can ignite business success* explores situations where pioneering leaders in various sectors have overcome challenges to deliver inspired, imaginative and bold

initiatives that make a huge impact on business and society.

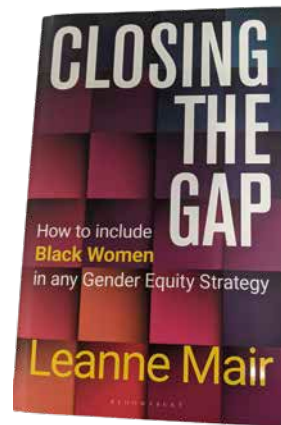
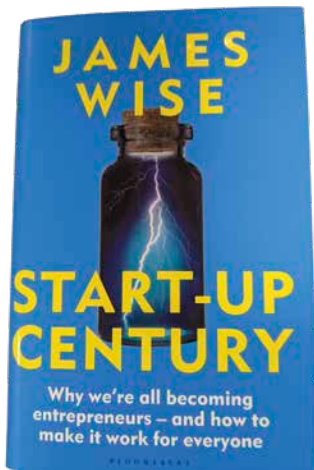
Transforming

His case studies include The Turquoise Mountain Foundation (in whose establishment King Charles III, when Prince of Wales, and former Conservative MP Rory Stewart were driving forces) and the European Union

Youth Orchestra (which he co-chaired). Using interviews with key players in projects that attempted to turn ideas into reality, Sir John provides a manual for enhancing, revitalising and transforming professional cultures.

Potential

Leanne Mair is a former asset manager who now runs a consulting firm. In



Closing the Gap: how to include Black women in any gender equity strategy she focuses on how companies can accelerate their gender diversity, equity and inclusion efforts by identifying blind spots that can prevent Black women from reaching their full potential in the workplace.

Empowering

“Does it feel like everyone you know is starting a business? That’s because they are.” These are the arresting opening words of venture capitalist James Wise’s *Start-up Century: why we’re all becoming entrepreneurs – and how to make it work if for everyone*.

“she focuses on how companies can accelerate their gender diversity, equity and inclusion efforts...”

Like Tusa’s book, it is packed with personal tales and interviews – in this case with teenage side-hustlers as well as multi-billion dollar successes. It also makes the case for how AI can be an empowering force and help people lead more independent lives and find dignity and meaning in their work.

www.bloomsbury.com

Enigmatic

Lightening the mood a little, from Nomad Publishing comes a first novel by artist Lorraine Amrani. *In the Frame* takes us from wartime Paris, when French art galleries were being plundered, to the mysteries of today’s auction houses. An art student as well as a creative artist, Amrani uses her knowledge to good effect to set the cultural scene and produce an entertaining tale. The closing revelation (fiction, but could it be fact?) is appropriately enigmatic.

www.nomad-publishing.com

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The digitalisation of the immigration system

by Natasha Chell



Natasha Chell is a partner and head of risk and compliance at Laura Devine Immigration

www.lauradevine.com

Forthcoming Home Office and UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) digitalisation plans for the UK immigration system promise substantial advantages for business. Through streamlined processes and enhanced accessibility, they will benefit from expedited and more efficient procedures when hiring foreign talent, fostering an increasingly attractive business landscape in the UK.

Digitalisation of the systems

Existing digitalisation, which has revolutionised the customer experience, includes the UK Immigration: ID Check mobile phone app to complete the identification verification stage of eligible immigration applications and the rollout of all immigration permission being electronic in the form of eVisas by the end of 2024.

Digital transformation of UKVI is underway to streamline and enhance the systems by integrating diverse IT upgrades, improving customer service, modifying compliance procedures and engaging with stakeholders. The IT transformation includes a new and improved sponsorship management system for migrant workers.

The digitalised system aims to simplify visa applications and reduce bureaucratic hurdles. Increased efficiency and transparency in the immigration system is likely to reduce operational costs and administrative burdens for businesses.

Processing times

The Home Office is undertaking several improvements to processing times

and introducing value-added services for customers made possible by digital transformation efforts and operational automation.

Crucially, UKVI intends to remove the pre-licence priority cap by Spring 2024. This will allow more businesses to obtain sponsorship licences in minimal time, preventing delays in the sponsorship of migrant workers. UKVI also aims to offer the 24-hour Super Priority service to applications submitted using the IDV mobile phone app in the next year – a welcome improvement on the already rather quick current five-day priority processing. The UK remains at the forefront of expeditious visa processing when compared to other countries.

Simultaneously, efforts are underway to provide more straightforward guidance and revamp customer contact channels, ensuring a more accessible and transformed user experience with the system.

Simplification and security

To strengthen security and remove the responsibility on employers to identify fraudulent Biometric Residence Permits (BRPs) and passports when completing manual RTW (right to work) checks, the Home Office has implemented secure digital solutions.

The Home Office's online RTW checking service which gives employers access to up to date, real-time information about migrants' right to work has expanded to include most non-British and Irish nationals. The digitalisation of RTW checks has also benefitted British and Irish nationals

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The need for a common framework to tackle information security threats

Standardisation is not a new concept. It raised decades ago from the need for a common framework to tackle technical incompatibilities across nations.

Similarly, nowadays, a harmonised system to tackle information security threats is needed. These are becoming increasingly sophisticated and may arise from seemingly unrelated circumstances.

An elegant way to overcome that challenge and ensure robust resilience would be implementing ISO-compliant management systems.

ISO/IEC 27001 is widely known for providing requirements for implementing efficient information security management systems, which enables organisations to manage the security of assets such as financial information, intellectual property, employee details or information that might have been entrusted by third parties.

Ideally, ISO 27001 would be integrated into a broader system and would also include ISO 22301 to give reassurance regarding Business Continuity to the extent defined. And it could be parts of the organisation, locations, size, nature and complexity, and products and services.

Resolving information security and cybersecurity-related issues is frequently perceived as a technical challenge rather than a management responsibility.

Traditionally, we have been worried about computer-assisted fraud, espionage, sabotage, vandalism, fire, flood, etc. We have recently, merely several years ago, started

worrying about malicious code, computer hacking and denial of service attacks.

Implementing a management system within a common framework is essential to tackle the threats. Industry leaders are already working towards improving their defence mechanisms.

To be successful, organisations should ensure that: information can flow within the market and across sectors; common rules and ethical values are protected and respected, especially regarding personal data protection and consumer protection; fair access to and use of information are guaranteed.

Another frequent issue that organisations worldwide face is the need for information and cybersecurity professionals to fill in the ever-increasing number of openings. The industry continues to suffer across all sectors from an acute shortage of experts.

This raises particular concerns about how quickly organisations will be able to react and adhere to efficient information security management systems and, most importantly, how efficient the information flows designed will be.

The ISO approach helps organisations be more innovative and agile thanks to planning on business transformation initiatives as part of a solid, long-term digital transformation.

As a result, organisations with integrated management systems effectively reduce technological, legal and financial exposure, direct and indirect costs of disruptions as well as address operational vulnerabilities.

through the introduction of Identity Service Providers (IDSPs) utilising Identification Document Validation Technology (IDVT). IDSPs enable employers to confirm digitally the RTW status for British and Irish nationals without manually verifying original passports and documents – this service is particularly beneficial for employers with geographically dispersed and remote working teams.

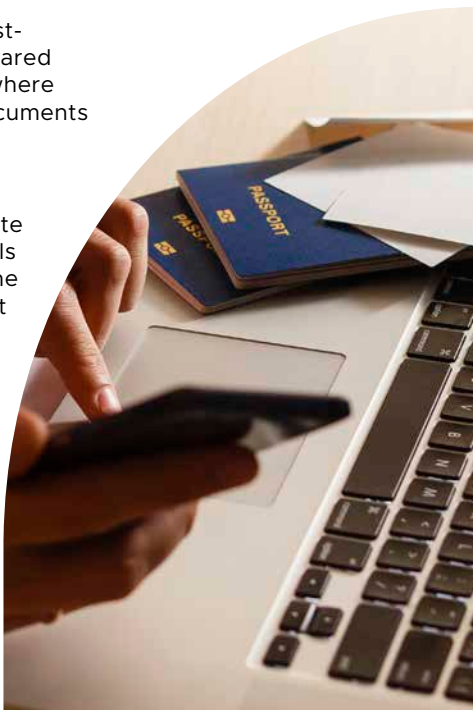
These improved systems accelerate the employee recruitment and onboarding cycle. Both employers and their representatives advocate for these changes, citing increased cost-effectiveness compared to manual checks where original identity documents need to be verified.

Opportunities

Amid national debate regarding high levels of immigration to the UK, the government is committed to reducing net migration – recent figures from the Office for National Statistics for the year ending June 2023 estimate that net migration added

672,000 people to the UK population. Nevertheless, attracting skilled economic migrants to the UK workforce is a priority for the government, and steps are underway to support this foreign talent.

The digitalisation of the UK immigration system presents opportunities for businesses to optimise HR processes for onboarding migrant employees and simplify sponsorship of migrant workers. The introduction of digital by default by the end of 2024 will mark a paradigm shift that should benefit employers and migrant employees alike.



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image credit John Sturrock

Dynamic centre for business and culture

King's Cross is now firmly established as one of London's most vibrant business locations and arguably one of Europe's most successful regeneration projects writes Vincent Burke

The 67-acre development is now home to leading international and UK companies including Google, Facebook, Sony Music and Nike. The formerly derelict railway and industrial site boasts nearly 3 million sq ft of office, retail, food and drink and leisure space, providing 18,000 jobs, many in the creative, digital and knowledge-based sector.

Landscaper

Around 42,000 people live and work on the regenerated site which has also become one of the capital's leading visitor destinations, with 26 acres of parks, gardens and other public space to enjoy. Granary Square in the heart of the development has welcomed more than 41 million public visits since it opened in 2012.

The site's commercial status will be further strengthened when Google opens its massive UK headquarters there in 2025. The new HQ – dubbed a 'landscaper' because it is as long as the Shard is tall – will reportedly accommodate some 4,000

employees and contain a 25-metre swimming pool, as well as basketball and tennis courts.



Culture

The area is also an increasingly important centre for culture. Chief among the local attractions is Kings Place, which recently marked its fifteenth anniversary.

Kings Place combines a modern arts centre with office space, being home to The Guardian newspaper. It was the first cultural building to be built in the King's Cross quarter and was created by Parabola Land, led by Peter Millican OBE. The rest of the site was mostly regenerated by property developers Argent.

Millican had wanted to create a building that was part arts and part office. At the time, new City blocks were going up with the public excluded and he was determined to make his building open to anyone. Kings Place achieves that mix with a wide range of people using it. As well as office workers, it hosts schoolchildren, mothers and babies, artists and musicians and numerous visitors.

Emerging artists

Since opening in 2008, Kings Place has become a centre for performing arts innovation and developing emerging artists. The venue hosts a diverse range of festivals and cross-arts collaborations across many genres including classical, contemporary, jazz and folk music, together with spoken word events and live podcasts.

Kings Place also plays a central role in the life of the local community. It regularly

donates rehearsal and performance space and facilities for training and mentoring sessions to numerous music and theatre charities and other local organisations.

Unwrapped

2024 will see Kings Place host a year-long series of events called Scotland Unwrapped, celebrating Scottish music and spoken word culture to highlight Scotland's traditional and regional riches. Scotland Unwrapped embraces cutting-edge contemporary composers, folk musicians and classical performers and leading figures in the Scottish literary scene. Artists appearing during the season include folk singer Julie Fowlis, percussionist Evelyn Glennie and choral ensemble The Sixteen.

Speaking ahead of Scotland Unwrapped, the executive and artistic director of King's Place, Helen Wallace, said the venue was the ideal location for such an event as it benefits from having intimacy at the heart of its design which creates fine acoustics. Wallace explained that the main concert hall was sheathed in oak, making for excellent sound insulation, resonance and warmth.

Vincent Burke is a communications consultant, podcaster and film-maker

www.kingscross.co.uk



Helen Wallace

Investment managers and sustainable practices

by Sarah Hallam



Amid escalating environmental challenges and heightened climate change awareness, investment managers find themselves at a pivotal juncture. Beyond the pursuit of returns, they are now tasked with assessing the enduring impacts of their investment decisions, driven by the realisation that climate change now poses tangible risks, including extreme weather events and shifting global temperatures.

Investors are increasingly seeking opportunities that align with their values, emphasising environmental stewardship and social responsibility. This article explores the changing landscape for investment managers, examining the benefits of sustainable investing while acknowledging the complexities in balancing profitability and sustainability.

Considering the forthcoming FCA Sustainability Disclosure Requirements (SDR), the article also provides preparatory suggestions for investment firms, advocating transparent disclosures, thorough data evaluation and strategic realignment to capitalise on sustainable opportunities.

Financial advantages of sustainable investment

Sustainable investing extends beyond ethical considerations, offering tangible financial benefits:

- **Long-term resilience:** Sustainable and green investments demonstrate greater resilience in the face of market volatility and economic

downturns. Embracing these investments enhances adaptability to changing market conditions.

- **Innovation and competitive edge:** Investing in sustainability aligns with the growing demand for environmentally friendly solutions, fostering innovation and providing a competitive edge by supporting forward-thinking companies.
- **Access to growing markets:** The global rise in sustainability awareness opens doors to expanding markets, from renewable energy to eco-friendly technology, presenting substantial growth opportunities.

Challenges

While the merits of sustainable investing are evident, challenges persist. The landscape is intricate, involving issues such as greenwashing, measuring ESG metrics and navigating regulatory disclosure requirements. Striking the right balance between profitability and sustainability is crucial when selecting suitable investments.

FCA's sustainability disclosure requirements

The FCA is spearheading the SDR to improve sustainability information for consumers and instil trust in sustainable investment products. Proposed labels include:

- **Sustainable focus** - for products investing in environmentally or socially sustainable assets.
- **Sustainable improvers** - for products investing in assets to improve environmental or social sustainability over time.
- **Sustainable impact** - for products investing in solutions to environmental or social problems to achieve positive, measurable real-world impact.

Investment firms are urged to proactively address these regulations,

ensuring transparency, thorough data evaluation and strategic realignment to capitalise on sustainable opportunities. The FCA's final policy statement, expected in Q4 2023, will bring clarity to greenwashing concerns immediately upon implementation.

Preparing for SDR implementation

Starting your journey on the adoption of these regulatory requirements will help to mitigate the key challenges.

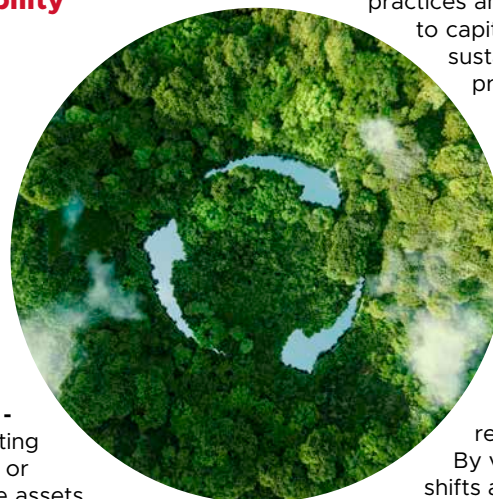
- **Prepare to disclose:** Align with the ISSB Standards principles in advance to ease the eventual transition and meet disclosure requirements.
- **Identify changes:** Evaluate current practices against SDR requirements, identifying necessary changes in governance and data processes. Ensure robust due diligence when utilising ESG data providers to guard against greenwashing allegations.
- **Embrace the opportunity:** View SDR implementation as a transformative business opportunity. Re-evaluate strategy, risk management, data practices and value chains to capitalise on sustainability-driven prospects.

Next steps

As the investment landscape undergoes a profound transformation, investment firms must prepare for the impending regulatory changes. By viewing these shifts as opportunities for transformative growth and improved risk management, firms can successfully navigate the changing landscape and position themselves as leaders in sustainable practices.

Sarah Hallam is a partner in the financial services team at Menzies

www.menzies.co.uk/sector/financial-services



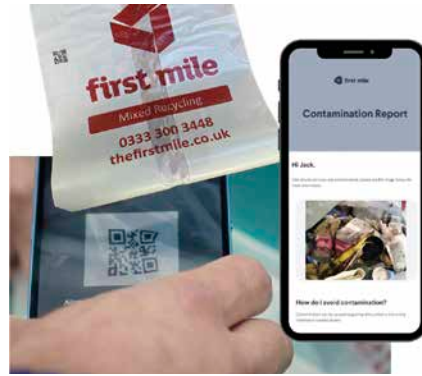
First Mile calls on landlords of multi-tenanted properties to embrace QR technology for recycling

First Mile is calling on landlords of multi-tenanted business and residential properties to embrace their original RecycleID™ QR-coded sack technology to boost their tenants' recycling rates and reduce recycling contamination.

Multi-tenanted properties often face complex waste challenges such as lack of space, mixed waste streams, and low awareness among tenants of what can, and can't, be recycled. In response, First Mile is encouraging the use of RecycleID™ where QR codes, which are personalised to each customer, are printed onto recycling sacks and then scanned on both drop off and collection by First Mile.

This original technology, first introduced 5 years ago by First Mile, has revolutionised the recycling process, enabling landlords and other business owners to access real-time data about the recycling's end location, ensuring complete transparency and accountability. It also provides individual recycling statistics, enabling accurate carbon data and recycling reporting.

As each code is specific to a business or tenant, the technology also means that any contamination issues - such as food waste being put in a dry mixed recycling sack -



can be identified. First Mile's app sends a picture, alongside advice on how to resolve the issue. Since 2018, First Mile has sent 200,000 contamination emails to landlords and business owners, working with them to educate and support them in ensuring that the right items are being placed in the right sacks, fostering a sense of collective responsibility towards the environment.

First Mile founder and CEO, Bruce Bratley, says: "RecycleID™ has empowered our customers to gain valuable insights in their business recycling activity and boost their commitment to sustainability and dedication to having a positive impact on the environment."

Case study: A Chelsea and Kensington estate

First Mile works with a prestigious estate in Chelsea & Kensington with 19 businesses of differing types and sizes in the area. Since working with First Mile and RecycleID™, this area has improved its recycling rate by 10% and decreased its contamination rate by 20%. A particular improvement was seen in food waste being placed in Dry Mixed Recycling. First Mile was able to pinpoint the exact customer and offer relevant advice to resolve the issue.

First Mile was also able to offer tailored solutions to businesses based on their individual identified waste needs. In total for the area, First Mile increased the total waste streams from four to eight, including a new food waste scheme that led to cost savings of around a third for the local businesses.

For more information visit [thefirstmile.co.uk](https://www.thefirstmile.co.uk)



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Generative AI in Higher Education – hype or transformational?

by Gunter Saunders and Doug Specht

The higher education sector has historically shown apprehension towards embracing new technologies, leading to slow adoption of digital innovations, even when they hold transformative potential. GenAI's simple browser-based interface lowers the barrier to use compared to previous educational technologies, which often require greater digital confidence. GenAI's conversational questioning style aligns well with academic inquiry, and the fact that its outputs need a human check increases rather than reduces the need for critical thinking and engagement.



Gunter Saunders

use GenAI to address that 'blank page feeling' when writing a new course outline or revising an old one.

GenAI can be used easily to create draft lesson plans, handouts, course outlines, multiple-choice quiz questions and ideas for group learning activities. GenAI can review reading lists, filling in gaps with new literature. It can generate slides from text, support the creation of accessible documents, help design marking rubrics and create innovative assessments.

Supplement not supplant

Thoughtfully designed assessments using GenAI can hone student evaluation abilities and contextual understanding to filter accurate information. However, in assessments, indeed where it is used in any activity, the role of GenAI should supplement, not supplant, human effort. Educators must determine when students' writing and analysis remain essential for developing scholarly skills and ownership in the learning process. Although concerns about plagiarism persist, banning the use of GenAI in the assessment process is counterproductive. Nuanced policies and teaching moments are preferable to outright prohibition, and such policies and teaching moments should help steer the way to exploitation of GenAI across all activities in learning and teaching.

Unprecedented opportunity

GenAI presents an unprecedented



Doug Specht

opportunity as an easy-to-use technology that aligns with academic skills. Rather than reacting with fear, higher education can lead in demonstrating AI's responsible integration to enhance access, engagement and outcomes.

This pivot requires transparent policies, practical training and development for colleagues and students; a thoughtful implementation that upholds academic integrity, and a solution-focused mindset ready to harness GenAI tools' potential while mitigating risks. Higher education must embrace this new frontier in ethical AI augmentation, which will expand human knowledge and possibilities.

Full potential

GenAI tools, such as ChatGPT, are here to stay. They will improve at what they can do and become increasingly part of everyday life and work. Hiding these tools from ourselves or our students would be a disservice. Universities and educators within them should seek to engage with GenAI, finding ways to free up precious time to provide space for increased guidance, support and development to help students reach their full potential. Through doing this and being transparent about it, educators can continue to act as role models for their students.

Gunter Saunders is director of digital engagement and library services

Doug Specht is reader in cultural geography and communication, both at the University of Westminster

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Growing green skills in your business

Green skills will be a decisive factor in the transition to a low-carbon economy. Enabling employees to drive net zero practices is quickly becoming essential for all businesses to thrive. Maggie Berry recommends steps businesses can take to nurture green skills

Green skills are part of every business's future. As the world of work shifts towards circularity and accountability, people will be the driving force behind creating new, more sustainable business ecosystems.

Footprint

For businesses, this brings a great opportunity to develop both the talent that they have and to attract new talent that is ambitious for designing a greener way to work. By nurturing the two, businesses can unlock new ideas and energy that will help them reduce their carbon footprint and demonstrate how they are taking progressive action to become more sustainable. It's this evidenced approach that clients and consumers are increasingly looking for when they choose which brands to trust and where to spend their money.

Attract customers

A report from *The Economist Intelligence Unit* showed that the popularity of Google searches related to sustainable goods increased by 71 per cent between 2016 and 2021. Businesses harnessing green skills to develop their products and services will find it easier to attract customers who are becoming more aware of the environmental impact of their choices. Expectations for businesses working in supply chains are shifting too. With up to 90 per cent of emissions being generated in the supply chain, clients want to know that when they buy a service, this won't exponentially increase their own carbon footprint. So no matter who your business sells to, someone, somewhere, is counting the carbon.

Talent

Developing green skills in the workforce won't only future-proof businesses, it will also support people to successfully adapt to a low-carbon economy. It's estimated that without skills development, 71 million jobs worldwide could be lost as the global economy moves towards becoming circular. Supporting your people to learn new green skills will not only prevent them from being excluded from the green transition but will help your business retain the talent that you've invested



Maggie Berry

in, stay competitive and set people up for driving this change through to other areas of their lives as well. The potential reach of enabling green skills stretches far beyond your office walls.

Green skills are the future but how can businesses embrace and embed them?

Green committees

Setting up a green committee is a good way to encourage people to get involved and to work together, rather than the heavy lifting landing on one person's desk. Bringing people together reduces the burden, sustains momentum and will help people feel engaged.

Mapping skills

Which roles naturally align with the green skills your business needs to thrive? For example, are your comms team confident to talk about the green transition your business is likely to take? Do your salespeople need to know about the sustainability credentials of your products and services to win or retain business?

Networks and resources

Your business doesn't need to do all the work alone, so look for resources and networks that can support your needs. Industry networks and LinkedIn are two places to connect with what others are doing and share best practices. Businesses based or operating in the Square Mile are eligible for a free place on Heart of the City's Climate for SMEs course to support them in making an achievable action plan to get to net zero, funded by the City of London Corporation as part of their Climate Action Strategy. A free climate action toolkit is also on hand to help businesses develop green skills as part of their transition.

Maggie Berry OBE is director of Heart of the City

www.theheartofthecity.com



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A happier and more productive workforce

Ben Mercer offers tips to encourage staff members to get more active for benefits both inside and outside the workplace

Many members of business workplace teams might already be considering investing more time into their exercise routines to benefit their health. One thing that could help them finalise this decision is sharing findings with wider teams.

Effective, open, honest communication is crucial for making a workforce feel valued and part of the conversation. By conveying the data and research done into the benefits of activity and exercise can have on both mental and physical health, companies can help push their workforces to engage more actively with their bodies.

Accessible

There's plenty you can do around your workplace to make it more accessible for those looking to benefit from exercising to and from the office. Many might see their morning and evening commute as the perfect opportunity to burn some calories and get the blood pumping through their bodies through the likes of cycling or even donning some trainers and running.

Nothing is sure to discourage people from exercising before work than the prospect of arriving sweaty and worn

out without a place to get changed into their uniform or appropriate attire. Or worse, be forced to smell for the rest of the day. Introducing purpose-built changing rooms with showers is a great remedy for this.

Similarly, for those cycling, they'll want to be sure they're able to store their bikes safely while they're working. Bike racks or sheds can encourage cycling without fear of theft or damage.

Benefits and incentives

Everyone loves a freebie, so offering benefits and incentives to those in your workforce who want to get a bit more active could help drive the idea home. You could partner with local sports brands that make and sell fitness and workout gear, ranging from apparel to peripherals like wrist straps for weightlifting. Their brand gets free exposure, and your workforce gets some additional equipment to help them during their workouts.

Gym memberships can sometimes be costly, making people uncomfortable committing their hard-earned money to a membership contract. Offering a discount or a free trial membership for a few months when they first



start with your business could help get them into the groove of going and exercising. If they enjoy it, they might sign up for a full membership and feel encouraged to go more frequently and learn about exercises that help them become more active.

Ben Mercer is a director at Leisure Lakes Bikes

www.leisurelakesbikes.com

The magic of greeting cards

| by Amanda Fergusson

A greeting card is a magical thing, opening a card creates a powerful connection between the sender and recipient. The benefits to mental wellbeing are numerous and research shows that over 50 per cent of people keep cards from their partner and children.

The British have been sending cards for over 200 years, the earliest known Valentines Day card c1790, was recently sold at auction. Card sending took off in Victorian times, with British civil servant and entrepreneur Sir Henry Cole responsible for the first commercial Christmas card in 1843, at a time when postal reform brought in the penny post, meaning that the recipient no longer paid on receiving mail.

Connection

Today over 90 per cent of the UK population send at least one card a year. Greeting cards also support the high street, with 89 per cent of cards bought in a bricks and mortar store. We send cards to celebrate weddings, graduations, birthdays, Valentine's Day, Mothering Sunday and Father's Day, as well as at Christmas, with the tradition now embraced by other religious occasions celebrated in the UK such as



Eid, Diwali and Bar/Bat Mitzvah.

We also send cards to say sorry, to express sympathy, and to say thinking of you, or just to share a joke or an image. Cards create a connection and mean more than a text message or email. This also translates to the business world – when sending a card can grab the attention of potential customers or other stakeholders.

National, reliable and affordable

The Greeting Card Association (GCA), established in 1919, is the not-for-profit trade body representing everybody in the greeting card industry from retailers and publishers to specialist suppliers for the industry. Its 500 members include many micro and small businesses.

Greeting cards contributed over £1.5 billion to the UK economy in 2022 and we lead

the world in card design and innovation, exporting our designs across the globe. Integral to the success of the greeting card industry, for both consumers and the many small business supplying online customers' orders, is a national, reliable and affordable postal service, so the GCA is working closely with stakeholders during the current Ofcom consultation on the postal service. GCA is concerned at Royal Mail requests to increase stamp prices further and to reduce their obligations under the Universal Service Obligation.

Well-chosen

As well as working with other stakeholders to protect the greeting card industry, GCA members also promote card sending, and sharing the joy of connecting with someone through a well-chosen card. In 2023, the GCA secured a place at London Pride, handing out over free 10,000 cards for supporters on the LGBTQ march to write and send on to somebody. Another recent initiative was working with Sainsbury's during Black History Month, highlighting the many Black designers and business owners working within the greeting card community to broaden the range of cards available for consumers on the high street.



Every occasion

Greeting cards are being increasingly embraced by younger consumers, with significant growth in card purchasing among 16 to 34-year-olds. Cards connect people and communities, creating a link with a loved one. We can all relate to the joy of seeing familiar handwriting on an envelope on the doormat and opening a card that was chosen by someone who cares. There is a greeting card for every occasion, and for less than the price of a cup of coffee, or for free if you choose to make your own, you can create a meaningful connection with someone you care about.

Amanda Fergusson is chief executive of the Greeting Card Association

www.gca.cards



Navigating the commercial coffee machine market

Tea and coffee are staples in our daily lives, and with the expectation that the UK will have more coffee shops than pubs before the end of the decade, there is no indication that demand is slowing.

Whether you run an office-based business, a hotel or a restaurant, there is a significant demand for hot beverages. While traditional kettles and pots of coffee offer a basic solution, commercial coffee machines provide a highly efficient and versatile service, delivering a wide range of beverages and significantly increasing financial benefits with an average cost per cup of approximately 14p.

In addition to offering the entire range of high-street beverages typically found in retail settings, commercial coffee machines can generate up to a 20 per cent annual profit margin. Furthermore, coffee machine rental costs are fully tax-deductible as a business expense.

However, embarking on a search for the ideal coffee machine for your business can be a daunting, even overwhelming undertaking, as there are numerous factors to consider and a vast array of solution providers. Essentially, the key factors that underpin unlocking the capital in the beverage market space should be guided by the following commercial coffee machine acquisition decisions.

Bean-to-cup vs. espresso machines

For office-based businesses, a bean-to-cup machine offers a convenient and cost-effective solution, providing easy self-service, a variety of beverages, and minimal staff training. However, for businesses with a high volume of customers or those seeking barista expertise and fully customisable drinks, an

espresso machine may be a more suitable choice. Remember, espresso machines produce just that – espresso! Everything else, from frothing milk to creating cappuccinos, falls under the barista's remit.



by James Marinos

Drink options

When considering a bean-to-cup commercial coffee machine, explore the diverse drink options available across different brands. Not all machines offer hot chocolate or customisable drink options, including milk frothing. Assess your customers' and staff's preferences to determine the ideal machine for your business.

Maintenance

A common misconception is that coffee machines will run 'eternally' after installation. Just like a kettle, they can accumulate limescale and require regular servicing. Like any mechanical device, regular maintenance is essential for commercial coffee machines to function optimally. Factor in the cost of maintenance when evaluating the overall cost of the machine. Assign the task of coffee machine maintenance to at least one employee to ensure this crucial cleaning routine is carried out.

Electricity consumption

Commercial coffee machines exhibit varying energy efficiency levels. Investing in an energy-efficient machine contributes to your business's cost-effectiveness and serves as an increasingly appealing selling point to customers, particularly when considering a traditional espresso machine for serving the general public.

Price

Commercial coffee machines exhibit a wide range in price. The cost is

determined by factors like size, whether it's a bean-to-cup or espresso machine, features, output volume and brand. The most expensive machine may not necessarily fulfil your needs or provide the beverages you seek.

Brewing capacity

A crucial factor in determining the best coffee machine for your business is the number of people you will be serving. Investing in a high-end espresso machine capable of producing hundreds of drinks per day would be a financial drain if you are serving fewer than 100 drinks daily.

Explore

Investing in a commercial coffee machine can prove to be a strategic and profitable decision, fostering employee satisfaction and enhancing productivity. If you are considering investing in a coffee machine or upgrading your current solution, the Coffee and Connect Networking event on 17 January 2024, offers an opportunity to explore the array of options available, receive expert guidance from industry professionals at Logic Vending, and witness first-hand the capabilities of various machines, including an immersive gourmet coffee cupping session led by master roasters from Kokebi Coffee.



James Marinos is marketing manager of Logic Vending

www.logicvending.co.uk

Breach of contract: a guide for UK businesses

by Adam Haffenden and Frank Oppong

Contracts are regarded as an imperative factor in business relations. However, despite the best intentions, breaches of contract can occur, resulting in financial implications. This article aims to provide UK businesses with a guide on breach of contract, outlining key aspects, legal consideration and potential remedies.



Adam Haffenden

to fulfil their contractual obligations before the performance is due.

Establishing breach of contract

To establish a breach of contract in commercial proceedings, businesses need to demonstrate

three essential elements:

Step 1 – Existence of a valid contract: the first step is to establish that a valid, legally binding contract exists between the parties involved. The prospective claimant will need to show that the elements of a contract are present, namely: offer, acceptance, consideration and an intention to create legal relations.

Step 2 – Breach of contract: the prospective claimant must demonstrate that the other party failed to perform its obligations under the contract. This could involve a failure to deliver goods, provide services or meet important deadlines.

Step 3 – Damages: the breach must have resulted in quantifiable damages, such as financial losses, reputational damage or additional expenses incurred by the non-breaching party.

Legal remedies

If the prospective claimant business can establish a breach of contract, there are several legal remedies that are available.

1. Damages – the most common remedy. The aim of damages is to compensate the non-breaching party

for the financial losses incurred due to the breach.

2. Specific performance – in cases where monetary compensation is insufficient, the court may order the breaching party to fulfil its contractual obligations.

3. Rescission – this remedy involves cancelling the contract and placing the parties in their pre-contractual positions.

Resolving a breach of contract situation

To resolve a breach of contract situation, businesses should consider the following steps:

1. Letter before action – the prospective claimant should send a Letter Before Action to the other party, providing an opportunity for remedial action.

2. Alternative dispute resolution – different forms of ADR should be explored, including mediation or arbitration, and can be utilised as an effective alternative to court proceedings.

3. Issuing proceedings – if ADR fails, the prospective claimant can initiate legal proceedings by filing a claim at court.

Breach of contract is an inherent risk in the business world, however, but there are steps you can take if you find your business at either end of a breach of contract situation.

Adam Haffenden is a partner and head of dispute resolution at TV Edwards. Frank Oppong is a solicitor in the dispute resolution team

www.tvedwards.com



Frank Oppong

Contracts

A contract is a legally binding agreement between two or more parties. Contracts are an integral part of business, serving as the foundation for legal relationships and commercial transactions. Contracts can be written, oral or implied by the conduct of the parties. However, it is good practice for key terms to be written as this provides a clear record of the agreement between the parties and it often avoids the need to litigate any dispute that arises between the parties.

Types of breach of contract

A breach of contract occurs when a party fails to fulfil its obligations as outlined in the agreement. There are different types of breaches commonly grouped as:

- **Material breach** – This occurs when a party fails to perform an essential clause of the contract which substantially undermines the entire agreement.
- **Minor breach** – This involves a less severe violation of the contract that may not significantly impact the overall agreement and can be resolved.
- **Anticipatory breach** – when a party signals that they do not intend

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The vital role of bereavement training

| by Clare Worgan



Clare Worgan is head of training and strategic planning at Sands. You can learn more at a Sands Bereavement in the Workplace taster session held on 1 Feb between 10:30-11:15pm via Zoom

www.training.sands.org.uk/bereavement-in-the-workplace

It can be difficult to talk about personal matters at work, particularly bereavement and especially the sensitive topic of pregnancy and baby loss. However, we know from listening to those who have been through these experiences that having a supportive workplace is vital for their wellbeing.

Grief

Employees who have experienced pregnancy and baby loss often discuss the challenges of balancing work with the impact of grief on their mental and physical health. They also are often navigating practical matters such as attending medical appointments, supporting other children, organising a funeral, and attending counselling.

Managers and colleagues of those affected report feeling ill-equipped to navigate the delicate nuances of their colleagues' grief. A recurring theme is often not knowing what to say, not knowing the most appropriate way to manage a bereaved team member, and not knowing rights, obligations and laws.

Pregnancy and baby loss is more common than many people realise. 50 per cent of UK adults have, or know someone who has, experienced at least one form of pregnancy or baby loss.

Supportive

A survey carried out by Sands – a charity which supports anyone affected by pregnancy loss or the death of a baby – found over half of bereaved parents did not feel supported by their colleagues or managers at work. However, wonderfully supportive workplaces do exist: “My manager was entirely supportive in my return, giving me lots of flexibility to return on my terms. I was offered support from an occupational therapist to do a phased return and counselling through the employee assistance programme.”

In addition to the emotional toll, bereavement can have significant economic implications for businesses. According to a Sands report, 40 per cent of bereaved parents experienced an impact on their work, with 20 per cent taking time off and 15 per cent changing their working hours or

reducing their workload. 64 per cent of bereaved parents felt that their work had a negative impact on their mental health. As reported in The Lancet Series on miscarriage, the annual cost of miscarriage alone in the UK is £471 million. These findings highlight the tangible costs associated with bereavement-related challenges in the workplace, emphasising the importance of proactive support mechanisms.

Practical

Sands has developed a suite of tools and training designed to give practical help as well as confidence building skills. Sands bereavement training is designed to give employees helpful insights and equip them with the tools and confidence to support anyone experiencing pregnancy or baby loss.

Feedback from those attending the training has been positive. One attendee commented: “I was really nervous about attending because I thought that the training may be quite triggering for me and upsetting, but I came away from it feeling heard and understood and that you have such a good understanding of the complexity of feelings that go with losing a baby.”

Wellbeing

Sands' aim is for this knowledge to become much more familiar in every workplace, no matter the industry, sector or setting. It has been inspired by organisations who have led the way by establishing employee-led networks, and policies that align with training and recommendations. They report on improved wellbeing, productivity and retention.

Significant

The societal and workplace impact of pregnancy and baby loss is significant. By investing in bereavement in the workplace training, companies not only fulfil their duty of care for their staff but also contribute to the mental health and resilience of their workforce in the long term. It's time for organisations to engage in open conversations and create a workplace that supports employees through one of life's most challenging experiences.



How to build strong client relationships

Establishing and maintaining fruitful working relationships is crucial. Bespoke software development experts at *Codiance* give their top tips in this area

Uncover hidden stakeholders: delving into identifying stakeholders is crucial in establishing a solid client relationship. It's not just about acknowledging the prominent stakeholders but also about uncovering those who might not be immediately apparent. Understanding these hidden influencers and decision makers is vital, as it allows you to grasp their unique needs, expectations and concerns. This depth of knowledge empowers you

to customise your communication, products and services effectively, meeting the diverse requirements of all stakeholders.

Understanding the bigger picture: by comprehending their vision and needs, you can tailor your products or services, communication and problem-solving to serve their interests better. This not only promotes trust and mutual understanding but also helps create a more meaningful and enduring partnership that benefits both parties in the long run.

Understanding the business challenges: by demonstrating a deep understanding of their challenges, you build trust and show a genuine commitment to their success. This positions you as a valuable partner, developing a more robust client relationship built on mutual goals and shared objectives.

Give direction and be influential: giving direction and being influential in building a client relationship is essential because it helps establish trust, clarity, and a sense of purpose. Clients often look to you as an expert or guide, and by

It strengthens trust and loyalty and allows for a better understanding of the client's evolving needs and preferences, enabling you to tailor your services and communication to better meet their expectations.

”

providing clear guidance and being influential in a positive way, you can demonstrate your expertise and that both parties are aligned in their goals and expectations.

Finding opportunities for further improvement: this proactive approach creates long-lasting, mutually beneficial partnerships and can lead to increased success and referrals. It strengthens trust and loyalty and allows for a better understanding of the client's evolving needs and preferences, enabling you to tailor your services and communication to better meet their expectations.

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Embracing and adapting to hybrid working

Hybrid and flexible working have influenced how businesses approach the day-to-day in offices. Dominic Fitch shares ways companies can continue to adjust their processes to account for these changes, starting with scheduling and timekeeping



Dominic Fitch is head of creative change at Impact

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When implementing hybrid and flexible working into your working day, the most important thing to establish is what the split between office working and working from home will be. Building a routine on which days everyone commutes to the office can help keep productivity consistent while also allowing for the flexibility that hybrid working offers.

Finding the right divide between building a strong office culture where your full workforce is together and working while also feeling they're trusted when working remotely. One way you can assess which days are best for in-office is by analysing your internal data on outputs and productivity, as these numbers can help you make informed choices.

One thing that's important to note is that these days don't have to be permanent. If you feel like they're no longer the optimal working days as time progresses, fluidly transitioning to different days is possible with hybrid working.

Keeping communication open with your workforce can help you make these decisions, as transparency will result in honest responses and reasoning as to how well the split is working.

Communication

As a business owner or management, a huge concern might be how you contact your workforce without feeling invasive. That's why communication technology that allows for everything from instant messaging to live voice and video calls is an important investment.

These can be synced to your pre-existing email systems so that when meetings are scheduled, emails can be sent that attach a link to the online meeting link. This provides more flexibility when it comes to meetings, as while you might prefer everyone to be present in person for it, those working remotely can still be included.

It also can help make meetings with clients more flexible. You might have partnerships and projects with companies all over the UK (and sometimes globally) with whom you can't always be in the same room, so being able to tune in with them no matter where they are means more open communication channels.

Collaborative working

Hybrid working provides a new challenge of collaborating with a colleague if they're working from home and you're in the office. Investing in the right software bridges the gap between in-office collaborative working and keeping those working remotely involved.

Statista Market Insights has forecast that collaborative software is on track to reach around £610 million. Thanks to the developments of Cloud-based programmes, there are plenty to choose from if you want one that is pre-built.

Alternatively, you can invest some extra time and money in your IT team to allow them to develop bespoke collaboration software if you want something more customisable and purpose-built for your processes and needs.



Cleankill strikes Gold to start the year off on a high

Cleankill Pest Control has started 2024 with celebrations after being awarded the Gold Investors in People accreditation for an incredible third time.



Cleankill team 2023

No other pest control company in England has retained the Gold accreditation three times and Cleankill joins an elite group of businesses that have achieved the treble.

Paul Bates, Managing Director of Cleankill Pest Control, said: "This is a wonderful achievement for a small business, and we are all absolutely thrilled. It is testament to everyone's commitment to our organisation, our management practices, and our dedication to continuous improvement.

"Investors in People Gold sets us apart from our competitors and also helps us attract new staff – it's worth all the effort that goes into preparing for the assessment."

Investors in People Practitioner Esther O'Halloran added: "Congratulations to everyone at Cleankill for retaining Gold. In my report I highlighted many positive things about the company but especially the transparent values which are at the heart of Cleankill. Management is transparent on what it expects from people and how they should behave and conduct themselves, not only with clients but with each other.

"The way people treat each other and talk at work with each other is important to building the family culture and Cleankill should be really proud of this. Everyone is conscious of Cleankill's values, and they have helped create a culture where everyone is actively involved in making sure the values are upheld. In addition, everyone in Cleankill takes enormous pride and ownership of their work and is focused on continuously delivering high standards of service and an ethical sales approach."

In 2018 Cleankill became the first pest control company in England to be certified 'GOLD' by Investors in People and in 2021, following another intensive audit, retained the Gold status. The latest assessment confirmed that Cleankill had again attained the coveted Gold standard.

Paul Bates went on to say: "We have been told that we have improved greatly and are very close to Platinum status. This is an incredible achievement when we have gone from 46 to 61 staff in 3 years - a 32% increase in staff numbers."

Cleankill had a challenging start to 2023 but, after stepping up marketing, achieved record months in July, August, and

October 2023. Cleankill then won the Pest Control industry Company of the Year Award beating several of the industry's large national companies and also the British Pest Control Association's Most Sustainable Company Award.

Investors in People is an organisation that assesses how businesses are performing against a standardised framework that encompasses employee engagement and communication, organisational culture, and ways of working. Cleankill customers benefit from staff who are enthusiastic, very professional, always try to exceed customer expectations and are committed to their employer.

Cleankill's staff are highly trained and offer an exceptionally fast and efficient level of service. The company holds ISO9001, ISO14001 and Altius Elite Vendor accreditations.

For expert advice and a free survey contact Cleankill Pest Control on **020 8668 5477**. www.cleankill.co.uk



0800 056 5477

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@cleankilluk

Dealing with HMRC enquiries



| by Amit Puri



Amit Puri is the founder of Pure Tax

www.pure-tax.com

Whichever part of HMRC a large business is the target of, enquiries are typically carried out by a team of officers. This requires increased numbers of people and time resources i.e. more costs.

Don't confuse these with regular compliance checks into simpler Corporation Tax (CT) returns, which typically focus on a single accounting period, and sometimes just some aspects. The business enquiries discussed herein significantly disrupt the owners' lives and/or those of their finance teams.

Dedicated

HMRC say they ensure continuity in terms of contact and industry specific understanding by appointing a dedicated customer compliance manager (CCM) in their large business directorate (LB) and to a degree in the wealthy and mid-sized business compliance directorate (WMBC).

HMRC's LB manages and constantly reviews the very largest businesses, which typically have an annual turnover of over £200 million. There are reportedly approximately 2,000 such large businesses. An LB business risk review is a collaborative evaluation of potential tax risks, led by the CCM. The key objectives include determining the overall risk rating and outlining actions. For businesses with low-ratings, full assessments are done every three years, while moderate to high-risk companies undergo annual reviews.

HMRC's WMBC enquires into businesses typically with an annual turnover of £10 million or more, of which they estimated there being approximately 160,000 last year.

Resource intensive

A full or cross-taxes enquiry is much more involving than a routine compliance check; it too is resource intensive and led by a CCM who has a team of specialists, typically covering VAT and employer duties (PAYE and NICs) as well as CT. However, most businesses don't have specialists in-

house nor do they have finance teams that can spare the time and attention required.

The CCM will ask for a meeting with the business owner(s) assuming they're involved in the business, as well as those responsible for record keeping, accounting and tax preparation.

Records

If not during the initial meeting, HMRC will quickly ask for a comprehensive download of electronic business and accounting records. While almost certainly only one accounting period will be under enquiry for CT purposes, HMRC will encourage sharing some four years' worth of records to support VAT returns submitted, thus obtaining vast amounts of data. In practice, this is used for CT purposes too – this happens all the time. Beware such requests where sampling should be encouraged/ offered instead, restricting outflows of information, to better manage the next stages of the enquiry.

Armed with a huge volume of records, HMRC will identify tax risks to pursue and create an action plan which various specialists feed into. They will share this with the business. It's normal for the pain to start showing now as the enormity of the enquiries becomes clear. There will be several lines of enquiry, which in practice have a life of their own.

These types of enquiries do not disappear quickly, so be prepared to work hard on them. A deep experience of handling HMRC ensures the scope of these enquiries is narrowed sooner and a conclusion comes into sight more quickly.

Specialist adviser

Businesses at the receiving end of HMRC's in-depth enquiries should consider using a specialist adviser; one who should critically evaluate everything the business is asked for. Everything they then gather and collate, and identify alternative records/ evidence to demonstrate the facts is done in the best possible light.

Nudge letters - how HMRC is replacing intelligence-led tax enquiries

by Danielle Ford and Riocard Hoy

HMRC started to formally use 'nudge', or 'one to many' letters in 2019 and they are now a staple means of communication by HMRC.

Single communication

Nudge letters are a cost-effective, standard communication sent to many taxpayers linked to a specific tax risk. The letters are HMRC's way to nudge taxpayers they believe have paid insufficient tax into reviewing their affairs and paying the tax underpayment, without opening formal enquiries, which HMRC does not have the resources to do.

Nudge letters allow HMRC to generate significant levels of revenue by expending a relatively low level of resource, so we can see why they're becoming more frequent.

Who is affected?

All taxpayers are at risk of receiving a nudge letter.

HMRC has possession of more detailed financial information than ever before, so receiving a letter from HMRC has never been more likely, especially for those with multiple business interests and complex tax affairs.

Nudge letter campaigns are becoming ever more specific, with some letters concerning small groups of taxpayers identified as a tax risk.

HMRC's latest nudge letters include taxpayers who:

- Have claimed incorporation relief in respect of Capital Gains Tax on incorporation of a property business
- were involved in property tax planning using an LLP and corporate

member (as highlighted in HMRC's Spotlight 63).

That said, overseas assets, income and gains continue to be a firm favourite of HMRC.

Each year, under the Common Reporting Standard financial institutions from around the world report details of UK residents' income and gains to HMRC.

What to do if a nudge letter is received

A nudge letter is not a statutory enquiry, but taxpayers are advised not to ignore them and to review their tax affairs thoroughly, to ascertain if a disclosure to HMRC is necessary. Even though nudge letters are mass communications, they are not generated randomly – they are target-specific. However, HMRC issue letters to taxpayers where the information has formed part of their UK tax filings and where no additional disclosures are required.

Regardless of whether a disclosure is required, it is best practice to respond to HMRC within the deadline stated - usually 30 days. If you are unable to respond within the deadline, contact HMRC to agree an extension.

It is not advisable to sign and return the enclosed certificate of tax position; there is no statutory obligation to do

so. However, a response to a nudge letter is recommended, together with seeking professional advice. An adviser can review the tax position and advise the appropriate next steps, including penalty mitigation. Should a disclosure be required, it will need to encompass all relevant tax years, the tax liability, late payment interest and calculate the appropriate penalty. Bear in mind that a false declaration in the document could have very serious ramifications.

HMRC will follow up on nudge letters which have been ignored, with much stronger communications, similar to a traditional enquiry. These communications request significant amounts of information within a 30-day deadline and refer to the powers HMRC has available.

Should you discover a mistake in your filings before being contacted by HMRC, making a voluntary disclosure to HMRC carries a clear advantage, as this disclosure would be considered 'unprompted'. Unprompted disclosures allow access to the lowest possible penalties - in some cases as low as nought per cent.

Overall it is recommended that professional advice is sought upon discovery of a mistake or receipt of a nudge letter. It is important that you do not bury your head in the sand.

Danielle Ford is a partner and head of tax disputes and resolutions at haysmacintyre. Riocard Hoye is senior manager at the same firm

www.haysmacintyre.com



Danielle Ford



Riocard Hoy

Making a difference in the community



Trustees play an important role in the many thousands of UK charities which makes a significant difference in their wide ranging and valued work in the community. By some estimates, the time spent by these largely voluntary but sometimes remunerated people amounts to billions of pounds each year.

Rewarding

Becoming a trustee can be very rewarding. Using one's experience and knowledge to help a cause one believes in is hard to beat. But it can also be demanding and it is not always clear at the outset what one's duties and responsibilities are.

There are a number of sources where would be trustees can find comprehensive information – see links at the end of this article. Yet there is nothing like hearing the realities from someone who has gone on the trustee journey. Megan Potterton of Age UK Plymouth's Board of Trustees is one such person and here she lists what she sees as the six main duties of the role.

Ensure the charity is carrying out its purposes for the public benefit

This is perhaps the most important responsibility of a charity trustee. All trustees must make sure that the charity is always fulfilling the purpose for which it was set up, and for no other purpose.

This includes making sure that all decisions made by the chief executive help to meet the charity's goals and achieve the things that the charity was set up for.

Comply with the charity's governing document and the law

Trustees must also make sure that the charity complies with its governing document. This document includes things like the charity's purpose, who the trustees are, how trustees should be appointed and removed, and how trustee meetings are arranged and carried out.

In addition to this, trustees also need to make sure that the charity complies with charity law requirements.

Act in the charity's best interests

Trustees should work together to make balanced and informed decisions that act in the best interests of the charity.

They must also always do what the whole board decides will best serve the charity's purposes.

Manage the charity's resources responsibly

This one is all about acting reasonably, responsibly and honestly.

This includes not taking any risks with the charity's assets or reputation, and making sure that any assets are only used to support the charity's purpose.

Act with reasonable care and skill

Trustees must also act with reasonable care and skill and use their experience, knowledge and skills when making decisions for the charity.

They should also dedicate adequate time and thought to the role by properly preparing for and participating in board meetings.

Ensure the charity is accountable

Trustees must also comply with statutory accounting and reporting requirements, as well as being able to demonstrate that the charity complies with the law and runs effectively.

Information on trustees is available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-essential-trustee-what-you-need-to-know-cc3>

www.ncvo.org.uk – national council for voluntary organisations

Megan Potterton is a member of Age UK Plymouth's Board of Trustees

www.ageukplymouth.org.uk



Megan Potterton

WANTED! A PROFESSIONAL INDEPENDENT PENSION TRUSTEE

The London Chamber of Commerce and Industry is looking to recruit a professional independent trustee to Chair the Trustee Board of its Defined Benefit Pension Scheme alongside the employee trustees. The Scheme is fully closed to active members and future accruals and is fiduciary managed and administered very professionally by Schroders. As Chair, you will lead on the appointment and oversight of actuarial advisors, auditors and legal professionals, as when required, and have full access to administrative support, arranged by the Chamber. The position will be remunerated and monthly, quarterly or annual fees will be agreed, commensurate with the responsibilities.

If you are a suitably qualified and experienced pension trustee professional, either as an individual or personal corporate structure, and are interested in this opportunity, please send your details to the Company Secretary and Finance Director [nstansfield@londonchamber.co.uk] and a full job description will be provided and follow-up discussion with the Chair of the Pensions Committee will be arranged.

A final shortlist, interviews and appointment is expected by 28 February 2024 or shortly thereafter.



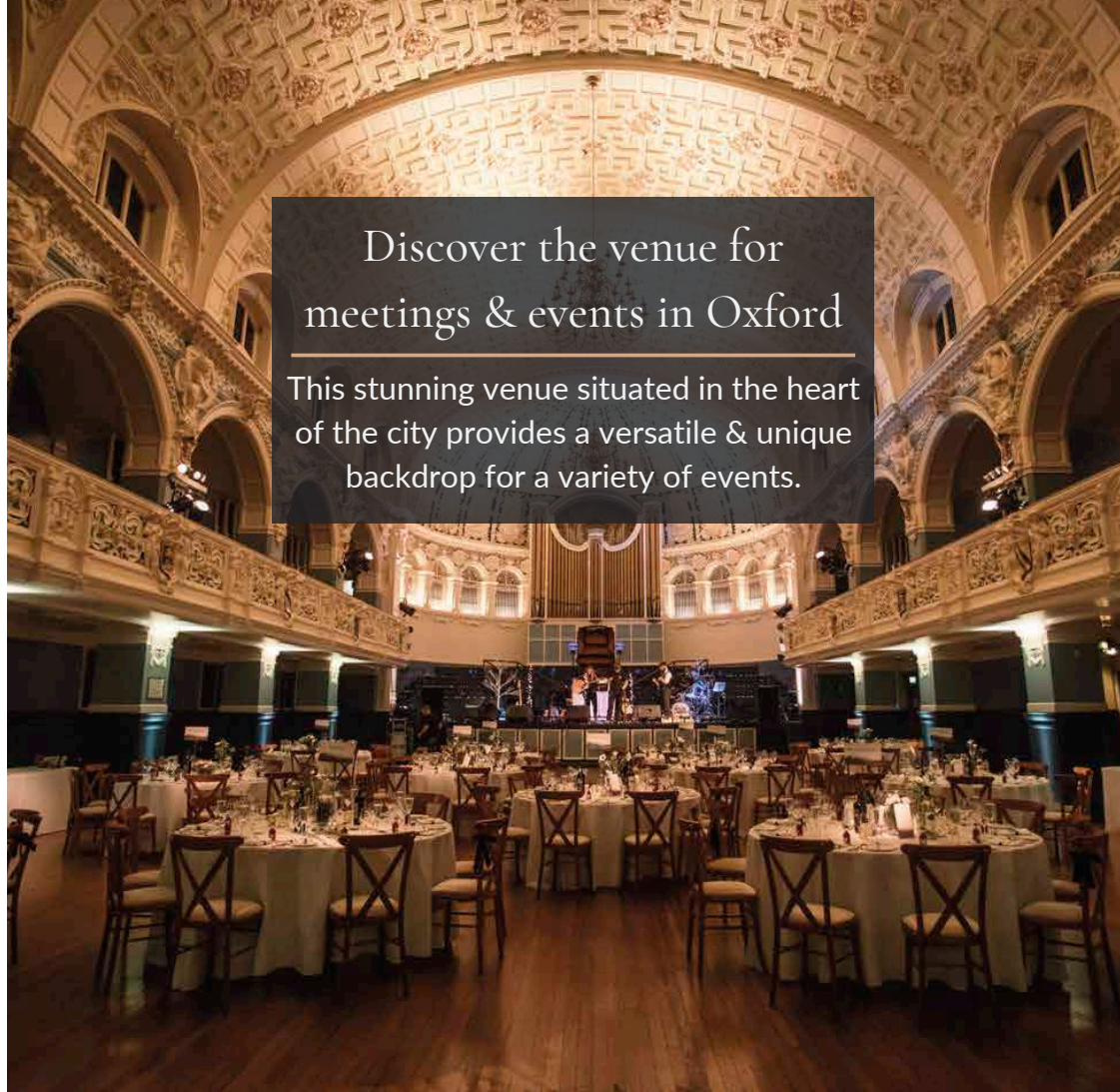


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Six SEO myths that need to stay in 2023

by Duray Pretorius



Digital marketing is changing. Between the time of my typing this and you reading it, the digital landscape may have changed completely. Is X (FKA Twitter) still around or has Elon nuked it? What even is Threads? Does anyone remember Clubhouse?

As social media platforms come and go, websites have stood the test of time (over 30 years) and everyone wants more attention on their site. Businesses, bloggers and website owners are often in constant pursuit of the elusive top spot on search engine results pages (SERPs).

However, amid the quest for search engine optimisation (SEO) supremacy within an unregulated industry, many myths have emerged through the internet.

It's time to cut through the haze and debunk some prevalent SEO myths.

Myth #1: "I have just SEO'd the website"

One of the most persistent myths surrounding SEO is that it's a one-and-done task. The uncomfortable and expensive truth is that SEO is an ongoing process that requires consistent effort and adaptation. Search engines

frequently update their algorithms and user behaviour evolves. Continuous optimisation, content updates and staying abreast of industry trends are imperative to maintain or improve your search rankings.

Myth #2: Content is king

While keywords are undeniably crucial in SEO, fixating solely on them is a common pitfall. The algorithmic landscape has evolved and search engines now prioritise user intent and context. Rather than stuffing content with keywords, focus on creating valuable, relevant, and helpful content. This satisfies search engine algorithms and enhances the user experience, leading to higher rankings.

Myth #3: More links mean better rankings

Link building has long been considered a cornerstone of SEO. However, the quality of links outweighs the quantity. Numerous low-quality or spammy backlinks can harm your site's credibility and rankings. Instead, concentrate on building high-quality, relevant links from reputable sources. A few authoritative backlinks can significantly impact your site's authority and visibility. Focus on partners you work with and write blogs on their behalf, but first make sure their Domain Authority makes it worthwhile.

Myth #4: SEO is only about rankings

While achieving high rankings on SERPs is a primary goal of SEO, it's not the sole measure of success. The ultimate objective is to drive organic traffic that converts. Metrics like click-through rates, bounce rates and time-on-page are equally crucial. Ultimately, Google is using the user behaviour of people to determine the relevancy of its results. A high-ranking page that fails to engage

and convert visitors is an incomplete SEO strategy. Focus on delivering a holistic user experience to ensure sustained success. This will also lead to more leads/customers.

Myth #5: "Social media has no impact on SEO"

The relationship between social media and SEO is a confusing topic. While social media signals may not directly impact search rankings, the indirect influence is undeniable. Social media can amplify your content, increase brand visibility, and drive traffic to your website. Furthermore, efforts on social media can drive more branded searches on search engines. Need more convincing? Ask the nearest Gen Z how to find the best restaurants in London. You'll find them using TikTok as a search engine.

Myth #6: "Mobile optimisation doesn't matter for a business like us"

With the surge in mobile device usage, paying attention to mobile optimisation is a critical mistake. Even if your customer primarily buys using a desktop, Google is now indexing and crawling the mobile versions of websites. Furthermore, users are getting more accustomed to purchasing on their mobile devices. Ignore this at your peril.

SEO is a dynamic discipline that requires a nuanced understanding of its principles and continuous adaptation to industry changes. By dispelling these myths and embracing a holistic, user-centric approach, businesses can navigate the complex SEO landscape with confidence, leading to improved visibility, engagement and, ultimately, online success.

Duray Pretorius is director of Viaduct Generation

<https://seo.viaductgen.com>

BBA shares success stories

Guests at a recent Black Business Association (BBA) event at LCCI heard from Segun Akinwaleola, founder of the Gym Kitchen, and Dr Carlton Brown, managing director of Marshall & Brown, who captivated them with their stories of how they became successful entrepreneurs despite bumps in the road.

Trajectory

In a session chaired by Kike Oniwinde, founder and chief executive of BYP Network, Akinwaleola spoke of the challenges of not having Black role models and how getting into university and out of London changed his trajectory.

Dr Brown described how he differentiated his company from competitors and emphasised the importance of networking.

University of Westminster was programme partner for the event

www.westminster.ac.uk



L-R: Segun Akinwaleola, Kike Oniwinde, Dr Carlton Brown



Dr Carlton Brown





Bombay mix

The Bombay Brasserie once again provided a magnificent and appropriate setting for the LCCI Asian Business Association's winter reception.

Karim Fatehi and Tony Matharu addressed an audience of over 100 people before an evening of networking and a generous sampling of Indian delicacies.

Programme partners for the event was the University of Westminster

www.westminster.ac.uk



Karim Fatehi MBE



Tony Matharu

Two minute interview

Alan Sellers of Your Crypto Coach and Blockchain Basecamp

Who are you?

Alan Sellers – chief executive and founder of Your Crypto Coach and Blockchain Basecamp.

Our aim is to make everybody in the UK safely and securely ready for the cryptocurrency and blockchain future.

I first started out helping family and friends navigate the crypto space safely.

After a few months, a friend suggested that I should open out my help to others, so the company was born.

What is your connection with the London Chamber of Commerce?

I am a member of LCCI and also the Crypto/Blockchain specialist on the LCCI Experts Panel.

What was your first job in London?

I worked on the old London Stock Exchange (not quite quill pens but close) as a messenger, before computers. (Yes I'm that old!) As a result of this first job, scurrying around the City with stock transfer documents, I know the backstreets and alleyways of the Square Mile very well.

Which one business achievement over the last 12 months are you most proud of, and why?

We are now the preferred and trusted crypto and

blockchain educators and information providers for over 30,000 fiduciaries in the UK. We are the primary digital asset educators with a number of associations for regulated professionals.

We are also helping SMEs and individuals get to grips with crypto and blockchain in a 'sound, practical and safe' way.

If you were advising a young entrepreneur which business person would you suggest as a model?

Vitalik Buterin – co-founder of the Ethereum Blockchain, upon which many Web 3.0 applications are being built.

In 2013, at the tender age of 19, Buterin proposed the idea of Ethereum, a new blockchain platform that would be more powerful and flexible than Bitcoin. He raised £15 million in funding for the project and Ethereum was launched in 2015.

Not only is he a maths genius, he had a vision for how a Blockchain network should be. He foresaw what is now becoming the norm for the new internet.

How do you think the transport system in London can be improved?

Introduce a 'talking carriage' on each London



underground train, encouraging people to be more communicative instead of peering at their mobiles. I'm not advocating a free for all, but at least people know that if they sit in that carriage somebody may smile and say "good morning" to them.

Which piece of red tape causes most problems for your company and why?

Pretty happy in general, although as a general principle let the digital asset space innovate without too much red tape.

As long as individuals have protection and companies are encouraged to be innovative, then red tape should not be too cumbersome.

What is your favourite and least favourite thing about London?

Favourite thing – the variety our great city has to offer in terms of opportunities, culture, leisure and cosmopolitan atmosphere. I love how London seems like a collection of villages, each with their own distinctive flavour. Least favourite –

crowded train carriages on hot summers days in rush hour. I try to walk around London most of the time which relates back to my favourite thing.

If you were Mayor of London for the day which one thing would you change?

Bring in a law that makes homelessness illegal for all London

Boroughs.

Humans deserve a safe place to live. Central government should support this more actively than they do.

Who would you consider an appropriate person to play you in a movie of your life?

I've been told that I look like a cross between Paul McCartney and Al Pacino so I'll just leave this here.

What is your favourite quotation?

"The two most important days of your life – the day you were born and the day you find out why."

www.yourcryptocoach.co.uk
<https://cryptotrainers.co.uk>



Paul McCartney, 2021

Paternoster Square, City of London, England – the new home of the London Stock Exchange and next door to St Paul's Cathedral.



SPONSORED COLUMN



Government consultation response: non-compete clauses to be limited to 3 months

by Alex Kiernan and Kendal Youngblood

The Government has announced plans to limit the length of non-compete clauses in employment contracts, in its response to a 2020 consultation on their reform.

The 2020 consultation

Non-compete clauses are one of several types of post-termination restrictions ("PTR"s) that businesses may include in an employment contract, which restrict an employee's ability to work for a competitor following the termination of their employment. To be enforceable, PTRs must be carefully drafted to ensure they are no wider than reasonably necessary, and they protect the business's "legitimate business interests" – such as confidential information or relationships with clients. If a PTR falls outside of these requirements, a Court may invalidate it.

The concern with non-compete clauses is that they arguably disincentivise employees from changing jobs, which could restrict the talent pool and innovation in the wider economy. In 2020, the Government published a consultation paper exploring options for reform, highlighting two options in particular:

1. Mandating that non-compete clauses be unenforceable unless the employer provides compensation for the period of restraint; or
2. Making all non-compete clauses unenforceable.

The response

Although most respondents to the consultation favoured the first option, the Government's response expressed the concern that requiring businesses to pay for a non-compete period would impose substantial costs and

stymie growth. The Government has instead rejected both options, and has proposed an option 3 to limit the period of non-competes to 3 months.

Comment

In September, the Recruitment and Employment Confederation reported there were 3 million unfilled vacancies in the UK. The Government surely hopes its reforms to non-compete clauses will give some much-needed elasticity to an incredibly tight labour market, but businesses may still find workarounds. There will be no changes, for example, to garden leave clauses, which prevent employees from working for any other business, not just competitors.

What steps should employers take?

At the moment, the proposed changes are just that – proposals. The Government's response suggests only it will bring forward legislation "when parliamentary time allows". Given a surfeit of ongoing distractions (not least of which are sure to be next year's looming parliamentary elections), we are unlikely to see any sudden developments. In the meantime, non-compete clauses lasting longer than 3 months will continue to remain effective.

It is nonetheless worth reviewing existing employment contracts now to consider alternatives for protecting your business. For instance, other restrictions (such as non-solicitation or non-dealing provisions) will continue to provide lengthier protection.

For advice on non-compete clauses or any other employment law issue, contact Alex Kiernan at Thomas Mansfield Solicitors on **020 7377 2829** or email alex.kiernan@thomasmansfield.com.



**thomas
mansfield.**
Employment Law

Answers to The Knowledge

On page 23

1

The Elizabeth Tower. 2012 was Diamond Jubilee Year.

2

Marshalsea Prison in Southwark. The fictional Dorrit family also spent time there. The prison closed in 1842.

3

Senate House of the University of London in Malet Street. The building was taken over by the non-fictional Ministry of Information during World War II.

4

The Matchgirls' Strike at the Bryant & May match factory. The Union of Women Matchmakers (later the Matchmakers' Union) was formed later in 1888.

5

Michael Portillo. His TV career began with Great British Railway Journeys and he subsequently expanded the series globally.

6

Alexander Pope. A pub named after him (formerly the less obvious *Pope's Grotto*) stands on the banks of the Thames in Twickenham.

7

The Hogwarts Express, much used by Harry Potter and his schoolmates.

8

David Lodge. The author was an undergraduate at University College London in nearby Gower Street.

9

Temple. It is on the District line in London, Line 9 in Paris.

10

HRH The Princess Royal. She remains Chancellor to this day.



Two minute interview

Lesley Batchelor CBE



Who are you?

I am an international trade expert and champion of UK exporters, specialising in helping businesses gain international market intelligence, from research to revenue and first sale. I've been connected with international trade throughout my career, spanning from blue chips where I learnt best practice, to my own company producing training and consultancy packages to help business grow into new markets. I have worked with World Bank, EBRD and many UK government programmes.

What is your connection with the London Chamber of Commerce?

I've been connected with LCCI since 1992 when I worked with the membership director at the time on the promotion and marketing strategy. It's a great organisation and I have continued to stay connected through my work and interest in international trade. Peter Bishop is a font of all knowledge on global trade whom I happily rely on for information.

What was your first job in London?

My first job in London was with Fujitsu Europe in Jernyn Street, working as

a market analyst as we developed the plans for bringing our computer parts and printers into Europe. Until then I worked as a management trainee with Ciba-Geigy Pharmaceuticals in Horsham. This is where I first encountered LCCI using their documentation services and producing my first ATA Carnet which luckily proved to be my last one!

International trade is a complex subject. Where do you pick up market intelligence and go for information and advice?

Export Angels is a consultancy that uses over 200 qualified sources of data to help produce reports that run from market selection and what should our packaging look like to pricing and distribution. This is a rewarding business as we know we are providing businesses with real market intelligence that helps them to make informed decisions.

How do you get on with ports and airports in London and the South East?

The worst thing is the road and rail infrastructure that feeds them. Owing to something that is beyond your control, you can miss

your connection due to the road or rail system. Despite having the right paperwork, making the right decisions, and building the right strategy to support them, you get stuck in traffic – it is a waste of time and energy. More needs to be done to ensure this doesn't obstruct the growth that the UK needs to make internationally.

Which piece of international trade or customs legislation causes most problems for your company and why?

The most problems for my business are that the government says it provides the same services that we are forced to charge for. Often it isn't comparing like with like but that is how it appears to the market.

What is your favourite and least favourite thing about London?

My favourite thing is that it is diverse and culturally stimulating – there is always something to see or do.

Least favourite is the homelessness and the related issues that come with this terrible stalemate that stops

people being able to pull themselves out of poverty.

If you were Mayor of London for the day which one thing would you change?

Support for international trade should be more business-centric with targets and quotas set around the business needs, not government or funding guidelines.

Who would you consider an appropriate person to play you in a movie of your life?

Helen Mirren - she is unashamedly herself and good at what she does!

What is your favourite quotation?

"Anyone who thinks they are too small to make a difference has never shared their bed with a mosquito!"
Dalai Lama

www.export-angels.com





New Members

Who has joined the London Chamber of Commerce and Industry in the last two months?

5Bay Group

T: 07769 638077
info@5baygroup.com

www.5baygroup.com

Property advisory

ACC Finance Solutions

info@accfinancesolutions.com

www.accfinesolutions.com

Financial advisers for small businesses

Add then Multiply

dbh@addthenmultiply.com

Accountant

Ampergia Limited

T: 01908 772311

info@ampergia.com

www.ampergia.com

Renewable energy

Apex Currency

T: 020 8161 8700

info@apexcurrency.co.uk

www.apexcurrency.co.uk

International payments

APGB Boutique Consultancy

alicesantos@apgbboutiqueconsultancy.com

apgbboutiqueconsul.wixsite.com/apgb-boutique-consul

Link investors with African projects

Asfigo Technologies Limited

T: 07405 330918

svenkat@asfigo.com

[asfigo.com](http://www.asfigo.com)

Chip design solutions

Barking and Dagenham College

T: 020 8090 3020

www.bdc.ac.uk

Further education

Bermondsey Engineering

& Trade Co. Ltd

284 Chase Road, A Block 2nd Floor, London N14 6HF

Engineering

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T: 07497 701243

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Cybersecurity

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www.comexpotrading.com

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Down Piccadilly way

The world-renowned Food Hall at Fortnum & Mason in Piccadilly, just along from what is perhaps London's most famous square, was again the venue for the LCCI's annual winter reception last December. Interim chief executive Karim Fatehi MBE welcomed guests and announced the prize winners of the much sought after F&M Christmas hampers.

Magic

Fine wines and canapés are de rigueur at such an event and the fun was further enhanced by Paparazzi VIP and their Magic Mirror photo booth which proved a popular attraction.





LCCI Member News



Heathrow Airport

Thomas Woldbye has officially taken the helm of the UK's hub airport following the departure of former CEO John Holland-Kaye. As a champion of passenger service, sustainability and growth, Thomas's arrival opens a new chapter in Heathrow's story after a decade of transformation.

On his first day, Thomas met colleagues across Heathrow to see first-hand what makes it one of the world's top airports. As new CEO, Thomas will oversee the airport's multi-billion pound plans to upgrade existing facilities over the next three years to provide an even better service for passengers, including the next generation security programme and new baggage system for Terminal 2.

As the UK's hub airport, Heathrow's success is built on collaborative relationships with local communities, Team Heathrow partners including airlines and ground handlers and stakeholders across sustainability, business and politics. Thomas is getting to know these stakeholders and hearing their thoughts on how to further improve the airport.

Smart Air UK

Smart Air is a social enterprise and the only certified B-Corp dedicated to fighting air pollution.

Our commitment to creating cleaner indoor spaces at accessible prices has recently earned us a place as finalists for LCC's SME 'Positive Impact Award'.



Seeking businesses to donate 'branded' Clean Air

Our Corporate Donations programme puts your logo on a powerful, yet quiet, air cleaner making indoor spaces more inclusive for everyone while reducing sickness and improving the health of your local community.

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SSE Energy Solutions

LCCI Patron SSE has unveiled a £15m support fund dedicated to businesses facing steep energy bills. This initiative follows SSE's 2020 sale of its GB household energy segment to OVO Energy.

The fund is specifically for business clients of SSE Energy Solutions who entered into longer-term fixed contracts between August and December 2022—a period marked by record-high wholesale energy prices. While some businesses benefit from the Energy Bills Discount Scheme (EBDS), the expected support this winter might be less than before. Nikki Flanders, Managing Director of SSE's customer businesses, emphasized the need for enhanced customer support considering the ongoing energy challenges. The fund will credit eligible customers, including charitable businesses and domestic-like entities. Additionally, SSE is advocating for energy efficiency, encouraging the installation of smart meters to help businesses monitor and manage their energy consumption.



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Buckingham Futures

Clean water, a resource that many people in developed countries take for granted, is a luxury in certain parts of the world. More than 300 million of the 800 million people living in Sub-Saharan Africa live in water-scarce environments.

Without access to safe drinking water, diseases associated with poor hygiene, improper sanitation, and contaminated water develop.

For his 50th birthday, our member Ketan Dattani owner and Founder of Buckingham Futures gave back to the community that 'gave him his identity' as East African Asian.

Buckingham Futures partnered with the Ugandan Water Project to build a water well in a town called Kamuli in the Eastern Region of Uganda, which is where Ketan's father was born.

By continuing to partner with the Ugandan Water Project Ketan plans to provide additional water points in the area surrounding Kamuli over the coming years.

This will help generations to come.

www.buckinghamfutures.com



Global Scale

Global Scale introduces an innovative AI Business Training Project, bridging digital skill gaps for SMEs.

Our tailored courses target top-level managers, middle management, and various departments like marketing, HR, sales, logistics, and IT.

These courses cater to specific business needs, fostering competitiveness and operational efficiency. The program imparts a fundamental understanding of AI, instilling confidence to leverage technologies for transformative business opportunities.

No technical experience is required, and upon completion, SMEs receive practical guidance for strategic AI implementation. The adaptable course structure allows customization to meet client requirements.

This flagship initiative revolutionizes businesses by turning uncertainty into actionable opportunities.

Our agency's core services include consulting and branding for international business scaling, specializing in the UAE, UK, and EU markets. Explore more globalscalebusiness.com/en and www.linkedin.com/company/global-scale/ +44 7899 867327 (Tel/WhatsApp)



The Worshipful Company of Constructors

The Worshipful Company of Constructors established a Climate Action Committee back in 2021 with an aim to use their networks and influence to help address the climate and biodiversity emergency. Since its inception they have established a task group structure covering: Climate Action & Policy, Supporting the City of London and Livery Climate Action Group, Climate Action Scholarships and Skills, Industry Influence and Engagement and Impact Reporting.

They produced their "Climate Action Plan" in 2021/22 and issued their final version for print in October 2022, this then led to them producing their "Carbon Reduction Plan" which was issued in March 2023. The plans have calculated the companies' emissions and has allowed them to reduce their emissions and then consider how they can offset their carbon.

As of the 16th May 2023 they planted 7,000 trees which will remove 28 Tonnes of CO2 per year and confirms their Net Zero status.

constructorscompany.org.uk



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The Masterclasses can be tailored to your requirements and delivered in-person or online and are comprised of Future Dreams representatives, healthcare professionals and breast cancer patients.

Those who attended were able to check their breasts and reach out to their GPs for anything that was a concern to them. "I've now had surgery to remove the cancer and I'm about to start radiotherapy, all within weeks of making that decision to take a lunchbreak and learn properly about regularly checking your breasts." Jane, Metropolitan Police.

To find out more about our awareness initiatives or to book a Masterclass, please visit futuredreams.org.uk

Up for the mayoral challenge

LCCI will be following with particular interest the progress of two candidates in the run up to May's London mayoral election as Natalie Campbell MBE and Tarun Ghulati have thrown their hats into the ring.

Campbell, chancellor of the University of Westminster, a Chamber patron member is running



as a "centrist middle-of-the-road candidate" and has promised to survey 100,000 Londoners on what matters to them.

Independent

Ghulati, president and chief executive of Squared Watermelon Limited, is a former deputy chair of LCCI's Asian Business Association.



He recently participated in a Chamber mission to India, in conjunction with the India Startup Foundation which he co-founded.

Both are running as independent candidates. Also in the race at this stage are Rob Blackie (Liberal Democrats), Howard Cox (Reform UK), Zoe Garbett (Greens), Susan Hall (Conservatives), and Sadiq Khan (Labour).

On board

LCCI board member Richard Moir has joined the equivalent body of the British Serbian Chamber of Commerce (BSCC). Moir organised the first Belgrade Wealth Forum in 2017 and believes that Serbia has gone from strength to strength in recent years "as have both bilateral and commercial relations thanks



in no small part to the BSCC and the dedicated teams in both embassies."

Renaissance

This, says Moir, can be witnessed by the regularly improving annual trade flows. "UK-Serbian relations are not only enjoying a renaissance, trade in goods and services are

up too and are approaching one billion pounds per year."

LCCI recently hosted a Balkan-UK trade roundtable with the BSCC. Serbia is engaged in ongoing accession negotiations with the EU and it is anticipated that the country will join the bloc by 2030. The UK has a trade agreement with Serbia which has been in effect since May 2021.

www.britserbcham.com



Panorama of Old Belgrade from the USCE Shopping Center, Silbaski, CC BY-SA 4.0

Leadership

Diane Betts, chief executive of City Gateway, is the first recipient of the David Coughtrie Leadership Award, named in honour of his time spent as CET chair.

City Gateway helps bridge the gap between the City's finance district and 16-18 year olds from the most disadvantaged areas

of London through their 'route to employment' courses. The award celebrates exceptional skills in the development of commercial ability.

The award was presented by Lord Mayor Michael Mainelli and David Coughtrie himself.

www.thecet.org



LCCI Member Offers



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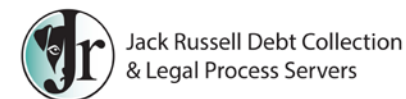
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Buying and selling assets and the risk of substantial property transactions



By Abbie Head, Trainee Solicitor, Corporate, Birketts

When a company buys or sells assets, it may do so on the open market; or it may buy an asset from, or sell an asset to, a director of the company or someone connected to such a director. In the latter scenario, the company needs to consider whether the transaction constitutes a “substantial property transaction” according to the provisions of the Companies Act 2006, because if it does there is a particular legal process that must be followed.

If the proper process is not followed, the consequences are potentially severe. The transaction is voidable at the election of the company. And the following persons are liable:

1. the director/connected person who entered into the transaction (i.e. sold or bought the asset);
2. where a connected person entered the transaction, the director of the company or the company's holding company with whom the connected person is connected; and
3. any director who authorised the transaction.

Let's consider when a transaction is a substantial property transaction, the legal process that must be followed in such a transaction and a potential solution to historic substantial property transactions where the proper process was not followed.

Scenario

In 2018, Flowerpot Limited (Company) bought a plot of land and was the registered sole legal owner. The Company hoped to use the land for a commercial project but was unable to obtain the appropriate planning

permission. The Company had no further use for the land and so decided to sell it. In 2023, a director of the Company, Barry Flowerpot, offered to purchase the land from the Company for personal use for £120,000, which the Company accepted.

Is this a “substantial property transaction” under the Companies Act 2006?

The law

To determine this, the Company must consider the following initial questions:

1. Is the Company selling to or buying from one or more of its directors or a person connected with such a director a substantial non-cash asset (or proposing to do so)?
2. Does the value of the non-cash asset exceed £5,000 and 10% of the Company's asset value or £100,000 (without regard to the company's asset value)?

For these purposes, a director is “connected” with their family members (including, parents, spouse, civil partner, children, step-children and siblings). A director is “connected” with a body corporate if they and persons connected with them are:

1. interested in shares in the body corporate constituting at least 20% of the share capital of the body corporate; or
2. entitled to exercise more than 20% of the votes attaching to shares at a general meeting of the shareholders of the body corporate.

In the scenario above, the facts suggest that the transaction is a substantial property transaction – the Company is selling a substantial non-cash asset (land with a value of £120,000) to one of its directors (Barry Flowerpot).

If the Company were selling the land to a corporate entity in which Barry Flowerpot held (say) 40% of the shares, this too would constitute a substantial property transaction, as the Company would be selling a substantial non-cash asset to a person connected to a director of the Company.

Process

A substantial property transaction requires approval of the shareholders.

Approval is given by the passing of an ordinary resolution of the shareholders – that is, a resolution passed by a simple majority – unless the company's constitution requires a greater majority.

Please note, private companies can pass the resolution as a written resolution.

The purpose behind giving shareholders the power to approve substantial property transactions is to allow the making of a more objective decision than would be the case if it were left to the directors, one or more of whom are interested in the transaction.

Also, if a company is to enter into a substantial property transaction with another company (second company), consideration will also need to be given to whether the second company is entering into a substantial property transaction and therefore requires the relevant shareholder approval.

Resolving historic breaches

Is there a solution to instances where a company has failed to pass the requisite shareholders' resolution to approve a substantial property transaction?

The answer is potentially, yes.

The “Duomatic principle” has been held to apply to the shareholders' approval of substantial property transactions. In essence, this means that if the substantial property transaction was not properly approved by a simple majority of shareholders, this can be subsequently rectified if all the shareholders consent to the transaction.

The Birketts view

Careful consideration is needed when analysing transactions of a substantial value. The consequences of failing to comply with the legislation could be significant. If in doubt, please seek legal advice at the earliest opportunity.

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Coming up...



JANUARY

Motivate your clients to buy – how to have compelling sales conversations

Monday 15 January, 1.45pm – 2.30pm

Add value to your business: use an internship scheme

Tuesday 16 January, 10.00am – 10.45am

London Chamber Open Week Networking Event

Tuesday 16 January, 3.00pm – 5.00pm

Coffee and Connect Networking

Wednesday 17 January, 10.00am – 12.00am
LCCI

Calling all coffee lovers! We are delighted to invite members to a coffee tasting at LCCI. Brett Boswell, Managing Director, Logic Vending will be on hand to offer members the unique opportunity to mix their own blend of coffee at this mid-morning networking event. Taking place on Wednesday 17 January, 10.00pm – 12.00pm, this event is free to attend for LCCI Members only.



Networking Lunch with Sara Davison 'The Divorce Coach'

Thursday 18 January, 12.00pm – 2.00pm
LCCI



Join us to hear from Sara Davison, an award-winning coach, best-selling author and podcaster, with a client list that sees her referred to as "the best-kept secret of society's elite". Sara has a wealth of experience in supporting Business Owners, Directors and Managers grappling with the personal aftermath of a breakup, while simultaneously steering and inspiring their workforce. Taking place on Thursday 18 January, 12.00pm – 2.00pm at LCCI, this event is free to attend for LCCI members only.

LinkedIn Workshop: How to Grow Your Business Through LinkedIn
Monday 22 January, 3.00pm – 4.30pm

Business Owners Club New Year Reception

Tuesday 23 January, 6.00pm – 8.00pm
St. James's Place Entrepreneur Club

Taking place at St. James's Place Entrepreneur Club, in the heart of the City and close to LCCI HQ, we will welcome up to 80 business owners at this reception to engage in peer-to-peer networking and make valuable connections whilst enjoying drinks and canapes. Taking place on Tuesday 23 January, 6.00pm – 8.00pm.

Programme Partner: LenovoPRO

Tickets are £12.00 inc VAT for Premier Plus members.

**St
James's
Place**



Capital 500 with Vicky Pryce, Chief Economic Advisor and Board Member, Cebr, James Rentoul, Director at Savanta ComRes and Ian Daniels, Property Partner at Haysmacintyre
Wednesday 24 January, 12.00pm – 2.00pm

Sponsored and Hosted by Haysmacintyre

Go Connect! Networking

Wednesday 24 January, 4.00pm – 6.00pm

Humble Grape, Fleet Street

LCCI member venue Humble Grape, Fleet Street will host the first networking event for 2024 at a station tasting event where guests will be able to network as well as experience a broad selection of wines. Taking place on Wednesday 24 January, 4.00pm – 6.00pm, this event is open to Members only.

What Every Importer Needs to Know

Tuesday 30 January, 10.00am – 10.30am

FEBRUARY

An introduction to supporting colleagues through pregnancy and baby loss

Thursday 1 February, 10.30am – 11.15am

Navigating redundancy: Legal insights for a smooth transition

Monday 5 February, 1.45pm – 2.30pm

City of London Chamber Anniversary Celebration with guest speakers Michael Mainelli, Lord Mayor of London (2023-2024) and Bim Afolami MP, City Minister at Art Gallery, Guildhall

Wednesday 7 February, 6.00pm – 8.00pm

Export Customs Change from CHIEF to CDS

Tuesday 13 February, 10.00am – 11.00am

Mastering Generative AI: ChatGPT's Business Revolution

Tuesday 20 February, 10.00am – 10.45am

Go Connect Networking at Lucky Voice, Liverpool Street

Wednesday 21 February, 4.00pm – 6.00pm

Creating an Export Strategy

Tuesday 27 February, 10.00am – 11.00am

How Blockchain is Improving the Bottom Line for Business in 2024

Tuesday 27 February, 5.00pm – 7.00pm

LCCI

This event is specially designed to answer the questions you may have about Blockchain, digital assets (crypto) NFTs, Tokenisation, Smart Contracts and much more. It will also highlight how blockchain can improve your bottom line! All delivered in an easy-to-understand way. Taking place on Tuesday 27 February, 5.00pm – 7.00pm at LCCI, the event is free for LCCI members only.



Business Crime briefing with guest speaker Michelle Roycroft, Founder and Managing Director, Holcon Associates and Director, help me Angela at LCC

Wednesday 28 February, 12.00pm – 2.30pm

Women in Business Networking Lunch with Kali Hamerton-Stove, Managing Director, The Glasshouse and Glasshouse Service user

Thursday 29 February, 12.00pm – 2.30pm

MARCH

Future Unveiled: An Interactive Introduction to Robotics and Artificial Intelligence at LCCI

Tuesday 5 March, 5.00pm – 7.00pm

Women in Wine: Inspiring Inclusivity - Wine Tasting and Networking with Elizabeth Hawthornwaite, Founder of Elizabeth & Wine

Wednesday 6 March, 4.00pm – 6.00pm

Go Connect Networking at Clayton Hotel

Wednesday 13 March, 4.00pm – 6.00pm

Black Business Association Spring Networking Reception at LCCI

Wednesday 20 March, 6.00pm – 8.00pm



Unlocking potential – Coaching's role in optimising workplace L&D



Is content really king when it comes to effective workplace learning and development? With City & Guilds' Training Trends report saying 99% of large employers have experienced the failure of in-house training programmes over the last five years, is there a better way of supporting your L&D strategy with a means of embedding learning more successfully?

Coaching in the context of adult learning is a powerful form of scaffolding that supports learners as they acquire new skills, knowledge and perspectives. Scaffolding refers to the temporary support provided by a knowledgeable mentor or trainer to help learners reach higher levels of understanding and independence. Similarly, coaching serves as a structured framework that aids learners in achieving their learning goals in a personalised and effective manner.

The scaffolding theory is based on Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) concept of educational psychology. It represents 'the space between what the learner is capable of doing unsupported and what the learner cannot do even with support. It is the range where the learner is able to perform, but only with the support of a teacher or a peer with more knowledge or expertise.'

It's a useful lens to apply in the context of workplace learning. For example, colleagues working in a learning circle on a shared



problem provides each individual access to support that can assist them in performing beyond what they can do on their own. Group coaching offers similar supportive opportunities.

Building on Vygotsky's work, Jerome Bruner created the scaffolding theory in the 1950s to describe the process where the learner is given support from an instructor which is then gradually removed as the learner's skills increase. The idea being that the scaffolding provides enough support so that the learner feels challenged, but not beyond their current level of capability.

Both theories shape learning experiences and resources that focus on the skills development and coaching can function as effective scaffolding for many reasons.

The first is personalisation in that coaching considers the individual learner's needs, preferences and learning style. Coaches tailor their approach to match the unique characteristics of each learner to ensure support is relevant and engaging.

Coaching also serves well with goal clarity. Coaches work with the learner to set clear,

achievable learning goals. This is the foundation for the learning journey and helps the learner to stay focused and motivated.

The use of reflective practice is also part of the coaching approach. Learners are encouraged to reflect on their experiences and progress. This enhances self-awareness and allows the individual to make connections between theory and real-life application.

Through one-on-one interactions, coaching can assist learners in developing specific skills. Breaking down complex concepts into manageable steps enables the learner to build up their expertise and confidence.

A coaching approach fosters accountability for the learner and their own learning journey. Making space for regular check-ins and progress updates helps the learner stay on track. It also helps build crucial soft skills like problem solving because the learner is encouraged to find their own solutions, so this is pivotal in building independent thinking and decision-making skills.

In-house training programmes can be beset with challenges around planning, design,

delivery and evaluation. By augmenting them with coaching, challenges such as ensuring that the programme is engaging and keeps learners invested in their own development can be overcome. It can help create meaningful progression pathways and enable L&D professionals to assess the impact the training has had. It can also help bolster statistics like take-up rates, satisfaction levels and improve completion versus dropout levels.

Coaching provides a structured, flexible framework that scaffolds the learner's growth by offering a personalised approach, targeted skill development and continuous improvement and support. It creates a dynamic learning environment which encourages independent thinking, self-directed learning and lasting transformation. So whether it is acquiring new skills or navigating career transitions, coaching plays a valuable role in facilitating and embedding learning.

For more information visit www.aeec.com



*By Karen Smart,
head of consultancy, AoEC*

Man of many parts

Peter Bishop remembers Alan Tabbush – engineer, champion of Anglo-Argentine relations, LCCI export adviser and wonderful travelling companion – who died last October

I first met Alan in 1995 when the London Chamber set up an export development programme. We needed to recruit some seasoned international traders to add their real-life experience to a theoretical framework and provide some heft to what turned out to be a successful and hugely enjoyable venture.

Specialised

With his GKN and British Electric background, he soon showed his value in advising hundreds of UK companies in the practicalities of finding and maintaining overseas customers. Having headed up operations in Latin America, it was no wonder that he specialised in that region but he was equally effective in helping firms develop their business in Europe, North America and elsewhere. Being fluent in French, German, Italian and, of course, Spanish was a more than a useful aid.

There are some people with whom working with is an unalloyed joy and Alan was one of those. His work ethic, experience and knowledge of such a large variety of subjects clearly played a big part but his personality – warm, caring, helpful at any cost – were at least equally important. These qualities came out most obviously to me as a travelling companion. I had the privilege of joining him in various projects in Latin America, Europe and South East Asia.

Well-travelled

In Buenos Aires, where we attempted to persuade the Argentine Finance Minister to sign an international trade convention, he introduced me to a



Alan Tabbush (left) with Peter Bishop in the 1990s

former Mayor, arranged for me to play tennis at the renowned Hurlingham Club, and showed me the Casa Rosada. Alan was returning to the city where he studied engineering at the university and it was one of his favourites. In Lima, on another trip, I had a serious bout of food poisoning but Alan had the answer – a healthy dose of Pisco sour. And yes, it did the trick admirably.

In Poland, together with a valued colleague, John Lyon-Maris, we visited Auschwitz after running international trade training courses in Katowice, Torun and Warsaw. Both had relatives who had been directly affected by the Holocaust and the experience was deeply affecting.

Alan was a supremely well-travelled man and took a deep interest in the

countries he visited from both a cultural and linguistic point of view. Sitting beside him on the plane was like having a travel writer in tow. Yet he imparted his knowledge in a typically unassuming and modest way – it made for a true conversation, never a lecture.

Optimist

Not that he didn't have strong views and ones he was unafraid to propose, always rational though, and with a good deal of supporting evidence. British relations with Argentina was a constant source of concern. He knew how close the countries were in so many ways and their conflict pained him greatly. But he was an optimist too and believed that the great relationship would resume.

Friends and admirers

There are so many things to say about Alan and I could continue at length. However, I do want to add that one of the most impressive things about him was that after his main career had come to an end he was determined to continue to contribute in some way to Anglo-Argentine relations of course, but also to the political and economic developments in the world at large, and to maintaining his large network of friends and admirers whom he never let down.

I have no doubt that I speak for Alan's friends and companions, John Lyon-Maris and Lottie Peacock, both such important parts of the LCCI team, in saluting him as a gentleman in business whose cultural interests and companionship made our lives richer.

A Alan Tabbush OBE 1929-2023



Honoured

Mahanta Bahadur Shrestha – 'Monty' to one and all – has been deservedly honoured with an OBE for his contribution to the Nepalese community.

Popular

Monty – his restaurant in Ealing bears that legend – is a long standing and active member of the LCCI Council and is well known for his hospitality and community

spirit. He is also the man behind the increasingly popular Khukhuri beer.

Commitment

At his investiture at Buckingham Palace, Monty said that his award "represents the service and commitment of everyone I work with. To my family, friends and all those who have been a part of my journey of public service, thank you for your support and kindness."

Spotlight on the LCCI Environment, Sustainability & Green Growth Committee

This committee – ESGG – provides support for companies in their pursuit of sustainability and green growth. Their work includes a programme of activities offering opportunities to network, collaborate and share good practice highlighting the needs of London businesses on their journey to net zero.

Recent work has covered sustainability in the built environment, sustainable finance – funding and government support – and sustainable supply chains as well as the production of a much-needed jargon buster.



Mark Jenkinson
Committee chair. Director, Crystal Associates

Director and Founder of sustainability and low-carbon technology consultancy Crystal Associates. He is also member of the LCCI Council and the British Chamber's Climate Group, Board member of the South East London Chamber, co-lead of Tech London Advocate's working groups for PropTech and Education, member of the City of London's Skills for a Sustainable Skyline Taskforce and Mentor for a PropTech incubator.



Sarah Bell
Public affairs manager UK,

Ireland and the Nordics, UPS
Leads on urban access and sustainable transport policy areas as well as aviation, international trade and postal issues in the UK, Ireland and the Nordics.



Maggie Berry OBE
Director, Heart of the City
Leads Heart of the City, a responsible business charity that works with SMEs to help them develop responsible and sustainable business programmes, focusing on topics such as climate action, local community volunteering, diversity and wellbeing in the workplace and social mobility.



Sabrina Clarke
Managing partner, BUILD GLOBAL
Build Global is an award-winning boutique strategy consultancy providing companies with strategy, transformation and sustainability services. She drives sustainability across industries with her niche of expertise; sustainability in business and the supply chain.

Ketan Dattani
Chief executive, Buckingham Futures
Provides bespoke permanent



and temporary talent acquisition and consultancy solutions to public and private sector employers. His corporate policies are designed to reduce carbon footprint and encourage the protection of the environment.



Rabin Doolub
Head of environmental sustainability, Middlesex University
Ensuring Middlesex University minimises expenses, conserves energy and lessens its carbon imprint and signs up to the SDG Accord. Previously worked on national UK policies for hydrogen and CCUS.



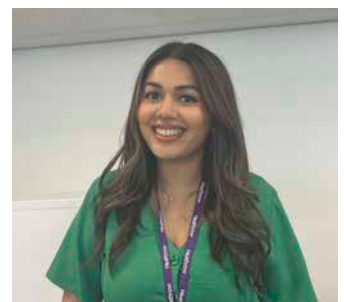
Fflur Elin
Public affairs officer, London Gatwick
Part of London Gatwick's External Engagement team, working with LGW's sustainability team to achieve net zero for their Scope 1 and 2 emissions by 2030, and advocating for policies to ensure that the aviation sector can achieve net zero by 2050.



Amy Green
Insurance specialist, Specialist Risk Group Limited
At the forefront of designing new insurance solutions for the changing business environment landscape. Has over 20 years' experience in the insurance and risk industry, having worked as an underwriter at a global composite and for global brokers.



Stewart Inglis
Director, Maritime Policy & Government Affairs (UK)
Expert in maritime policy and regulatory affairs and responsible for representing MSC Cruises in its engagement with policy-makers and key stakeholders and partners in the UK.



Anjali Jashani
External & government affairs manager, Heathrow Airport
One of Heathrow's business engagement leads, focusing

on areas such as sustainability strategy – which sets out how Heathrow plans to achieve net zero in the air, but also on the ground by 2050. Also leads Heathrow's largest diversity network, ensuring Heathrow is creating an inclusive space and opportunities for people of colour.



Katherine McCullough
Development director,
Merchant Land

Joined Merchant Land in 2013 and has led a forward-thinking and ambitious SME property company during a time of great change and opportunity within London. Specialises in small to medium mixed use projects.



Tom Mockridge
Strategy director, Recorra

Helped found Recorra in 1988 to develop better recycling services for London businesses. Has worked to grow the company into one of London's leading waste management providers. Currently manages the sustainability policy, innovation and government relations functions.



Hattie Park
Sustainability manager, The All England Lawn Tennis Club
Leads Wimbledon's Environment Positive strategy, which addresses emission reduction, resource efficiency, biodiversity gain and inspiring wider action. Has 15 years' experience developing and delivering corporate sustainability strategies.



Keith Paterson
Director, Corporate Banking Europe, CIBC Capital Markets

Focuses on developing relationships in the energy sector, inclusive of both power and utilities and mining. In order to support the energy transition he has adopted additional responsibilities to assist with the driving of sustainable finance across Europe.

Elisha Sempa
Manager, ESG KPMG

Experienced across a range of portfolios, programmes and projects. Specialising in Social Value, she has driven change in infrastructure contractors for over 12 years.



Her work spans major private developments as well as publicly funded projects.



Richard Singleton
Finance & sustainability director, Menzies

Looks after the internal finance department and he is part of Menzies' strategic advisory division. Started at Menzies in 2011 as a graduate and has experience auditing accounts prepared under UK GAAP in a wide range of industries, including retail, property, manufacturing, technology and consultancy.



Haarprit S Suri
Director, Suri London Properties Holdings Ltd

His business is residential and student accommodation in the property sector. He is a Freeman at The World Traders

company, City Livery, chair, Park Royal Business Group, board member Bridge India, Ealing Acton Business Club, and member of LCCI council.



Aaron Uthman
Senior corporate and community stakeholder manager, London City Airport

With over a decade's experience at London City Airport, he leads on delivering the airport's socio-economic sustainability targets and ensures a balance between the airport's operations and the local community.



Lamé Verre
Head of strategy, innovation & sustainability, SSE Energy Customers Solutions

SSE PLC is a FTSE 100 leading generator of renewable electricity and one of the largest electricity network companies in the UK. Fellow of the Energy Institute.

London Business Matters

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Q&A with Chloe Jones and Mary Harding from Troup Bywaters + Anders

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Let's bring knowledge to life:

New City College Pioneers Green Skills Training for a Sustainable London

In a bid to address the growing demand for green skills and sustainability in London, New City College has positioned itself at the forefront of a transformative initiative. The college recently inaugurated its second low carbon technology lab at the Construction and Engineering Centre in Rainham, marking a significant step in providing essential green skills training for the region's workforce.

Calley Page, Deputy Group Director for Apprenticeships & Business Development at New City College, highlighted the need for the plumbing and electrical industries to adapt to cleaner energy and net-zero targets.

"The new lab at Rainham campus serves as a valuable resource for employers seeking to retrain their workforce in green skills and low carbon technologies. Courses at New City College cover a range of skills crucial for the future, including Solar PV, Solar Thermal, Air Source Heat Pumps, Electric Storage, Electric Vehicle Charging, Retrofit, and Energy Efficiency".

Carly Alavoine, Commercial Manager for Apprenticeships and Business Development stressed the importance of



the training facilities in New City College's commitment to sustainability. "Our new training facilities are another step forward in New City College's commitment to sustainability. Technology is changing rapidly and it is difficult for technicians to retrain and get qualified in installing the technology of the future. These new courses are so necessary and we can now provide them in such brilliant facilities as the new Low Carbon Labs."

Beyond Rainham, New City College is actively involved in the £6.7 million Central London Forward Local Skills Improvement Fund (LSIF), collaborating with 15 other institutions. The LSIF aims to equip Londoners with skills for future jobs, with a focus on Digital Skills and Green Skills. Running from November 2023 to March

2025, the project addresses identified skills gaps in various sectors, boosting employment opportunities, especially among black and minority ethnic communities.

At the launch of the first lab at NCC Hackney, Catherine Barber, Director of Environment and Energy for the GLA, had congratulated New City College, saying: "The Mayor wants London to be net zero by 2030, so this agenda on climate change, on clean technology and providing the skills that London needs to meet this ambitious target, is so vital.

"There are currently about 4,000 people working in retrofit in London, but that figure needs to be closer to 60,000 people, so there is an enormous demand for skilled workers and the training you are offering."

In collaboration with 15 partner institutions, New City College is contributing to the creation of a skilled workforce capable of leading London towards a cleaner and more sustainable future. The emphasis on green and digital skills training reflects a commitment to addressing the evolving demands of the workforce in an increasingly environmentally conscious world.



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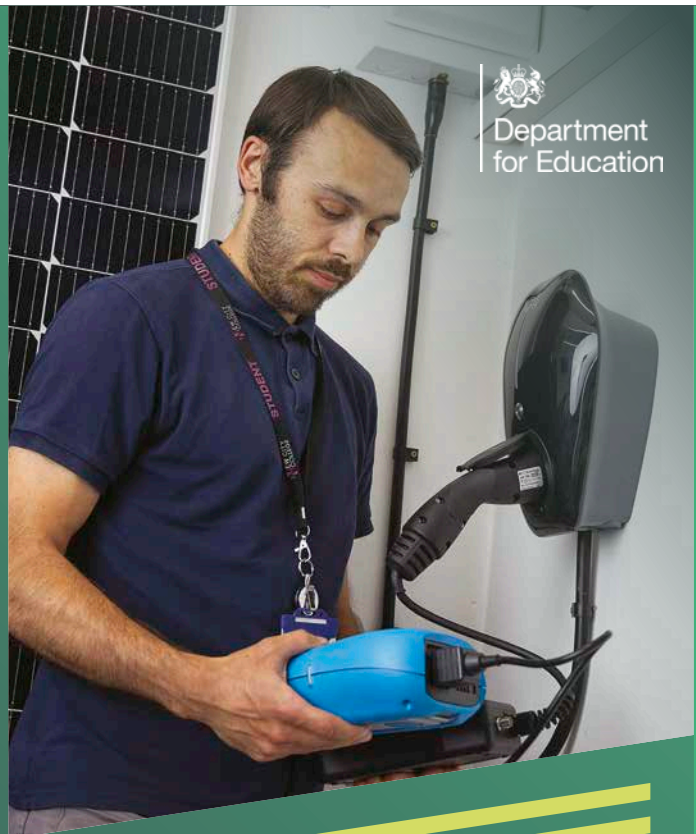
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The Unknown Impacts of Climate Risk in Auditing a Business and Preparing an SME to Meet the Demands of Scope 3



By Mark Lumsdon-Taylor

In today's world, climate change has evolved from a distant concern to an imminent threat, with far-reaching implications for businesses of all sizes. As governments and investors increasingly prioritise sustainability, it is crucial for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) to understand and address the unknown impacts of climate risk in auditing their operations. Furthermore, preparing to meet the demands of Scope 3 emissions reporting is becoming essential for SMEs aiming to remain competitive and resilient in a rapidly changing business landscape.

Understanding Climate Risk in Auditing

Climate risk encompasses a broad spectrum of challenges, including physical risks (e.g., extreme weather events and rising sea levels) and transition risks (e.g., policy changes, technological shifts, and market preferences). Auditing a business's climate risk involves evaluating how these factors may affect its operations, financial performance, and long-term sustainability.

One unknown impact of climate risk in auditing is the potential for regulatory changes to disrupt business operations. Governments worldwide are implementing stringent environmental, social and governmental regulations to combat climate change, impacting SMEs across various industries. These changes may include carbon pricing, emissions limits, and cascading mandatory reporting requirements (from such regulations as TCFD, CSRD, CFD and SEC). Failure to anticipate and adapt to these regulatory shifts can result in financial penalties and operational disruptions.

Additionally, the physical risks associated with climate change can catch SMEs off guard. Rising temperatures, changing

precipitation patterns, and increased frequency of extreme weather events can damage infrastructure, disrupt supply chains, and affect production. These impacts, often underestimated in traditional financial audits, can lead to unexpected costs and losses if not properly assessed.

The Demand for Scope 3 Reporting

As businesses increasingly focus on sustainability, Scope 3 emissions reporting is gaining prominence. Scope 3 emissions encompass indirect emissions generated throughout a business's value chain, including those associated with suppliers, customers, and product use. Preparing to meet the demands of Scope 3 reporting is essential for SMEs looking to align with global sustainability goals and meet investor expectations.

One unknown impact of Scope 3 reporting on SMEs is the potential to uncover hidden risks and opportunities in their supply chains. Assessing the emissions associated with suppliers can reveal vulnerabilities to climate-related disruptions and dependencies on high-emission activities. This information can help SMEs diversify their supply chain, reduce risks, and strengthen their resilience.

Moreover, Scope 3 reporting can uncover potential cost savings and efficiency improvements. By identifying emissions hotspots in their value chains, SMEs can pinpoint areas for emission reductions and resource optimisation. Implementing such measures not only reduces the environmental footprint but can also lead to cost reductions and enhanced competitiveness.

Challenges in Auditing and Scope 3 Reporting

While the benefits of addressing climate risk and Scope 3 reporting are evident, SMEs often face significant challenges in these endeavours. One such challenge is the lack of data and expertise. Many SMEs lack the resources to collect and analyse comprehensive climate data, making it difficult to assess risks and track progress accurately.

Another challenge is the complexity of supply chain emissions. SMEs often have limited visibility into their suppliers' emissions and may struggle to engage suppliers in emission reduction efforts. This can impede progress in Scope 3 reporting and limit the effectiveness of sustainability initiatives.

Additionally, SMEs may face resistance from within their organisations.

Implementing climate risk assessments and Scope 3 reporting requires a cultural shift, and some employees and stakeholders may resist change. Overcoming this challenge requires strong leadership, effective communication, and a commitment to long-term sustainability goals.

How we deal with these issues are approached in different ways. However, one must cut through the issues outlined below; We deal with this by

- Adopting the KISS Principle
- 99.2% of UK businesses are SMEs with 0-49 employees (5.5m businesses) – therefore it must be simple and align to resources and ultimately profitability – but in the right way.
- SMEs account for 99.9% of all UK businesses:

- 1. Map a framework** - of all activities (Integrated External Engagement)
- 2. Check baseline compliance** - SECR, ESOS, GHG Protocol
- 3. Choose the scale of ESG engagement you as business want to achieve** – scope 3 is an area no business has achieved yet.

- 4. Identify the strategic commitment level.** Is the aspiration TCFD & SBTi, key standards in today's world of ESG?

The unknown impacts of climate risk in auditing a business and preparing for Scope 3 reporting are significant and cannot be underestimated by SMEs.

The risk versus reputation versus reward needs to be properly assessed, and scope 3 plays a part in this.

Failing to address these issues can lead to financial losses, regulatory penalties, and reputational damage. On the other hand, SMEs that proactively assess climate risks, engage in Scope 3 reporting, and implement sustainable practices stand to benefit from improved resilience, cost savings, and enhanced competitiveness in a rapidly evolving business landscape. To successfully navigate these challenges, SMEs must prioritize sustainability, invest in data and expertise, and engage with stakeholders to drive positive change.

To find out more contact Mark at Mark.Lumsdon-Taylor@mha.co.uk

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Did you know that there is now government funding available to cover 95% of the cost of staff development, from entry level roles, right through to senior management. Apprenticeships create a unique opportunity to develop your people capability, creating a productive working environment for your staff, by offering pathways to development, that will allow your employees to grow with the business.

There are many longstanding misconceptions about apprenticeships, that they are for 16–18-year-olds and suited to trade professions but the reality is in stark contrast to this, in fact in 2022, 47% of all apprenticeship starts were over the age of 25, compared to just 22% aged 16–18 years, furthermore the largest growth area for apprenticeships is seen in the higher and advanced apprenticeships, with health, business, law and STEM leading the field. The recent London Skills Survey, noted that top skills needed within the capital included, data handling, project management and administration, and at LMC we deliver apprenticeships across these key areas, from entry level Business Administration to Degree Apprenticeship Programmes in collaboration with the University of West London.

As a specialist provider LMC bring even greater efficiencies to your business, embedding project management principles into all our programmes. Project management is more than just a simple qualification, it is your key to ensuring your business is as efficient and productive as it can be, and that your employees are delivering the best work they can, with the resources they have.

Apprenticeship prices start at just £250, with our degree programmes just £1,100, for the entire duration. If you are a London based SME, you may also find support through the London Progression Collaboration, to cover the full cost of funding for your apprenticeship.

Our Apprenticeship Programmes

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In Partnership with



Q&A with Chloe Jones, HR Coordinator and Mary Harding, L&D Coordinator from Troup Bywaters + Anders



WHY DID YOU INVEST IN THESE TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT SCHEME(S)?

Chloe: Troup Bywaters + Anders formally introduced its apprenticeship scheme in 2012, working with training providers to create a standard fit for the industry. We continue to be involved in the development of building services design engineering standards, acting as a lead employer and trailblazer in the industry.

Through our investment in apprenticeships, we have been able to address a skills gap by developing and nurturing our own pool of home-grown talent – a crucial factor in strengthening retention as well as the sustainability and ethos of our business.

Not only that, but our apprentices have also positively contributed to both our financial growth and size, demonstrating the success of the scheme. This year, we've taken on 12 apprentices nationally and we hope to

continue on this path of progressive growth as we look to the future.

Historically, University has been the typical route into engineering, but apprenticeships have helped to open up a more accessible pathway into the profession and provide opportunities to people from more diverse and vast backgrounds. This has helped us enhance our EDI at a grassroots level. A good example of this is the recruitment of apprentices who are school leavers; the scheme allows us to help shape their learning and skills directly in accordance with our business ethos and values.

Our scheme has introduced a professional route into the industry which provides both academic, training and development opportunities at all stages up to Chartership, allowing us to align with the Engineering Council competence standards and professional engineering institutions such as CIBSE.

WHAT CHALLENGES HAVE YOUR LEARNERS HELPED YOUR BUSINESS OVERCOME?

Chloe: Our apprenticeship scheme has aided STEM engagement, particularly within underrepresented groups in the industry, such as women and ethnic minorities. Supporting data shows that since its introduction, our scheme has seen our female apprentice ratio increase to 21% and our ethnic minority apprentice ratio increase to 20% - both numbers being above the industry average.

Continued on p93...

Our scheme has introduced a professional route into the industry which provides both academic, training and development opportunities at all stages up to Chartership



Apprenticeships Align to UEL's Careers First Ethos

The University of East London (UEL) began its higher degree apprenticeship provision in 2016 with the Digital and Technology Solutions apprenticeship, and our first employers included well-known names, such as Accenture and the NHS. It has grown significantly since then.

Today we support over 900 learners across 20 Apprenticeship Programmes ranging from Civil Engineering to Teaching providing

“The University of East London has been pioneering futures since 1898, from the 2nd Industrial Revolution through to where we are now, the 4th. We are a careers-led university. Our mission is to prepare you for the jobs of the future.”

Professor Amanda J. Broderick
Vice-Chancellor & President

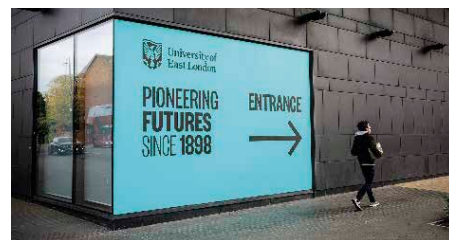
opportunities for learners to gain a higher education degree while also improving their knowledge and skills at work.

Apprenticeships help employers upskill their workforce, while also improving recruitment and retention at almost every level within an organisation from new starts to senior leaders.

For UEL, the tripartite relationship between the apprentice, the employer and the University embraces the very ethos of the University's "Vision 2028" transformation strategy, a mission to prepare our students for the jobs of the future.

Our apprenticeship programmes produce graduates with the skills, tools and competencies sought by employers in a rapidly changing world. Apprenticeships also align with UEL's long-standing commitment to inclusion and social mobility.

UEL stands out from other providers by ensuring apprentices are embedded in the same high-quality education experience as our traditional courses. As such, we have dedicated teams across the University that work



in partnership with our six Schools to pioneer a high-quality apprenticeship experience for both our apprentices and employers.

We strive to keep our courses innovative and current with the changing pressures of careers-centric learning and it is our goal to solidify a position as one of the leading apprenticeship providers in the country.

As part of our commitment to innovation growth, we are proud to announce the development of the Royal Docks Centre for Sustainability. The perfect place to discover the endless possibilities of transformative research. UEL's centre provides learners with the necessary expertise, resources and innovation to support their academic endeavours in various fields, with sustainability embedded in everything that we do.

In September 2023, UEL underwent its first full inspection of its apprenticeship provision, receiving a judgement of **Good** across all four themes: quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management. Inspectors commended the high levels of satisfaction in all areas of our apprenticeships: apprentices highly value their training and have a positive attitude towards their studies; academics teach apprentices extensive new knowledge which prepares them well for their work responsibilities; employers are caring and helpful; and management escalates relevant issues to the university board. UEL's inspection also marks the first ever inspection of the level 6 Geospatial Mapping and Science Specialist apprenticeship, commended for staff's guidance on effectively using professional surveying equipment and software to calculate traverse lines.

For more information about how your business can benefit from degree apprenticeships, visit us at www.uel.ac.uk/study/apprenticeships. Both apprenticeship levy paying and smaller non-levy paying organisations can benefit from apprenticeships and we can guide you through the process.



APPRENTICESHIPS



Invest in your team and develop a new generation of experts.

Hiring an apprentice is an effective way to grow talent and develop a motivated and qualified workforce. They are an exciting option for both apprentice and employer: as well as filling skills gaps, our research shows that they boost morale and staff retention.

You can hire someone new or upskill an existing employee. Our dedicated team of apprenticeship managers will support you and your apprentice through the entire journey.

INVEST IN AN APPRENTICE

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Find out more about the Apprenticeships delivered by the University of East London. Email degreeapprenticeships@uel.ac.uk or visit www.uel.ac.uk/apprenticeships



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University of East London

Continued from p91...

It allows succession planning for the future of the business and fosters an inclusive culture.

Secondly, it's helped to improve overall retention rates. Currently, 23% of our workforce are apprentices, graduates and trainees.

We've also been able to solve innovative challenges with the input of our apprentices. Many are representatives on our Future Leaders board, which we launched last year. This forum is made up of a mixture of people across the business who get together to exchange ideas, experiences and give feedback. This feedback is shared with the board and informs the business' wider strategy. An example of the impact they've helped to make is within our enhanced benefits package. Thanks to their views, company-wide changes were made and implemented.

WHAT DO YOU CONSIDER TO BE THE MAIN BENEFITS OF THE TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT SCHEME(S) YOU PARTICIPATE IN?

Mary: Apprentices have a really positive impact across Troup Bywaters + Anders. Our Future Leaders board is just one example, but the whole business also benefits from their presence in the workplace.

This is reflected in our metrics having increased turnover by 70% since 2012 and won 42 awards of excellence related to people development and apprenticeships.

We definitely see our business as a valuable environment for apprentices to carve out a successful career. One of our apprentices, Samuel Clark said that for him, some of the key benefits include pursuing a degree 'at no cost to [him]', 'early exposure to the industry' and helping him create 'a detailed career plan'.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO EMPLOYERS CONSIDERING USING A TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT SCHEME FOR THE FIRST TIME?

Mary: We would suggest employers utilise Government support and advice to help them shape their training programme, as well as the wealth of resources that are available online. We're also part of several industry coalitions - such as the Technical Apprenticeship Consortium (TAC) - which allows us to exchange experiences and best practices with other employers seeking to sharpen their training scheme(s).

When creating the programme, consider manager and stakeholder buy-in to ensure best practice is established from the start. If you create clear objectives, then you can make sure the programme aligns well with the business' strategy ensuring the programme and the business grow together.

It's also worth saying - keep looking for ways to improve. We champion continuous improvement and this includes our apprenticeship scheme. Refining the programme's design so it benefits all parties involved is an ongoing process, fuelled by experience.

To find out more about how you can get your organisation involved visit: https://find-employer-schemes.education.gov.uk?utm_source=LondonChamberMagazine_medium=editorial&utm_campaign=rev&utm_term=und&utm_content=TroupBywaters+Anders

**TROUP
BYWATERS
+ ANDERS**

Hire an Apprentice With Croydon College

Croydon College is one of South London's leading providers of apprenticeships, with a growing reputation for its focus on the employability of students. The college ensures that students leave education not only with top qualifications, but work-ready and equipped with the skills employers really want.



The college works closely with local, regional and national businesses to gather valuable expert advice to inform the teaching and curriculum, and to provide students with the opportunity to interact with some of the best employers in the country. This keeps staff and managers up to date with employer requirements and industry standards, and allows local businesses to advise on curriculum and courses.

Employers are regularly invited by the college to participate in "Learning walks", giving them the opportunity to experience – first-hand – the skills, techniques and workplace-readiness that are prioritised in the learning offered to students. College managers and staff take part in "Employment walks" on local business' sites to refresh skills and upgrade their commercial awareness and expertise.

A cornerstone of the employability offer at Croydon College is the large number of apprenticeships on offer, including opportunities in the following professions and industries:-

- Accountancy
- Building and construction
- Carpentry and joinery
- Digital marketing
- Engineering
- Hospitality
- HR
- IT
- Plumbing and heating
- Project management
- Property maintenance
- Teaching

Apprenticeships are offered at Intermediate, Advanced and Higher (degree) levels, depending on the applicant's existing qualifications and experience. There are no tuition fees due by the student, since training costs are funded by the government and employer.

The Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) acknowledged Croydon College's



focus on employability in their review of the provision and stated, "There is strong evidence of the development of employability skills." At its most recent inspection, Ofsted noted, "Initiatives introduced by the college to develop students' employability skills have been successful in exposing students to the world of work in a number of different ways, including through imaginative projects and live briefs."

Croydon College continually works to maintain and improve its relationships with employers to ensure students leave with the skills they need, and employers want.

If you are interested in working in partnership with Croydon College, please contact apprenticeships@croydon.ac.uk or telephone **020 8686 5700**.

HIRE AN APPRENTICE

- **Expand your workforce**
- **Upskill your team**
- **Tailor talent to your needs**



92% of companies that have taken on apprentices believe this leads to a more motivated and satisfied workforce*

Hiring an apprentice or upskilling an existing member of staff helps build a stronger workforce that is motivated, skilled and appropriately qualified to meet the needs of your business.

Apprentices come with all levels of experience: from school leavers to university graduates, from career changers to self-improvers. Hiring an apprentice is a cost-effective and exciting way to offer on-the-job training, enjoy higher staff retention, and build a culture of learning and development.**

- Data from apprenticeships.gov.uk
- ** Smaller employers are eligible for government funding which will pay between 95% and 100% of the apprentice training costs. Larger employers can use the levy to pay for training.

To find out more, email apprenticeships@croydon.ac.uk



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STUNNING £8 MILLION TRANSFORMATION OF 1 NEWBRIDGE SQUARE

FI Real Estate Management has announced the completion of its stunning £8 million transformation of 1 Newbridge Square in Swindon.



The multi-million-pound project is part of the wider regeneration of Swindon, with a strong emphasis on sustainable design and occupier wellness.

The building, which was the former home of Zurich Insurance, has been transformed into a state of the art business address, with high spec office and retail space. 1 Newbridge Square boasts a total of 100,000 sq ft of high-quality grade A office space, with flexible floorplates available up to 24,000 sq ft.

The scheme focuses on wellness, ESG with a future-proof vision, and has implemented an environmental

management system which minimises onsite energy usage, including the installation of solar panels. This is supported by key environmental credentials including EPC A and BREEAM Excellent.

Interior highlights include two living trees living in the reception area, and a 7550mm x 4000mm living wall; such features are proven to increase productivity, improve air quality and regulate temperature. Complementing these are occupier amenities including fitness and gym facilities; cycle and scooter provisions; EV charging points; on-site retail; a business lounge; and an event

space, which can be adapted for a variety of uses, from yoga classes to business conferences.

1 Newbridge Square's environmental credentials also include:

• Life Cycle Carbon Assessment

- the building is developed to achieve low embodied carbon and be low-carbon in operation. The design has 30% less structural embodied carbon compared with other benchmark buildings

• **Fitwel accreditation** - a standard that measures occupant health and wellbeing

• **Low Zero Carbon PV Installation** - renewable energy production via solar photo-voltaic panels on the roof of the building

• **Materials** - local procurement where possible; low carbon materials (with a high recycled content) or renewable materials (i.e. from natural sources such as wood, plant fibres and bio-based materials); healthy materials, with a third party low toxin and volatile organic compound (VOC) certification

• **Waste** - reusing as much of the strip-out material as possible; avoid sending strip-out waste to landfill (align with London Plan requirement to divert 95% of construction waste from landfill); where new materials are specified, ensure high recycled content

• **Lighting Strategy** - including highly efficient LED lighting; lower illuminance throughout and zone lighting, so that if the office is not fully occupied, the lighting can be turned off in those areas that are not occupied

Dominic Knowles, Head of Offices at FI Estate Management, commented: "We are immensely proud of 1 Newbridge Square. We believe it's an incredible workspace and a real asset for Swindon, which brings 'London quality' offices to the South West.

"We've already shown the space to many global and local businesses who are in conversation to potentially relocate, and we've been blown away by their amazing feedback and positive comments."

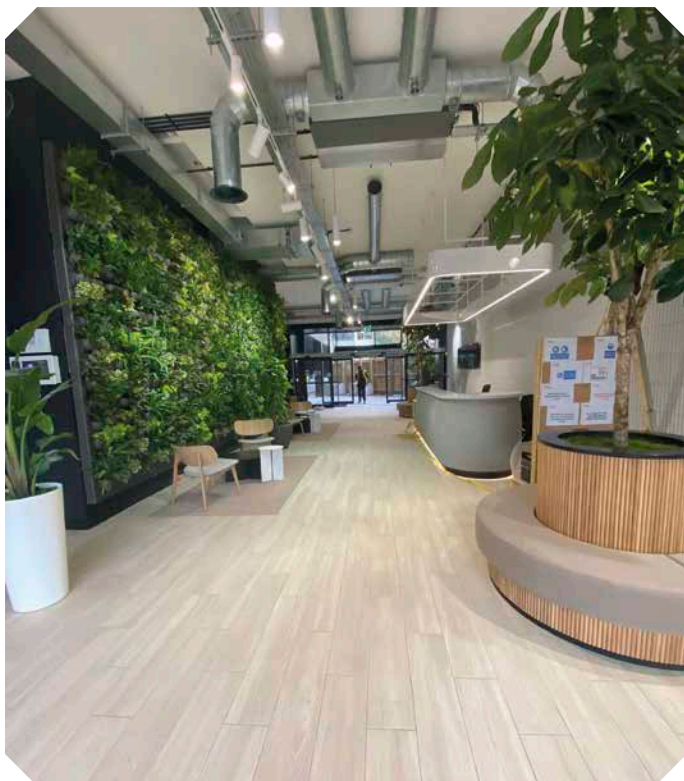
Tim Knowles, Founder and Managing Director at FI Estate Management, added: "At FI Real Estate Management our passion lies in creating attractive, sustainable and unique spaces, and 1 Newbridge Square embodies all of these key elements and more.

"We wanted to be part of the exciting £1 billion regeneration that is happening right now in Swindon, and enable businesses to grow in a wellness-focused, user-centred workspace, as well as being at the forefront of improving the town's eco strategy as a climate positive asset."

As one of the most established names in commercial asset and property management in the UK, FI Real Estate Management operates an extensive and diverse portfolio which covers over 15m sq ft, including 5m sq ft of new build developments, across the nation, with assets totalling in excess £1.2bn.

Cushman & Wakefield, Loveday, and Smethurst are acting as joint agents for the office space.

For more information go to fi-rem.com/property/1-newbridge-square/





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mid-sized
thrive

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We're on hand to support mid-sized SMEs looking to accelerate their growth organically or through acquisition.

Our regional team of experts works exclusively with business finance advisers and lower mid-market private equity investors to create bespoke funding solutions from £1m - £15 million. By combining the latest in data analytics with traditional lending skills we recognise the importance of speed, certainty and flexibility for advisers and borrowers.

It's how we've helped fund UK businesses with more than **£1.7 billion** so far.

Intermediated opportunity

The rise and rise of the commercial finance broker



By Norman Chambers

It's something of a truism that small businesses are often grouped uncomfortably together under the broader umbrella of SMEs. All too frequently this oversimplified categorisation overlooks the diversity and uniqueness of such enterprises. Whilst Britain's commercial heritage may be rooted in the image of a nation of shopkeepers, the reality today is far more varied. Not every small business is in retail for instance, and a tech SME may share more in common with a larger firm in the same industry than with a similarly sized venture in a different sector.. Such reductive a view of SMEs risks undermining the size, financial health, and - most importantly - the ambition of modern small businesses.

This patronising perspective can trickle down into public consciousness too, influencing how banks and lenders perceive and engage with these dynamic entities. As UK banks and lenders grow larger and more bureaucratic, it is inevitable that their ability to understand and cater to the nuanced needs of small businesses diminishes. Indeed, the closure of over 5,000 bank branches across Britain's high streets since 2015 exacerbates this issue, creating not just a knowledge gap but a substantial chasm in physical banking presence too.

Where then does this leave a driven and ambitious small business in need of finance? One answer, an increasingly popular one, lies in the services of commercial finance brokers. Mirroring the roles of residential mortgage and insurance brokers, the commercial finance broker has become indispensable for many growth seeking enterprises. Commercial finance intermediaries, particularly those accredited by independent trade bodies like the National Association of Commercial Finance Brokers (NACFB) are stepping up and into the void left by traditional banks.

These brokers, many of whom are small business owners themselves, understand the intricacies of the SME sector. They bring a wealth of knowledge, speaking the language of SMEs, and empathise with the challenges these businesses face. Unlike traditional bank managers, commercial finance brokers also have

access to a vast array of financial products from a multitude of lenders, each with their own specialties and appetites for risk.

The growing need for relationship led lending falls against a background of broadly challenging SME funding space. The sector's leading trade body, UK Finance revealed a 20% year-on-year drop in lending to SMEs last year. As lending to SMEs fell for the fifth consecutive quarter, whilst gross lending was down by just over a fifth when compared to 2022. Demand uncertainty, higher interest rates, and the impact of lending taken out during the pandemic have all contributed to the weakness in gross lending this year.

TURNING A 'NO' INTO A 'YES'

Modern commercial finance brokers recognise that no two businesses are the same. They offer bespoke solutions ranging from property-led short-term bridging loans and asset leasing finance to various innovative invoice financing facilities. Their expertise and broad access to financial products enable them to match each client with a loan that precisely suits their needs.

Tellingly, a survey conducted by the NACFB among its 2,000+ member brokers revealed a telling statistic, in the past year, 32% of new clients successfully funded via commercial brokers had previously been denied funding elsewhere. This includes businesses that were rejected for debt financing by banks or other finance types, such as equity funding. These cases exemplify the crucial role NACFB Members play in providing access to growth capital and highlights the commercial broker's other unique strength: turning a 'no' into a 'yes'.

Additionally, the NACFB found that 29% of transactions brokered by Members led to clients choosing a different financial solution than they originally sought, a slight increase from the previous year. This shift underscores the tangible benefits of working with a commercial finance broker, who can guide clients towards more suitable funding options.

Further survey findings highlight that in 2023, NACFB brokers facilitated an impressive £38 billion in lending, showcasing their resilience and adaptability in a challenging market. Although this represents an approximate 16% decrease from 2022's £45 billion and a 7% drop from 2021's £41 billion, such performance aligns with broader market trends. Early Bank of England data confirms that SME lending decreased across all channels in the first three quarters of 2023, reflecting the overall economic climate.

Despite these challenges, including rising inflation, over a dozen successive interest rate rises, cautious lending policies, and a cost-of-living crisis, the NACFB community's ability to generate £38 billion in lending is a testament to its commitment, adaptability,

and effectiveness. The higher lending figures in previous years were also significantly boosted by pandemic-related funding. Looking ahead, the NACFB expects the value of broker-originated transactions to stabilise and plateau in the near term.

BRIDGING THE GAP

Looking ahead to 2024, the NACFB is focusing on a critical area where we believe our organisation and members make a significant impact. Surprisingly, 35% of commercial lenders admit to lacking a formal referral system for declined direct SME funding enquiries. The trade body sees an opportunity to bridge this gap, believing that many rejected applications could find success through an NACFB member's intervention.

We are therefore advocating for the government to revisit and revitalise a scheme originally aimed at creating viable pathways for businesses initially turned away from traditional financing sources. Such an ask forms a central tenet of the trade body's industry representations ahead of the Spring budget event.

A key advocacy aim for the trade body is a reimagining of the Bank Referral Scheme. The Bank Referral Scheme (BRS) was a government initiative designed to help SMEs access finance after being rejected by major banks. Under the scheme, banks were required to refer these SMEs to designated finance platforms, which then connected them with alternative funding options via digital platforms. The initial BRS faced challenges, including poor incentivisation for lenders and a cumbersome process for businesses. Now we urge learning from these past mistakes to create a more efficient and effective scheme.

The NACFB is advocating for a system where advisory networks play a more central role, moving away from the impersonal digital platforms of the original BRS. This human-centred approach recognises the diverse ambitions of SME owners, from those aspiring to major corporate growth to those seeking stable, satisfying business ventures.

A revitalised scheme should not just be for high street banks but enable a broader spectrum of lenders to refer declined SMEs to a centralised system, maximising efficiency, and resource utilisation.

There is great potential for this reimagined scheme to unlock growth for SMEs and strengthen the UK's economic resilience. The NACFB calls upon the government alongside other industry bodies - such as the British Chambers of Commerce - to join us in embracing this vision and support the community of modern finance professionals in reinventing the scheme as a cornerstone for SME growth.

Is optimism returning to the market for SMEs seeking finance?

Simon Adcock, regional director for London and the South East at Reward Finance Group, reflects on renewed optimism in the SME finance market seeking commercial finance to accelerate growth after a turbulent 12 months.



Simon Adcock
Regional director, London and the South East
Reward Finance Group

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07912 667 373

Over the past year, the UK economy and lending market has been surrounded by political and economic uncertainty however it is not all doom and gloom and there are some positives.

The Bank of England have paused the raising of interest rates to stimulate the economy, this followed 14 rate rises.

Many borrowers, particularly young businesses would never have traded through a time of such high borrowing costs and therefore it was no surprise that the commercial finance market experienced a significant slowdown due to increased nervousness and uncertainty.

Similarly, traditional high street bank lending remained subdued and the demand for new finance continued to trend below pre-pandemic levels for them.

So, what happens when the bank won't lend? Are you aware there is a huge landscape of alternative funding providers in the marketplace?

For the first time ever, gross lending last year from the alternative finance landscape overtook the banks. Is this a trend that is likely to continue?

Discussions with our network of finance brokers and intermediaries across London and the South East indicate a rise in asset finance and leasing usage among SMEs, while working capital finance has seen

month on month decline. This highlights the challenge businesses for those without balance sheet assets to secure the financing they need.

In a recent study 81% of brokers predicted a surge in demand for financing over the next six months due to rising business running costs, high interest rates and difficulties in hiring and retaining staff.

These increased rates pose a real threat to small businesses, making it more difficult to pay off debts quickly and access loans to cover unexpected expenses.

While loan applications for finance continue across the UK, lending criteria has tightened, and deals take longer to complete compared to previous years.

However, it's not all bleak for SMEs and there are signs of optimism ahead. As we transition into an era of customer-focused lending, the alternative finance market offers greater liquidity, increased flexibility and evolving advice. We (as an example) examine various aspects of SME businesses before devising tailored plans to assess their needs and vulnerabilities, striving for mutually beneficial outcomes.

This joined-up approach was best exemplified in a recent funding deal we closed. The company struggled to secure finance from traditional high street banks that were not able to provide the commercial finance at the speed it required. An agile solution was needed to launch a new product range during a critical 'back to school' trading period, enhance cashflow, improve its supply chain and drive revenue across its core trade and direct-to-consumer markets.

We provided the speed and flexibility of lending, processing the deal at the pace required to meet forward orders for the client's new product range and capitalise on the crucial trading period.

Furthermore, investors, private equity houses and alternative lenders are displaying confidence and injecting significant capital into the market,

something we have ourselves recently experienced after receiving a £50m increase to our funding from Foresight Group. This will enable us to provide further capital to support SMEs as we continue our growth plans to achieve a loan book of £350m in the next three years.




Despite the pessimism, political and economic uncertainty, and stagnant bank lending of the past year, there seems to be a renewed sense of confidence following the most recent announcement to hold interest rates again. I am sure this confidence will lead to many SMEs exploring new opportunities as their circumstances evolve, resulting in increased demands for traditional forms of working capital finance and asset based lending.

In summary, while we continue to navigate uncertain times, we may have reached the peak of current interest rate hikes. The outlook for growth, both in the economy and for SMEs, appears optimistic yet steady. The banks may continue for some time yet to not return to pre-pandemic lending. Therefore, please remember there is alternative finance market out there that are well capitalised and have a huge appetite to lend.

We are one such lender and are welcoming and completing new applications for funding across the country.

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Unlocking Your Business Potential: The Power of Alternative Finance.

Fueling Growth Through Alternative Finance

With banks continuing to withdraw from the market, Alternative Finance has become a key contributor to the success of small and medium-sized businesses.

Many industry sectors across the UK are benefiting from new products and innovative solutions that traditional banks aren't able to provide:

Manufacturers who secured alternative finance increased their access to credit, which supported investment in growth initiatives, strengthening their cashflow position and **boosted revenues**¹.

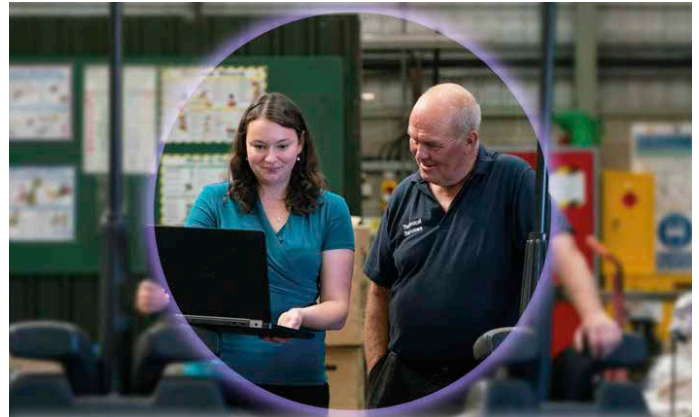
For **logistics companies**, alternative finance offers faster access to funding, easing cashflow pressures, reducing admin overheads and **enhancing operational efficiency**².

Wholesalers are now relying on alternative finance to bridge supplier pro-forma payment gaps and meet customer 60-day terms enhancing cashflow and **revenue growth**³.

multifi's easy to use platform offers fixed rates and fast payments to suppliers in all major currencies taking the faff out of business finance. This has helped UK SMB's improved their cashflow, boost growth and increase resilience. Manufacturers, wholesalers and logistics companies in particular are witnessing the benefits of quick access to working capital.

A leading UK distribution solutions provider with over 50 years of exporting experience had established itself as a premier global logistics partner. However, to capitalise on new growth opportunities, they needed to quickly secure additional working capital beyond what their existing lenders could

provide. By partnering with multifi for flexible alternative funding, the distribution company fueled their expansion plans with an **unsecured £150k cashflow facility set up in just 48 hours.**



What multifi customers say:
"In the current economic climate, the traditional methods have proven difficult and across the market there is a reluctance to help small businesses grow. multifi is quick and straight forward. The people are very knowledgable, understand the different needs as an SME and most importantly, provide funding with a viable facility."

Key factors that supported growth:

- **Fast funding** with access to credit in 48 hours.
- **Flexible unsecured facility** tailored to expansion plans.
- **No disruption** to existing lending relationships.
- **Easy-to-use** online platform for capital access.

View more multifi case studies at multifi.co.uk/business-finance-case-studies

Learn more at [.multifi.co.uk](https://multifi.co.uk)

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¹ Source: Alternative Finance and UK Manufacturing Growth (2022) by the Institute for Manufacturing at Cambridge University. <https://www.jbs.cam.ac.uk/faculty-research/centres/alternative-finance/publications/5th-uk-alternative-finance-industry-report/>

² Source: The Use of Invoice Finance in the UK Logistics Industry (2022) by the Centre for Logistics and Information Management at the University of Nottingham. <https://www.emerald.com/insight/content/doi/10.1108/09590551011085975/full/html>

³ Source: The Impact of Fintech Factoring on SME Performance in the Wholesale Trade Industry (2023) by the University of Southampton. <https://www.neliti.com/publications/426616/the-effect-of-fintech-implementation-on-the-performance-of-smes>



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*Indemnity cover may be required. Customers must utilise multifi's cash account functionality to make business payments. Eligibility criteria, terms and conditions can be found our website at multifi.co.uk/support#criteria

Making vision a pillar of employee wellness strategies

8 in 10 UK employers have reported a rise in requests for more wellbeing benefits in the workplace - This is where Specsavers can help.

Looking out for eyecare

A comprehensive employee wellness strategy should support employees' physical, mental, and financial health, and champion a preventative rather than reactive approach to risk factors at work and when working remotely. Being able to see properly is crucial to most people's ability to do their job but eyecare and eye protection are often overlooked as a wellness benefit.

A clear impact

There's no blurred vision when it comes to the impacts of poor eyecare on productivity in the workplace – our recent survey found that eyestrain is the top reason for poor productivity caused by physical discomfort. This demonstrates that it's not just employees' health that's harmed, but also business performance. Whatever the size of the business, from start-up to market leader, the impacts of absences or drops in productivity are real and will have an impact on the bottom line as well as employee wellbeing.

Whether eyestrain is caused by an undetected change in someone's prescription or simply fatigue, prolonged effects can include double vision, a sore neck and shoulders, and an increased sensitivity to light.

There are other more acute dangers for tradespeople who work without the right eye protection for their roles. Our research found that, of tradespeople who require prescription glasses, 60% wear these without added eye protection when on the job. Others are forced to wear goggles over their glasses, causing discomfort and impairing their vision.

Time to test

Almost a third of office workers consider eye tests too expensive and 1 in 5 struggle to find the time. When it comes to tradespeople, 20% didn't know that prescription safety glasses were available at all.

"Employers can remove these barriers by recognising how important vision is to not just the health of their employees but also to the proper functioning and ultimately the health of their business and giving it a central role in their wellness strategy. Convenience is key with these things, people are much more likely to take an action, even one to help themselves, if they have a clear path to doing it," said Giles Edmonds, Clinical Services Director at Specsavers.

The right programme

Providing that path is easier than ever with Specsavers Corporate eVouchers. These take the hassle out of the process of providing eyecare benefits to employees, offering access to essential services including free eye tests at nearly 1,000 stores in the UK, as well as discounted frames and lenses when it's time to choose some glasses.

Tradespeople can use vouchers on prescription safety glasses, so they never have to settle for their regular frames when on the job, nor deal with the discomfort of fitting goggles over their glasses. Specsavers safety glasses feature scratch-resistant lenses, robust frame materials and anti-fog ventilation, ensuring they're ready for action, whatever the job at hand.

Eyecare is central to working life for most employees, so vision should be equally prominent in wellness strategies. No matter the size of your business, Specsavers is here to help.



Starting from just **£17**, Specsavers Corporate eVouchers makes this the easiest job you'll do today.

For more information, visit www.specsavers.co.uk/corporate

Eye protection from screens to screws

Corporate eVouchers
from £17*

Hassle-free eyecare for
corporate and trade teams.

Visit [specsavers.co.uk/corporate/evouchers](https://www.specsavers.co.uk/corporate/evouchers)

Specsavers

Clarity and Beyond: Understanding the Importance of Eyecare

Our eyes are the windows to the world, providing us with the invaluable gift of vision. It's easy to take this gift for granted until it starts to diminish. The importance of eyecare cannot be overstated, as it plays a vital role in preserving our vision and overall quality of life. To shed light on this critical subject, we turn to the insights and expertise of the Association of British Dispensing Opticians (ABDO), which has been at the forefront of advocating for optimal eyecare. In this article, we will explore the significance of eyecare and the vital role of eyecare professionals in protecting your sight.

THE HIDDEN EPIDEMIC OF EYE HEALTH PROBLEMS

While the importance of eyecare is often underestimated, it is essential to recognize that eye conditions and vision problems are widespread. In the UK alone, there are over two million people living with sight loss, and around 50% of these cases could have been prevented with timely eyecare, according to the Royal National Institute for the Blind.

This statistic underscores the importance of regular eye examinations, as they can detect and address potential problems early on. Early intervention can significantly reduce the risk of permanent vision loss and enhance the quality of life for countless individuals.

EYECARE BEYOND CLEAR VISION

Eyecare encompasses much more than simply ensuring clear vision. ABDO President Daryl Newsome FBDO R SMC(Tech) CL says, "At your eye test the eyecare practitioner can also detect signs of health problems such as diabetes, high blood pressure, and certain types of cancer." In other words, regular eye examinations can serve as a preventive measure for broader health issues.

What's more, healthy living can benefit your eye health as well as your body.

Studies show smoking increases the risk of age-related macular degeneration, cataracts, glaucoma and diabetic retinopathy and Dry Eye Syndrome. ABDO's EyecareFAQ campaign has been sharing good eye health information with the

public for almost 10 years. As part of this campaign., Healthy You, Healthy Eyes looks at the research behind how to keep your eyes healthy. Daryl adds, "Eat a balanced diet to stay healthy: it has benefits for your whole body as well as your eyes. Being overweight

can put you at risk of health problems including high blood pressure, stroke and type 2 diabetes which can have adverse effects on the eyes. Leafy green vegetables and certain kinds of fish can have a positive effect."



This interconnectedness between eye health and overall well-being emphasises the need for proactive eyecare. A regular eye check can serve as a valuable tool for identifying potential health concerns, allowing for timely intervention and treatment.

PROTECTING OUR MOST PRECIOUS SENSE

Our sight is a sense we rely on daily, making it invaluable. Daryl Newsome emphasises this point, stating, "Our eyes are a vital part of how we experience the world, and taking care of them should be a top priority." The importance of eyecare is rooted in safeguarding our most precious sense and preserving the world as we know it.

"Through regular eye examinations and proper eyecare practices, we can minimize the risk of vision problems and ensure that we continue to see the beauty and wonder of the world around us."

EYECARE FOR ALL AGES

Good eyecare is essential for people of all ages. Children need regular eye examinations to ensure that their vision develops properly, and adults need them to monitor changes in their eyesight as they age. This underscores the lifelong commitment to eyecare that everyone should adopt. Whether you're a child, teenager, or senior citizen, your eyesight deserves attention and care throughout your life.

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Different ages have different issues to watch out for. As a new parent you should be aware that your child doesn't need to be able to read to have a sight test. While health visitors will carry out a basic check, Daryl Newsome says, "Do make sure that you take your toddler for an appointment at your local opticians. Ask around for recommendations of a practice that is good with little ones. By getting this test in early, any developmental problems such as squint and lazy eye can be picked up and treated before they

start affecting your child's learning."

As you enter your forties, it's like that even if you haven't had any issues with your eyes before, small print may get a little harder to see. This can be a particular issue in the Autumn as days get shorter and light levels lower. Daryl Newsome says, "It's perfectly normal for your vision to change as you get older. Make sure you book a visit to your local optical practice where not only will you be able to get eyewear to help, you will also have a vital health check on your eyes." Not everyone is aware that the risk of eye disease increases as you get older, and as you enter your forties it is important to have at least biannual eye tests including a check of the pressure inside your eyes and your field of vision if required. Problems with these can be an early sign of glaucoma. Glaucoma usually starts without any symptoms, so an eye examination is key to early detection. Once detected there are a range of treatments that can help protect your sight for the long term.

DISPENSING OPTICIANS: THE GUARDIANS OF VISION

Dispensing opticians are highly trained clinical professionals who are dedicated to ensuring that people receive the best eyecare possible. They provide expert advice on eyewear and can help you choose the right glasses or contact lenses for your needs. When you visit your local opticians ask to speak to the dispensing optician. Daryl Newsome says, "A dispensing optician can assist you in getting the right service for you, and making sure you get the best frames and lenses if you need them. Their expertise in selecting and fitting eyewear ensures that you not only see clearly but also receive the best possible eye health advice, visual comfort and protection for work, sports and hobbies."

EYEWEAR AS A FASHION STATEMENT

Eyewear is more than just a vision correction tool; it is also a fashion

statement and a protective shield for your eyes. Daryl Newsome says, "Choosing the right eyewear can enhance your style and protect your eyes from harmful UV rays, dust, and other environmental factors." Dispensing opticians specialise in eyewear guidance and can help you discover the perfect range of spectacles for you. What's more there are now sustainable frames made from recycled plastic, wood or bamboo meaning you can match your ethics with your eyewear. And if you have a job where eye protection is needed, a dispensing optician can supply that too.

RAISING AWARENESS FOR EYECARE

ABDO is actively involved in raising awareness about the importance of eyecare through EyecareFAQ. This campaign aims to ensure that people are well-informed about the significance of regular eye examinations and eyecare practices. At the same time, the Association provides professional qualifications and ongoing professional development for its members to ensure that they maintain high standards and provide excellent eye care and eye wear.

In conclusion, eyecare is a fundamental aspect of maintaining our overall health and well-being. Remember the advice in this article and make eyecare a priority in your life, ensuring that you continue to see the world with clarity, vibrancy, and wonder.

Find out more about your eye health by following EyecareFAQ on social media or visiting <https://www.abdo.org.uk/eyecarefaq>





Shield Pest Control's Advice on How to Prevent Your Business from Pests

Shield Pest Control is one of London's longest-running and highly regarded pest control organisations. Operating for almost fifty years, the company is renowned for providing incredibly high standards of pest control services to both domestic and commercial clients across Southeast England.

Due to an influx of bedbug infestations in Paris this year, UK residents have been on high alert, cautious of transmission via travellers going to and from Paris to the United Kingdom. At Shield Pest Control, our bedbug callouts have become a daily occurrence with a minimum of 2-4 per day. But, what exactly are bedbugs? In this article, we will be discussing what bedbugs are, prevention tactics, and how to detect them.

Bedbugs are small reddish-brown insects that feed off of the blood of humans, often during sleep due to being able to sense the carbon dioxide emitting from our bodies whilst we rest. Due to their small size, bed bugs can often go unnoticed until someone gets bitten, which is when people start to look for an answer.

Bedbugs can infest homes, hotels, or anywhere where someone lives or stays, and are considered to be a public health pest that is hard to hide from. Bedbugs are often associated with poor hygiene, but this is a common misconception. In reality, bedbugs are typically spread through travel, making frequent travellers more susceptible to bedbug issues. The pest can easily be transmitted from

person to person on public transportation, including planes, trains, and buses, which is why residents are so concerned about its spread from Paris.

Signs that you may have a bedbug infestation include red and itchy bite marks, typically found in either a line or cluster on exposed skin. You may also notice tiny blood spots on bed sheets, indicating that bedbugs have either bitten or been squashed during sleep. Additionally, you may see excretion marks on bed sheets that resemble ink splatters, or cast nymphal skins (similar to when a snake sheds its skin) in areas where bedbugs are hiding. Finally, if you spot a bedbug itself, that's a clear sign that you have a problem.

Bedbugs can be hard to treat due to the pest being highly resilient and the ability to survive for up to a year without feeding. Insecticide applications alone are not effective against bedbugs since bedbug eggs are waterproof. You would need to wait for the eggs to hatch into the nymphal stage before any insecticide will successfully take effect.

The best approach to treating bedbugs is with a combination of insecticides, as well as a heat treatment. By implementing a heat treatment, you will eradicate the entire life cycle of the bedbugs, including the eggs, nymphs and adults, all in just one day. Beds, mattresses, sofas and clothing are all able to be treated above 60 degrees with heat treatment. Insecticide spray is also recommended

to be applied to all floors and wall-to-floor junctions. This process should be repeated over several weeks for complete elimination.

The key to detecting bedbugs is to be vigilant. When travelling, ensure that you avoid putting your suitcase on the bed. Instead, place it onto a luggage rack if available until you have thoroughly checked the bed. Pull the bed out, check the mattresses and see if you can identify any of the signs mentioned.

If you suspect a bedbug infestation, it is important to take action by calling a pest control specialist to determine the extent of the infestation. Do not feel ashamed to ask for help.

Shield Pest Control's qualified technicians are experts in bedbug detection and elimination, taking a comprehensive approach that ensures that we don't just treat the symptoms, but address the root cause of the infestation.

Get a **free quote** today by calling **Shield Pest Control** on **0800 954 8098**.





Shield
PEST CONTROL



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We're exceptionally proud of the quality of work that we do, and this quality is reflected in our Royal Warrant. Since 2008, we have held a Royal Warrant, indicating that we regularly work alongside the royal family to ensure that their residences and workspaces are pest-free and safe.

Pest Control Service

We have a wealth of experience under our belts, which means that we know the best ways to help you protect every element of your home or business. No matter the pest you're facing, we are certain we've seen it before, and that we'll be able to help out completely.

As one of the leading companies offering pest control in London, we have to work in a number of distinct and unique environments. From flats to offices, we're familiar with the intricacies of residential pest control in a range of different spaces, as well as commercial pest control services, too.

We're certain that we have the specialist knowledge to **help you in the most effective way possible.**

-  BIRD PROOFING/ FOULING CLEANING AND REMOVAL
-  DAMP & TIMBER SURVEYS
-  FOX PEST CONTROL
-  INSECT CONTROL
-  MAMMAL CONTROL
-  RAT PEST CONTROL
-  RODENT CONTROL
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